

The Religious Moderation Empowerment for Islamic Disciples at Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School Semarang Regency

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Abstract

The aims of this research are: 1. To find out how religious moderation is viewed at the Al-Ittihad Poncol Islamic Boarding School in 2022. 2. To find out how to strengthen religious moderation for students at the Al-Ittihad Poncol Islamic Boarding School in 2022. This research is a descriptive-qualitative research type field research. Primary data sources are kiai, administrators, and students of Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School. Secondary data sources include documents related to the Islamic boarding school curriculum, documentation of santri activities, and documentation of santri activities in the community. Data collection through interviews and non-participant observation. Data checking uses triangulation of sources and techniques. This research shows that the view of religious moderation at the Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School can be seen in several aspects of moderation, including: 1. respect for differences in non-violent dialogue to address differences. 2. local culture, countries, and civilizations are not threats but potentials that can provide benefits to Islam. The practice of religious moderation at the Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school is: 1. internalization of social values through the curriculum and reformulation of social piety; 2. prioritizing participatory dialogical methods; 3. eliminating the dichotomy of knowledge; 4. review of deviant groups carried out by scientific discussion using Mu'tabar basics; 5. encouraging scientific thinking processes and preserving the holy books; 6. proportional positioning of theory and context and avoiding non-essential debates; 7. the need for tajdid; and 8. positive coexistence of religion and the state.

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Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah: 1. Untuk mengetahui bagaimana pandangan moderasi beragama di Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittihad poncol tahun 2022. 2. Untuk mengetahui bagaimana implementasi penguatan moderasi beragama bagi santri Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittihad Poncol tahun 2022. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif deskripsif berjenis field research. Sumber data primer adalah kiai, pengurus dan santri Pesantren Al-Ittihad. Sumber data sekunder meliputi dokumen terkait kurikulum pesantren, dokumentasi kegiatan santri serta dokumentasi kegiatan kegiatan santri di masyarakat. Pengumpulan data melalui wawancara dan observasi nonpartisipan. Pengecekan data menggunakan triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa pandangan moderasi beragama di Pondok Pesantren Al-Ittihad dapat dilihat dari beberapa aspek kemoderatan meliputi: 1. Penghormatan terhadap perbedaan dialog nirkekerasan untuk menyikapi perbedaan. 2. Budaya lokal, negara hingga peradaban bukan ancaman melainkan potensi yang dapat memberikan kemanfaatan Islam. Praktik moderasi beragama di pondok pesantren Al-Ittihad yakni: 1. internalisasi nilai-nilai sosial melalui kurikulum dan reformulasi kesalehan sosial, 2. mengutamakan metode dialogis partisipatif, 3. menghilangkan dikotomi ilmu, 4. peninjauan kelompok menyimpang dilakukan dengan cara diskusi secara ilmiah menggunakan dasar yang mu'tabar, 5. mendorong proses berpikir ilmiah, pelestarian kitab-kitab turats, 6. proporsional mendudukan teori dan konteks, dan menghindari perdebatan nonesensial, 7. perlu adanya tajdid, dan 8. koeksistensi positif agama dan negara.

Kata Kunci : Pesantren; Islam; Pendidikan; Moderasi; Moderat.

A. Introduction

Islamic dormitory plays an important role in preparing moderate

Islamic disciples with excellent social interaction and preaching capability in the community. The Islamic disciples

will encounter various dynamics. Therefore, they must receive moderate religious values within the Islamic dormitory education and teaching. The graduates of Islamic dormitories should have a balanced reasoning, both realistic-religious reasoning and critical reasoning to use comprehensive and credible information. Therefore, Islamic dormitories must provide and prioritize multicultural and adaptive values to accommodate moderate values, receive changes and modernization, and respect the relevant traditions (Nurdin & Syahrotin, 2019).

Islamic dormitory schools must maximize the strategic roles to accompany the disciples about the importance of religious teaching substances and religious-textual contextualization as the moderating pillars (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The original and natural teachings of Islam are flexible, polite, and civilized. Therefore, the disciples must receive these matters (Saifuddin, 2016). The encounter between liberalism and fundamentalism paradigms leads to a competition for the "truth about Iman and Islam" and to get a specific position in

Islamic dormitories (Tasmuji, 2011). A further discussion is important to understand and explain the encounter between these paradigms.

The roles of Islamic dormitories to teach religious modernization are observable in various researches. Research titled "Mengurai Model Pendidikan Pesantren Berbasis Moderasi Agama dari Klasik ke Modern" mentions the review of *turat* books as an important matter to empower the moderate attitudes of Islamic disciples (Abdullah, 2019). Another study titled "Pesantren: the miniature of moderate Islam in Indonesia" explains that Islamic boarding schools have resembled the miniatures of Indonesian Muslims since the sixteenth century. The schools demonstrate a moderate attitude while being acculturated with the local cultures and religions. The books of *Diraasah Al-Islamiyyah* or *Kitab Kuning* are the primary taught book for Islamic disciples at Islamic boarding schools. The book teaches about moderate and tolerant attitudes. The examples of the books are "Anwar Al- Tanzil wa Asrar Al-Ta'wil" Abu Said al-Baidhawi (w. 691 H/1191 M) and "Tafsir al-Jalalain" Jalal al-Din

al-Mahalli (w. 864 H/1459 M) and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (w. 911 H/1505 M) (Ni'am, 2015).

Research about religious modernizations at Islamic boarding schools mostly emphasizes the teaching material substances, such as the books of *Diraasah Al-Islamiyyah* and the exemplariness of the *Kiai*, the Islamic religious figures. Therefore, research with an emphasis on religious moderation empowerment in a real, practical, and comprehensive manner for the Islamic disciples is important.

The religious practices of the Islamic disciples may not be ideal as found in the books. Islamic boarding schools may also encounter some risks, such as the birth of radicalism. This matter threatens the religious moderation. Radical disciples are born from Islamic boarding schools with intellectual networks from the Eastern. However, some other factors may also influence the birth of radical disciples (Farida, 2015). Abdul Malik, in the research titled "Kultur pendidikan pesantren dan radikalisme," found the value shifts in various Islamic boarding school models into radical values (Malik et al., 2016).

The indications are observable from the cultural shifts of the Islamic boarding schools, such as the assessment instruments, the systems, the processes, and the traditions of the Islamic boarding schools. The physical behavioral changes, the implementations of certain symbols, and related matters to radicalism ideology are observable in the aspects of motivation, *jihad* definition and the derivation actions, the realizations of the faith, the enthusiasm, the intention, the concepts of beneficial natures, and the concepts of reasoning.

Radicalism may penetrate various Islamic boarding schools. Alfi Qonita Badi'ati, in research titled "Santri, Jihad, dan Radikalisme Beragama," found the seeds of radicalism at most Islamic boarding school types (*salaf*, *khalaf*, and both of them) in Semarang (Badi'ati, 2020). The researchers found radicalism in the understanding. However, some of them had indications of radical actions. The influence of radicalism against the Islamic disciples occurs due to various factors, such as the types of boarding schools and curriculum, the influences of the *Kiai*, the educational models, the

reading materials, and the environmental situations of the disciples.

One of the Islamic boarding schools with a clear commitment toward religious moderation is Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, Poncol, Semarang Regency. The Islamic boarding school assertively holds the principle of “*khairul umuri awsathuha*,” meaning that the excellent matters are those in the middle or moderate position. Therefore, moderate attitudes become the primary attention of the Islamic boarding school. The realization of the attitudes requires comprehensive review and interpretation based on the Islamic principle of the gift and mercy for all universes. This principle believes that discussion and cooperation are important to determine various practical problems of religious life in the community. The actions of the principles include direct participation to interact with plural religious practices (The interview result with the division chief of the boarding school, December 29, 2021). Based on the results, a comprehensive review of moderating religious perception at Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, Poncol; and the

implementation of religious moderation for the disciples.

B. Research Method

This descriptive qualitative research applied a field research design. Qualitative research attempts to understand a phenomenon or the investigated research subject. Then, the research describes and discusses the data with sentences based on a certain context with various scientific methods (Moleong, 2017). Descriptive research explains the research subjects and facts briefly and naturally (Barlian, 2016).

This research describes the religious moderation empowerment found in the Islamic disciples of Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, Poncol, Semarang Regency. The researchers focused on the descriptions of the influence of the curriculum and the cultures of the Islamic boarding schools toward the moderation attitudes of the disciples. The researchers observed moderate attitudes on the aspects of enthusiasm toward the religious-interpretation variety problems, the definitions of *jihad* and the derivative actions, the concept of *amar ma'ruf nahi*

munkar, and the definitions of justice and balance in religious life. On the other hand, the researchers observed the moderation attitude empowerment based on the aspects of the *kyai* and the disciple figures; and the environment of the Islamic boarding school.

C. Results and Discussion

The Perspectives of Religious Moderation at Al-Ittihad Islamic Boarding School, Poncol

Being a moderate Muslim means to live in the middle or moderate positions. This attitude indicates that Muslims are ready to compromise and find acceptable solutions without any anarchy attitudes (Akhmadi, 2019). This notion is relevant to the principles of Islamic boarding schools to respect religious diversity with the principle of *mu'tabar* or consideration. The *Kiai*, *Fakih*, argues that any deviation or different argument requires further proper discussion to solve the problems without any harm (Interview Result, June 2020). The moderation attitude emphasizes justice in considering problems (Hamdi et al., 2021). Some matters require responses

but some others must be ignored and accepted as fates.

The main idea of moderation is - to seek universal shared values instead of asserting the differences. Islamic religion teaches about universal values, justice, and balance. These features are relevant to the era's development (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The *Kiai*, *Fakih*, explains that religion teaches goodness within the humanitarian feature, *basyariyah*. Thus, all social problems will have solutions. However, this common shared idea does not apply to the practices of worshiping, *ubudiyah*. Therefore, the disciples must learn about various religious perspectives within plural life and the correct tolerant attitude. Being moderate in religious life provides a solution to managing internal disputes of Islamic people and realizing a harmonious religious life (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

The underlying principle of religious moderation is justice and balance, the divinity and the, the revelation and the reasoning (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). The truth of the revelation must go along with proportional reasoning. Al-Ittihad Islamic

boarding school has the principle that revelation must go along with reasoning. Revelation is the primary matter that requires proper reasoning to understand. On the other hand, reasoning should not neglect the guidance from the revelation. Individual reasoning represents the art of practicing the revelation (Fakih, Interview Result, June 11, 2022).

The moderation perception of religion at the Islamic boarding school was observable from various aspects, such as national commitment, tolerance, anti-harm action, and accommodation toward the local culture.

The National Commitment

The Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, Poncol, emphasizes the collaboration and cooperation between religion and the state (Aqil and Khalid, Interview, May 28, 2022). The effort of realizing the national commitment requires many elemental empowerment, such as 1) curriculum and learning process, 2) monitoring and activity outside of the educational curriculum, and 3) the policy of the educational institution (Maghfuri, 2019). The curriculum and the learning process at the Islamic boarding school applied the

Sunni theologians. These theologians commonly perceive going against a legitimate government as something *haram*.

The monitoring system outside of the educational curriculum of the Islamic boarding school encourages the disciples to access formal education at schools or universities. The Kiai, Fakih, did not underestimate the importance of formal education. Moreover, he is a graduate of the science study program. The boarding school also trusted the formal educational system. This matter indicates the commitment and trust toward the nation and the state.

Tolerance

The Islamic boarding school educated the disciples to have interactive capability with the community, to learn differences, and to get excellent things from the differences. The Kiai, Fakih, argues that each religion teaches goodness with the humanitarian feature, *basyariyah*. Thus, various social problems will have solutions. The social dynamic problems of religions in the community should not only be accepted but responded to properly. Some matters must be responded to but not the other

matters. The boarding school respects differences if the differences have specific-considerable backgrounds, *mu'tabar*. In any Islamic boarding school with deviating *manhaj* and clear deviations, a discussion is important to solve the problems without any harm. This action resembles the action of moderate tolerance. Being tolerant does not mean - Islam is permissive. The Islamic teachings teach the believers some tolerable matters and those not tolerable (Asrori, 2020: 17).

The Anti-Harm

The Kiai, Fasih, explains that each religion teaches goodness based on its humanitarian nature. Thus, all social problems will have solutions. The Kiai also emphasizes the importance of dialog to manage differences. The boarding school also demonstrated anti-conflict action while having *mu'amalah* in the community. The boarding school also disagreed with violent and harmful actions to deal with differences. However, the educational process for the disciples still adopted physical actions, such as punishment by spaying sewer water or trouncing the disciples. These physical actions must receive specific

attention because violence or harmful actions will only lead to other harmful actions. Therefore, these actions will be difficult to end (Azra, 2020: 18). The violent tradition will be only inherited through future generations so this matter should be eradicated. The ideology of without any violence while preaching becomes the indicator of a moderate attitude (Kemenag, 2019: 8). The underlying idea is - violence goes against the teaching of Islam (Syam, 2018: 139).

The Accommodation of Local Culture

The disciples of the Islamic boarding schools conditionally participated in the religious activities of the community. The disciples also participated in various social activities, such as community service, *sinoman*, or even *walimah* events (Khafid, Interview Results, May 28, 2022). These findings indicate the accommodative culture of the boarding school toward the local culture with the condition of no principles against religious principles. Generally, many traditional boarding schools establish excellent relationships with the local cultures. Since the 16th century, Islamic boarding schools have demonstrated a moderate attitude while

being acculturated with local cultures and religions (Ni'am, 2015).

The Implementation of Religious Moderate Empowerment for Islamic Disciples at Al-Ittihad Boarding School, Poncol

Boarding schools must provide and develop adaptive-multicultural values to accommodate the moderate values, to be transparent about the changes and modernization, and to respect the old-relevant traditions (Nurdin & Syahrotin, 2019: 84). The religious moderation empowerment at the boarding school applied these actions:

(1) internalization of the social values with the implementation of curriculum and reformulation of social piety as the realizations of Islamic teaching values. The boarding school frequently involved the disciples in community activities with direct worshiping practices or non-worshiping practices. Thus, the roles of the theologians are not only following the NU-specific religious traditions, such as *yasinan* and *tahlilan* but also community service or *sinoman* (collaboration within the *walimah* event). The social interaction of the disciples with the

community would habituate the disciples with the reality and dynamics of practices of religion in a plural community. This interaction also could loosen the gaps between individuals with religious studies and those common individuals. This situation will create equality.

Social value internalization, such as *muhabbah*, *ijtima'iyah*, *muswah*, *'adalah*, and *ukhuwah* is important to create open-minded and inclusive education (Dakir & Anwar, 2019). Interacting with the community and understanding reality will educate the disciples to be fair while preaching and prioritizing the *ukhuwah*. Being fair within the scope of preaching refers to being proportional and aware of the community situation for keeping the *ukhuwah*.

(2) The boarding school applied the participative-dialog learning. Discussion and collaboration at the Islamic boarding school require dialog to understand the religion and to make the disciples aware that religion is not merely a dogmatic matter. The practices of discussing and collaborating allowed the individuals to share their arguments and opinions. The Kiai's opinions within the large

discussion forum are not something absolute. If the discussion has different results from the Kiai's understanding but the result has firm legal standing or is based on Islamic teaching, the Kiai must review his understanding. The disciples' devotions toward the Kiai must have some limitations to avoid illiterate actions. Saifuddin taklid explains that disciples' devotion to the Kiai is the basic element that must be changed (Saifuddin, 2016). The Islamic teachings do not instruct individuals to express exaggerated compliments or hatred (Shallabi, 2020: 51-53).

(3) The efforts of loosening the dichotomous paradigm between knowledge of religion and science The Kiai, Faki, explains that Al-Qur'an has all answers for all problems while human reasoning and revelation from Allah must go along together (The Interview Result, June 11, 2022). This matter indicates no gaps in knowledge and science. Al-Qur'an provides the non-religious problems although humans may not realize the specific answers in the Al-Qur'an. Surah An-Nahl, Ayat 43, says that Allah commands humans to ask the experts if they know nothing.

This open-minded behavior will protect individuals from extreme behaviors that assume all problems are solved. The fact shows many problems require solutions based on the references of Al-Qur'an, Sunnah, and the agreed and relevant principles by the theologians (Shihab, 2019: 111-113).

(4) The Kiai, Faki, explains that the monitoring system should include scientific discussion with *mu'tabar* principle (The Interview Results, June 11, 2022). The finding is relevant to the Islamic principle that allows the proper attitude to take sympathy and prevent conflict, *mudarah*; and to prohibit *mudahanah* or being weak and soft to get the mortal fortune (Shihab, 2019: xiv). Being moderate means that the individuals attempt to solve conflicts and avoid conflicts. Any deviating groups should not be responded to with conflicts or violence.

(5) The encouragement to think scientifically based on the preserved *turats* books as the source of knowledge. The Islamic boarding school used the standard books of traditional Islamic boarding schools, such as Alfiyah Ibnu Malik, Waraqat, Fathul Qarib, Jawahirul

Kalamiyah, Tafsir Al-Ibriz, Safinatun Najah, Tuhfatul Athfal, Jurumiyah, Imrithi, Qawa'idul Imla', Tashrif, Fathul Mu'in and Ta'limul Muta'alim. The books, especially the *fiqh* book, become the reference for promoting discussion to prevent free-trivial debates. The argument differences are acceptable based on clear references and considerable standing points.

(6) The proportionality between theory and context to prevent non-essential debates. The Kyai, Fakhri, asserts that the principal of the boarding school is - respecting the differences with the condition of having underlying and considerable bases, *mu'tabar*. This principle saves the disciples from trivial debates with no adequate arguments. These types of debates only hinder the preaching effort and the social interaction of the disciples. The Kiai also argues that being moderate is being literate about what things are exaggerating and what things are extremely slacking. Thus, being moderate is - responding to various matters at a moderate level.

(7) The Kiai, Fakhri, perceives the importance of *tajdid* or finding out the novelty inside of Islamic teaching and

outside of the *sharia* to realize the gifted Islamic teaching for all universes, *rahmatan lil alamin*. The principle of avoiding something bad or *madharat* is important and must be based on *fiqh al maqashid*, *fiqh al-awlawiyat*, *fikh al-muwazanat*, and *fiqh al-ma'alat*.

(8) The boarding school had no negative attitude about the relationship between Islam and Western things. The Kiai, Fakhri, explains that Muslims must have the capability to direct and collaborate their reasoning styles and the Western technological advancement for the Muslim world and share Islamic teachings. The Kiai also has positive attitudes toward other religions. The Kiai believes all matters within humanitarian matters have a solution with Islamic teachings.

(9) The positive consistency of religion and the state Curriculum and the learning process at the Islamic boarding school applied the Sunni theologians. These theologians commonly perceive going against a legitimate government is something *haram*. The intimacy between the boarding school and the local religious-nationalist-community organizations indicates the commitment

to religious attitudes toward national values and patriotism

The religious moderation for the disciples applied to various matters. However, the efforts might also encounter opposite actions, the opposite position against the moderation principle, such as physical punishment. In this research, the researchers found the punishment to be - spraying the sewer water. The ideology of no violence and no-harm while preaching indicates the moderate characteristic of Islam (Kemenag, 2019: 9). Any education with physical violence could make the disciples rationalize the violence for the righteous things.

The seniority practices and power abuses were observable at the boarding school. For example, the seniors instructed the juniors to wash their clothes and dishes. These inappropriate actions should be avoided as the effort of providing excellent exemplariness and monitoring the order. Seniority is also irrelevant with a moderate attitude to equality principle (*musawah*) and justice (*'adalah*).

D. Conclusion

The religious moderation perception at Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, Poncol, was observable in the aspects of moderation, such as the respect for practice differences, religious perceptions, and anti-violent dialog to respond to the differences. The Kiai, Faikh, has the principle that all differences will have a solution, including religious differences. The solution will be on the humanitarian principle. The local culture, national culture, and civilization, or even the Western things are not threats against the religion but they potentially bring the benefit of sharing the Islamic teachings.

The moderation practices at the Islamic boarding school include some matters, such as 1) the internalization of social values based on the curriculum and reformulation about social piety as the realizations of Islamic teaching values, 2) the primary method - the participative dialog method in learning, 3) the effort of eradicating the dichotomous paradigm between the knowledge of religion and the science, 4) the monitoring system against the

deviating groups by discussing scientifically based on the principle of *mu'tabar*, 5) the encouragement of scientific thinking process by persevering the *turats* books as the source of knowledge, 6) the proportional position between theories and contexts without being trapped within non-essential debates, 7) the efforts of *tajdid* from the Islamic teaching outside of *sharia* matter, 8) the positive behaviors and actions toward the relationship problems between Islam and the Western things, and 9) the positive consistency of the religion and the state.

The researcher recommends future researchers a discussion about physical punishment found at Al-Ittihad Islamic boarding school, such as spraying the sewer water or trouncing the disciples. Any punishment with physical violence does not go in line with the moderate principle of the religion because Islamic teaching prevents harm and violence while preaching.

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