

# THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN IMPROVING SOCIAL HARMONY IN MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

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**Abstrak:** This community service is carried out with the aim of raising public awareness of the importance of religious moderation in creating and improving social harmony in a multicultural society. Religious moderation refers to an approach that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect between individuals with different beliefs. The purpose of this community service is to educate and provide an understanding of the role of religious moderation in building social harmony and reducing conflict in a society with diverse backgrounds. The results of the community service activities show that religious moderation plays an important role in preventing inter-religious conflict, supporting an inclusive society, and preventing religious radicalization. Religious moderation also contributes to increasing the ability for dialogue and cooperation between communities of different beliefs. In addition, activities such as religious moderation workshops and eco-enzyme training held by UIN Walisongo Semarang strengthen social relations, promote moderation values, and teach new skills that are beneficial to the environment. Religious moderation is able to create a harmonious and inclusive society by respecting differences, and providing significant benefits through collaboration in social and environmental activities.

**Kata kunci:** Religious moderation, tolerance, multicultural society

## Introduction

The importance of religious moderation in creating and enhancing social harmony in a multicultural society. Role is a set of behaviors expected to be possessed by a person who has a position in society, a role can also be interpreted as a person's duties or obligations in a job and business.

According to KBBI, a role can also mean a playwright or a movie player. Religious moderation refers to an approach that emphasizes balance and tolerance in religion. Religious moderation can be interpreted as tolerance between citizens of different beliefs so as not to cause conflict and mutual respect and so on.

Increasing social harmony in a multicultural society, namely by holding socialization about understanding social harmony in a society with different religious

backgrounds, so that by holding this socialization, it can be understood by the community and they can respect each other.

### **Methodology of Community Service**

Community service activities are carried out with the aim of educating the community about the role of religious moderation in building social harmony in a multicultural society. The focus of the activity is to increase public understanding of complex social phenomena related to religious moderation and its impacts in a society with diverse backgrounds.

Before the implementation of the activity, the implementer will prepare the material to be delivered by way of official documents, such as government regulations related to religious harmony, reports from institutions that handle multiculturalism issues, and literature related to religious moderation. Based on secondary data sources derived from documents, books, journals, and previous research reports that are relevant to the topic of religious moderation and social harmony in multicultural societies, a Real Work Lecture activity was carried out with the theme of the Role of Religious Moderation in Improving Social Harmony in Multicultural Societies.

### **Discussion-Results**

According to Sinaga,<sup>1</sup> religious moderation is understood as a view, attitude, and action that avoids extremism and discrimination when someone expresses their religious beliefs. Referring to Nurdin<sup>2</sup>, moderation in Arabic is known as wasath or wasathiyah, which has a similar meaning to tawassuth (middle), i'tidal (fair), and tawazun (balanced). People who practice the principle of wasathiyah can be called wasith. The term wasathiyah in Arabic also means the best choice. Whatever term is used, they all refer to the same meaning, namely justice, in this case meaning choosing a middle ground position between various extreme choices. The word wasith has been

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<sup>1</sup> M.L Sinaga, "Religious Moderation: Current Public Attitudes and Expressions of Religions in Indonesia". *Journal of Society and Culture*, 24 (3), 2022, 333-344

<sup>2</sup> F Nurdin, "Religious Moderation According to the Qur'an and Hadith". *Al Mu'ashirah Scientific Journal*, 18 (1) 2021, 59-70.

absorbed into Indonesian as referee, which has three meanings, namely mediator or intermediary (for example in trade or business), mediator or peacemaker in disputes and leader in a match

Farihah,<sup>3</sup> et al. stated that religious moderation in Islam is rooted in maqosidu sharia, namely the values of goodness that can be adjusted to current conditions. Therefore, society needs to use knowledge that is continuously updated according to the science of ushul fiqh by paying attention to the Qur'an and hadith. According to Akhmadi,<sup>4</sup> cultural diversity (multicultural) is a natural phenomenon that occurs when various cultures, individuals, and groups with different cultural behaviors, ways of life, and specifications interact with each other. This diversity includes aspects of culture, family background, religion, and ethnicity that interact with each other in Indonesian society. Referring to Ridlwan, et al. (2023), Islamic teachings support the dimension of multiculturalism by emphasizing that Islam is a religion that spreads compassion to the whole world. This is reflected in the nature of Allah, namely Ar-Rahman, who gives compassion to all creatures, both obedient and disobedient (QS Al Fatihah {1}: 3).

In relation to social harmony in cultural societies, religious moderation plays a role in strengthening harmony and reducing conflict, which is a major factor in maintaining balance amidst differences in religious beliefs. There are several reasons why religious moderation plays a crucial role in this situation. First, religious moderation helps prevent inter-religious conflict and violence. When individuals and religious communities are moderate, they tend to be more open to dialogue, understanding, and collaboration with people from different religious backgrounds, which reduces the potential for conflict and increases the opportunity for productive dialogue.

Second, religious moderation also supports the development of an inclusive society. When individuals celebrate their beliefs moderately, they are more likely to engage in social, economic, and political life together with individuals. Third, religious

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<sup>3</sup> Farihah, RK, Ritonga, D., & Masykur. *Awareness of Religious Moderation in the World of Islamic Education* (Bogor: Guapedia, 2020)

<sup>4</sup> A. Akhmadi, "Religious Moderation in Indonesia's Diversity". *Journal of Religious Education and Training*, 13 (2), 2019, 45-55.

moderation plays an important role in preventing religious radicalization and extremism. As explained by Saumantri,<sup>5</sup> religious moderation can appreciate differences and encourage dialogue between different groups, as well as reject violence and religious extremism. Individuals who live with the values of moderation tend to be more immune to extremist propaganda and terrorism, act as a counterbalance to extreme thinking in their communities and help prevent the spread of destructive ideologies. Fathurrohman,<sup>6</sup> states that overall, religious moderation contributes to the formation of a harmonious society, where every individual feels respected and accepted regardless of their religious beliefs.

In the Community Service Program that has been carried out, a religious moderation workshop and eco-enzyme making training were held with the theme "Creative and Moderate in Welcoming Golden Indonesia 2024" which was attended by 25 participants. The religious moderation workshop activity provides various significant benefits for the community. The first benefit is increasing the understanding of tolerance, where participants gain in-depth insight into the principles of religious moderation and the importance of respecting different beliefs, thus creating an attitude of mutual respect. As explained by Kibtiyah and Erna,<sup>7</sup> that the attitude of tolerance, equality and cooperation of religious communities in society are values of religious moderation which are currently the main values in efforts to strengthen the unity of the Indonesian nation. The second benefit is reducing conflict; by understanding and implementing religious moderation, the community can reduce the potential for conflict and tension that arises due to differences in beliefs. The third benefit is improving dialogue skills. This workshop teaches effective communication and

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<sup>5</sup> T. Saumantri, "Actualization of Religious Moderation in Social Media". *Journal of Religious Moderation*, Vol. 03, No. 1, 2023, 64-75.

<sup>6</sup> Fathurrohman. "Establishing Social Harmony Through the Implementation of Religious Moderation." *Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars*, 2023, 559-564.

<sup>7</sup> M. Kibtiyah & S. Erna, "Attitudes of Tolerance, Equality, and Cooperation Between Religious Communities in Realizing the Values of Religious Moderation in Youth in Waikabubak District, West Sumba Regency, East Nusa Tenggara." *Journal of Education and Training*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 27-39.

dialogue skills, facilitating constructive interactions between individuals and groups from different religious backgrounds.



Picture1. Students of the Community Service Program of UIN Walisongo in West Harjowinangun Village, Tersono District, Batang Regency, Central Java.

The fourth benefit is building cooperation, by promoting the values of moderation, the workshop helps build harmonious cooperation between various religious communities, strengthening social solidarity. As explained by Syamsurijal et al (2022), religious moderation is one of the programs that is considered serious by the government to build a harmonious religious life in the nation and state. The fifth benefit is developing inclusive leadership, where participants, especially community leaders, can develop skills in leading with inclusivity, strengthening their role in creating a harmonious environment. The sixth benefit is overcoming radicalization, the workshop helps participants understand and avoid extremism, thereby reducing the risk of radicalization and the spread of destructive ideologies.

The next benefit is increasing social awareness. This workshop raises awareness of the importance of diversity and moderation in social life, encouraging people to be more active in promoting social harmony. In addition, religious moderation workshops are able to empower individuals, where participants get tools and strategies to become agents of change in their communities, promoting the values of moderation in their surroundings. Finally, it is able to encourage collaborative initiatives that generate new ideas and collaborative projects involving various groups, thus strengthening relationships and cooperation between them. With these benefits,

religious moderation workshops play an important role in creating a more harmonious and inclusive society.



Picture 2. Religious Moderation Workshop and Eco-enzyme Training Activities at the Harjowinangun Barat Village Hall, Tersono District, Batang Regency, Central Java

In addition to the religious moderation workshop, there is also eco-enzyme training, referring to Widyastuti,<sup>8</sup> Eco-enzyme is the result of fermenting organic waste, such as fruits and vegetables, with the addition of brown sugar or molasses. This process converts organic waste into value-added products that are useful for the community, such as household cleaners, natural fertilizers, and effective pesticides. Meanwhile, eco-enzyme making training, in relation to religious moderation, provides a number of positive benefits. The first benefit is Strengthening Social Bonds, joint activities in making eco-enzymes can strengthen social relationships between individuals from various religious backgrounds, supporting the creation of a harmonious and tolerant environment. The next benefit is Educating on Shared Values, this training teaches the values of sustainability and environmental responsibility that can be linked to the principles of religious moderation, such as shared responsibility and respect for life. Finally, the benefit is Fostering Collaboration, which involves participants from various religious backgrounds in joint projects, which support religious moderation by strengthening cooperation between communities.

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<sup>8</sup> S. Widyastuti, Sukarjati, Jumali, & IM Bagus, *Eco Enzymes Theory and Application* (Malang: CV Azka Pustaka, 2022).

Thus, eco-enzyme production training not only provides environmental benefits but also plays a role in promoting religious moderation through collaboration and understanding between communities.

## **Conclusion**

From the description above, it can be concluded that religious moderation is an action or view that avoids discrimination in expressing religious beliefs. This includes the principle of balance and justice in believing in a religion, belief or regional culture. In Islam, religious moderation is based on maqosidu sharia or values of goodness that must be adjusted to current conditions. When viewed from its social harmony, religious moderation can strengthen harmony between religious communities and reduce ongoing conflicts between them. Social harmony between communities in religious communities will also be established if this religious moderation is implemented directly when in society. To realize these good things, students at Walisongo State Islamic University, Semarang held the workshop.

In addition to discussing religious moderation, the workshop also brought up the topic of Eco-enzyme. Eco-enzyme is the result of fermenting organic waste, such as fruits and vegetables, with the addition of brown sugar or molasses. Strengthening Social Bonds is the first objective of this workshop which is expected to strengthen relations between communities with different backgrounds. Educating on Shared Values, is a follow-up benefit of religious moderation, namely the emergence of a sense of responsibility and respect for life. Fostering Collaboration, the existence of cooperation between communities with different backgrounds is expected to strengthen understanding between religious communities.

After this workshop, it is hoped that the community will be able to respect each other and strengthen attitudes of tolerance between religious communities that have different backgrounds, and will also be able to utilize waste and turn it into more useful items that can become new business opportunities.

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