

## THE URGENCY OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION TO PREVENT RADICALISM AND MAINTAIN UNITY IN SUKUN GEMPOL VILLAGE

Muhammad Aska Irfani<sup>1\*</sup>, Wiwik Ayu Kusuma Arum<sup>1</sup>, Roehan Bedrus Suja<sup>1</sup>, Hani Masyithoh<sup>1</sup>, Rizqi Arief Darmawan<sup>1</sup>, Iwan Aulia<sup>1</sup>, Novita Rizky Ramadiyati<sup>1</sup>, Putri Setia Ningsih<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Ilham Jauharul Ulum<sup>1</sup>, Hafizah Ulfah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta  
[\\*2010501004@student.uin-suka.ac.id](mailto:*2010501004@student.uin-suka.ac.id)

**Abstract** - Indonesia is a multicultural country, with various ethnicities, cultures, religions and beliefs. Diversity will produce differences that can lead to conflict, inequality and division. To minimize this, the government implemented a religious moderation program in Indonesia, the program has started since 2019 under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion. Last June, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Malang City launched one of the villages located in Tanjungrejo Village, namely the Sukun Gempol Religious Moderation Village, with the aim of establishing a harmonious life between religious communities. This article aims to discuss the urgency of religious moderation in Indonesia, especially in Sukun Gempol village. The method used is qualitative research method, this research is a field study (field research) by presenting it in descriptive form, the data is obtained by direct observation to the field and interviewing community leaders, religious leaders and the local community. This research concludes that the existence of a religious moderation program can produce a fair and balanced religious life that views, responds to, and practices its own religion exclusively and respects the religious practices of people with different beliefs inclusively, and there is a harmonious life.

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation, Plurality, Radicalism, Unity

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural country, in which there are various ethnicities, cultures, religions and beliefs, they should coexist and get along with each other. Diversity will give birth to differences that can lead to conflict and result in inequality and division, in fact based on data from the Setara Institute issued in 2022, it turns out that inter and inter-religious violence and conflict still occur massively.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, to overcome this, it is necessary to implement religious moderation, so that religious life becomes balanced. An example of efforts made by the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs is to establish a Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) and hold various religious dialogues at the national and regional levels. But despite these efforts, conflicts still exist, including religious-based conflicts. The government's new effort to increase tolerance is to implement religious moderation.

In the context of plurality in Indonesia, radicalism characterized by intolerance, fanaticism, and exclusivism that emerges in the rejection of differences shows that this "country based on Pancasila" is not doing well. Radicalism is dangerous not only because it shows a failure of critical thinking as a result of using the potential of reason alone to justify behavior (Koten, 2018), but also because it has the potential to "dim the radiance of religious nobility" as the highest source of value to respect all forms of God's creation. Therefore, the symptoms of violence in religious praxis and the rejection of plurality for the sake of ambition for a uniform framework of thought, as well as the imposition of will on others are the most obvious signs of "failing to understand" the essence of religion and God's Omnipotence.

The plurality of religions in Indonesia actually has the potential to make the Indonesian nation a beacon of world civilization because it has a "wealth of noble value sources" that are more effective for building a highly civilized community by projecting respect for humanity as the core of cultural religious praxis. However, closed attitudes to others in various forms of expression that are prone to destructive and uniformity tendencies that deny diversity and obedience to leaders without involving critical thinking actually make Indonesia a potential "threat to world civilization". Symptoms of the strengthening of radicalism due to intolerance or terrorism in the name of religion indicate the low level of reasoning or understanding of radical groups regarding the essence of religion and the meaning of religion for human life in praxis. It should be suspected that the dogmatic indoctrination carried out systematically by some "religious figures" who demand

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<sup>1</sup> Setara Institute researcher Syera Anggreini Buntara said the first trend is the increasing cases of disruption to places of worship. This is very significant, from 16 cases in 2017 to 50 cases in 2022. "This means that there will be 50 places of worship experiencing disturbances in 2022," Syera said. The Setara Institute defines disruption to houses of worship as acts of refusing to establish houses of worship, destruction of houses of worship, demolition of houses of worship, and destruction of facilities in houses of worship. This information is taken from SETARA Institute: <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/setara-institute-50-rumah-ibadah-diganggu-sepanjang-2022-jawa-timur-paling-intoleran/6941621.html>

"blind obedience" from their followers or for the sake of uniformity of theological frameworks among them, is the beginning of a mistake in reasoning and measuring the essence and meaning of religion.

Facts show that the ambition or lust of certain groups for uniformity of religious identity in the context of plurality accompanied by dogmatic indoctrination efforts in fighting for its implementation in praxis has made religion vulnerable to conflict and violence (Kimball, 2003). Dogmatic indoctrination for the sake of uniformity of mindset and theological framework clearly weakens the power of reason and the ability to think critically and logically towards the essence and role of religion in praxis. It is said that intolerance, which is the root of radicalism and terrorism as its climax, is allegedly related to this systematic dogmatic indoctrination.

Dr. Isroqunnajah pointed out the importance of religious moderation which consists of three scopes: first, living together and together in a diverse society, second, the obligation to maintain mutual harmony in society, and third, the emergence of extreme views across social strata that threaten the foundation of nationalism (Isroqunnajah, 2021). The implementation of religious moderation has been carried out since 2019, one of which has been implemented by the Ministry of Religion of Malang City in the Sukun Gempol village which was launched on June 13, 2023 which was held in Tanjungsrejo village. The purpose of this is none other than to minimize the occurrence of radicalism, and create a harmonious and peaceful life.

Therefore, this article focuses on discussing how the urgency of religious moderation in Indonesia in general and in Sukun Gempol Village in particular. With the existence of religious moderation, it is expected to minimize the occurrence of radicalism and to create a harmonious life.

## **2. METHOD**

This research is a type of qualitative research, this research is a field study (field research) by presenting it in descriptive form, the data is obtained by direct observation to the field and interviewing community leaders, religious leaders and the local community. As for strengthening existing data, researchers also use library research, namely researchers collect information from various sources such as books, journals, magazines, and electronic databases available to support a particular research or study, in this case to explore information about religious moderation. Then the data analysis used in this research is descriptive-analysis, which is a research method that uses the method of collecting data as it is, then the data is arranged, processed and analyzed with a focus on getting the information needed.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Definition of Religious Moderation**

The word "moderation" comes from the Latin word "moderatio", which means "moderate", is the origin of the term "moderation". Moderation refers to

reducing violence and avoiding extreme behavior. In English, the word moderation can be translated as average, core, standard, or impartial. Wasath or wasathiyah, on the other hand, is the Arabic word for moderation. Wasith refers to those who live by wasathiyah principles. The Indonesian word for wasith means balanced, impartial, and fair. The word wasath also means anything good that is indicated by its object. For example, the word "generous" refers to someone who is frugal and wasteful, while "brave" refers to someone who is cowardly (al-jubn) and reckless (tahawur). When dealing with state institutions and other individuals, moderation generally means prioritizing harmony in beliefs, morals and character (Samho, 2022).

Looking at the above understanding, religious moderation means a religious attitude that equally respects the religious practices of others with different beliefs (inclusive) and its own religious practices (exclusive). We will definitely avoid extreme, fanatical and revolutionary religious attitudes with this balance or middle way in religious practice.

### **The Principle of Religious Moderation**

Based on the results of an interview with Romo Swaji on August 4, 2023, he explained that the basic principle of religious moderation is to always maintain a balance between two things, such as ideal concepts and reality, religious texts and ijthad of religious leaders, body and soul, rights and obligations, individual interests and the common good, volunteerism and necessity, and balance between the past and the future. Balance encompasses one's perspective, attitude, and determination to always side with equality, justice, and humanity. Being firm without being harsh is part of having a balanced attitude in the arena of always being on the side of justice. Balance can be understood as a way of looking at things to do things moderately, without being too liberal or conservative (Interview with romo swaji, August 4, 2023).

### **Indicators of Religious Moderation**

Moderation in religion is choosing a perspective, attitude, and behavior that is in the middle of a number of choices, always acting fairly, and practicing religion without exaggeration. Tolerance and harmony in religion can only be achieved through moderation. There are many indicators that show an attitude of religious moderation, but they can be formulated as the main indicators of religion, namely acceptance of local culture, tolerance, and national commitment to non-violence. The degree to which one's religious perspectives, attitudes and practices influence allegiance to the basic national consensus is a very important indicator of national commitment. This relates to nationalism, the country's acceptance of Pancasila as its ideology, its approach to ideological challenges, and the ideology itself.

This measure of national commitment requires tolerance because Indonesia is a multicultural and very diverse nation. Tolerance is a way of giving space by not limiting the rights of others to have beliefs, express those beliefs, and voice their

opinions, even if they do not agree with us. There are three main aspects of religious moderation: social tolerance, political tolerance and religious tolerance. These three main aspects are the most important steps to maintain religious moderation and open up opportunities for other aspects. As a result, tolerance is characterized by an open, generous, voluntary and gentle attitude towards diversity. In addition to religious beliefs, differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity and culture can also be used to interpret tolerance.

In the context of religious moderation, ideologies or thoughts that seek to change social and political systems through extreme verbal, physical and mental violence in the name of religion are indicators of non-violence. The act of radicalism or violence is the attitude and behavior of a person or group that uses violence to produce the desired change. To find out the extent to which religious practices that are in accordance with local culture and traditions are willing to be accepted by using indicators of accommodating local culture. As long as it does not conflict with the main teachings of their religion, moderate people tend to be more accepting of local customs and culture in their religious behavior (Shihab, 2019).

### **Moderation in the Indonesian Context**

Indonesia's ability to recognize the diversity of ethnicity, race, culture, language, religion is the main capital of progress recognition. Indonesia remains one despite its diversity; the richness and beauty of Indonesia comes from its diversity. The nation's diversity is united by its foundation, which includes diversity in religious acceptance and religious practice. Therefore, the government must be able to nurture such diversity to become a force for national unity and a better Indonesia (Akhmadi & Belakang, 2008).

Religious moderation is part of the nation's plan to save Indonesia. As a very different country, from the very beginning the pioneers behind the state acted to convey a form of understanding in the nation and state, especially the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) that had applied to join Indonesia, all of which made an agreement to avoid becoming a strict state, but also not to isolate religion from daily life. The fact that the state favors religion is important to understand here. The state with religion is like a coin on each side, neither side making the other worthless. This assumption does not make religion trivialized, the actualization of the state is based on religious values.

Moderation in religion is the content of values and practices that are common to understand the excellence of the earth. A solid, fair and adjusted view is essential to handle our diversity, in building a country and true expression, every Indonesian has the same freedom and commitment to realize coexistence in harmony and tranquility. If we can execute this, then at that time every citizen can become a full Indonesian human being and also become a truly assertive human being.

Quoting Aristotle says; despite the fact that this good is the same for both the individual and the state, the good of the state seems greater, more perfect to achieve, and more secure. Although one would love to do this service, it is nobler and holier

to do it for many nations. The concept embraced by the Greek philosopher shows that the collective good is prioritized and takes precedence over its interests, although individual interests are also felt to be inseparable. It is natural for Indonesians to strive for moderation in religion that the government seeks to later become the applicable legal system (Aristoteles, 1893). It should be noted that the 2020-2024 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJM) is not an interim plan, as it deals with fundamental aspects of the country, including issues related to religious beliefs and shared routine practices. Therefore, in an effort to achieve and implement religious moderation in the state order, there will be pro-con conflicts that result in sacrifices for the honor and sanctity of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia.

### **Religious Moderation in Sukun Gempol**

Sukun Gempol Village is located in Tanjungrejo Village, Sukun sub-district, Malang City, East Java. Tanjungrejo Village has a large area. Tanjungrejo Village is located at 440 to 660 meters above sea level. The population of this kelurahan reaches 30,171 people, consisting of 14,647 men and 15,524 women. Tanjungrejo Village consists of 13 RWs (Rukun Warga) and 138 RTs (Rukun Tetangga) (Interview with Mr. Febri Wikoko, village official on July 12, 2023). Sukun Gempol Village is nicknamed Kampung Moderasi Beragama (Religious Moderation Village), where the community has diverse beliefs and is not dominated by just one belief. In this case, there are four religions embraced by the people of Sukun Gempol, namely, Islam, Hinduism, Catholicism, and Protestantism (Interview with the head of RW 10, Mr. Suripto on July 16, 2023).

The majority of people in Tanjungrejo Village embrace Islam with several different groups. However, because this village is known as the Village of Religious Moderation, besides Islam, the people in Tanjungrejo, especially RW 09 and RW 10, also have religious pluralism. The community here also embraces several religions, namely Christianity, Catholicism, and Hinduism, which live peacefully side by side. The community in RW 09 is dominated by Islam, Hinduism, and Protestantism. Most of the Muslims belong to the NU (Nahdlatul 'Ulama) group and the rest belong to MU (Muhammadiyah). Meanwhile, the community in RW 10 is dominated by the Catholic community. Nevertheless, the ukhuwah between the people of Kelurahan Tanjungrejo RW 09 and RW 10 is very good in upholding tolerance so that harmony can be seen between local residents (Interview with the head of RT 14, Mr. Sunar on July 12, 2023).

The villages of religious moderation are RW 09 and RW 10. On June 13, 2023, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Malang City named this village as a village of religious moderation (Interview with religious counselor of Malang City, Mrs. Elvi Nurridho on July 11, 2023). This program was launched in Tanjungrejo Village and attended by several local religious leaders. The purpose of this program is to fortify the community from radicalism and extremism, and create inter-religious harmony.

With the existence of the Religious Moderation program in Sukun Gempol village, especially in RW 09 and Rw 10, there is a harmonious life between religious communities, even they live side by side, and help each other when there is an activity in each religion, for example during Eid al-Fitr, our non-Muslim brothers and sisters help secure the road, so that Eid al-Fitr prayers run smoothly(Interview with the advisor of the Al-Fattah mosque, Mr. Bambang on July 16, 2023).

### **The Urgency of Religious Moderation**

According to Bartolomeus Samho, religious moderation is important because it is more effective in finding a middle way that offers a win win solution to every religious problem faced together. In the context of religious plurality in Indonesia, religious moderation is relevant to ground the values contained in Pancasila and the Law that guarantees freedom of religion and belief. In the context of religious plurality lately vulnerable to truth claims that can trigger conflict and violence, religious moderation becomes a necessity and even a must to strive for a life of society, state and nation that is filled with beauty and peace(Samho, 2022). The meaning here is clear, with the existence of religious moderation can create a harmonious and peaceful life between religious communities.

### **4. CONCLUSION**

Religious moderation is a fair and balanced religious attitude that views, responds to, and practices its own religion exclusively and respects the religious practices of people with different beliefs inclusively. So that radicalism, fanaticism, and overly revolutionary attitudes in religion do not get a balance or middle ground. Efforts need to be made to raise multicultural awareness in Indonesia, which in turn will foster an attitude of religious moderation, in order to deal with the diversity that exists there because of its cultural diversity and pluralism. In Indonesia, religious moderation occupies the middle ground in the midst of diversity. Moderation can be shown by not using violence to impose one's will, being tolerant, and accepting the existence of others. Religious moderation is the concept of wasathiyah Islam, which refers to an inclusive Islamic way of life or an open religious attitude. Moderate Islam (wasathiyah) tries to find a middle ground when looking at a problem and finding a solution. Regardless of ethnicity, tradition, culture and religion, it is oriented towards islahiyah (good deeds) based on tradition, willing to listen to each other. Moreover, learning from each other to exercise the ability to control and overcome the differences between them without compromising the Islamic teachings they believe in.

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