

The Practice of Religious Moderation Based on Theo-anthropocentric in Indonesian Islamic Boarding Schools: A Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

Religious moderation was an important value in the life of modern society. The article aimed to analyze the practice and implications of religious moderation in Indonesian Islamic boarding schools based on theo-anthropocentric values. This research was qualitative field research with a phenomenological approach. The source of the research data was Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia and taken by representatives of the regions of East Java and Southeast Sulawesi as one of the largest Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. The research participants were 30 people including, the leaders of the *pesantren*, the caretakers of the *pesantren*, and the students of two major Islamic boarding schools in East Java. Data collection was done by interview technique. The data analyst follows a procedure that begins with data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. This result showed three main keys to the practice of religious moderation. First, the practice of moderation was in harmony between technology or theory and its application in the field. Second, the moderation attitude in the *pesantren* and its environment could prevent the emergence of radicalism. Third, this moderation practice also fosters and forms a tolerant and democratic attitude toward all the differences that exist. The results of this study could serve as a simple guide in applying of diversity moderation in other areas. The existence of limitations on the validity of the data and the depth of analysis was a note that needs to be completed in the future.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Theoanthropocentric, Theoanthropocentric Islamic Education

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INTRODUCTION

The religious moderation discourse is currently getting stronger along with the development of radicalism and acts of religious intolerance in Indonesian society. On the one hand, the values of moderation are increasingly being echoed to maintain pluralistic community relations and interactions. But on the other hand, there are more and more forms of radicalism and intolerance in society. Moderation, besides being a way to counter radicalism, also counteracts liberalism. This understanding is no less dangerous than radicalism. This is allegedly one of the causes is the lack of

understanding and attitude of religious moderation, thus fostering an attitude of intolerance and radicalism. This assumption has sparked the emergence of critical studies on moderation in Islamic education such as Abidin's research which analyzed the values of Islamic moderation in curriculum construction (Abidin, 2019); Ekawati, et al. focus on moderating forms of Islamic higher education curriculum (Ekawati, 2019); research Rusli, et al. also describes the moderation of Islam in the view of the academic community (Rusli, 2019); research Mahrus, et al. examine the moderation of Islamic education in ancient manuscripts (Mahrus, 2019); some even study the moderation of Islamic education on the historical trajectory of Indonesian education, such as Najib's research (Najib, 2018).

It is common for religious moderation to be believed to be able to stimulate the stability of social life (Kawangung, 2019) because it is considered a counter opinion from the two poles of right and left Islamic extremities (Arifinsyah, 2020). These assumptions, or facts, encourage Islamic educational institutions as well as Islamic religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools to initiate mainstream religious moderation, as indicated in the conclusions of Zubaedi's (2020) Fathurochman (2019) research, or Ni'am's (2015) research. This research seems to confirm the dynamics of religious moderation formed by Islamic boarding schools in various regions, including Islamic boarding schools in Jember Regency, East Java. This is because the strong resilience of the *pesantren* can contribute to the development of the community's social life. This resilience arises from socio-religious identity and the ability to adapt one's identity to the identity of the community within the framework of ethnic, cultural, and religious plurality (Abubakar, 2020).

Prevention of radicalism needs to be done together with all existing components. The government, educational institutions or schools, families, communities, and other non-formal institutions are considered capable of contributing to counteracting this radicalism. *pesantren* is one of the units of religious institutions and community education that have a strategic role in overseeing this program (Ma'arif, 2019). Islamic boarding schools are considered to be more positioning religious moderation as a social-ethical value. However, he is often untouched by residents of traditional (*salaf*) and modern (*Khalaf*) *pesantren*, the majority of whom internalize formal religious moderation. As the results of Ahdar's research (2020) and Mohammad's research (2018) concluded that the cultivation of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools tends to be a formality. However, in the field of Islamic boarding school, which is the subject of research, it is slightly different by institutionalizing theological values as a paradigmatic basis for religious moderation actions for all *pesantren* residents. One of the implications is the creation of thoughts, attitudes, and activities that are colored by the values of tolerance, respect, and tolerance, among others.

It must be admitted that the moderation attitude instilled by Islamic religious institutions such as Islamic boarding schools directly impacts the lives of various people in society. According to Hamid's research, religious moderation can bring about a dynamic and tolerant society like the Indonesian people (Hamid, 2018). Also able to create a progressive situation and a generation with a moderate view (Ropi, 2019). This effort is oriented so that attitudes and actions of tolerance for religious harmony emerge to break the growth of religious extremism that can damage the socio-religious balance of society in Indonesia. Indonesian society is a relatively pluralistic society, not only differences in ethnicity, race, and religion but also in culture and social attitudes have differences. Differences in responding to teaching values also provide an

understanding of attitudes and behavior in people's lives. If you treat religious teachings only in a textual way, your religious attitude will also tend to be rigid and absolute. A middle ground needs to be taken to be able to synchronize these conditions. One of the strategies is to strengthen religious moderation in the community.

Based on the construction of the research context, this research focuses on the theological values that are the background for the construction of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools in Jember Regency, East Java. While the research question is how the construction and implications of religious moderation are based on the theological values of Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. Previous research on religious moderation has been widely carried out. Saleh's research focuses on religious moderation in defending the state; through qualitative studies. This research finds that the existence of moderation (religious) Islam can eliminate the dynamics of threats to national defense (Jubba, 2021). Second, Ibrahim's research focuses on the suitability of the principle of religious moderation (Islam) –with the Confucian concept of Zhongyong. This research uses a qualitative methodology with descriptive, comparative, and textual types of analysis. The findings of this research reveal that universal values such as justice, balance –read moderation– and progress can be used to de-radicalize extremists (Ibrahim, 2018). Third, research from Supriyanto, et al. focuses on cultural reservations for the application of religious moderation. This research uses a qualitative approach; and he found the values of religious moderation that emerged in the cultural reservation process, among others: the value of togetherness and cooperation in religious activities (Saa, 2020). Fourth, Soemantri's research focuses on tracking religious moderation messages codified in the *Tanbih Qadiriyah Naqsyabandiyah* text. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with the type of content analysis to data sources. The findings describe that the text contains the values of religious moderation, namely: harmonization of relations between religion and the state; mutual respect; compassion; equality; and prioritizing common interests (Somantri, 2020).

METHODS

The phenomenological approach is the basis for the implementation of this qualitative research. The main research subjects are six Islamic boarding schools in East Java and Southeast Sulawesi. The selection of the location was based on the consideration that the two areas in question were areas that had many Islamic boarding schools in the community and had an influence on religious life in the surrounding area. The participants of this study were 12 people consisting of *pesantren* caregivers, *ustadz*, and students.

The sampling technique uses a purposive approach where the researcher will select informants who are considered to be able to provide their views on the dynamics of reconstructing the value of religious moderation and its implications in society. The data collection techniques were in-depth interviews and participatory observations. The data analysis technique uses the ongoing analysis principle where the analysis is carried out simultaneously and not separately after the data collection process is complete. The special procedure in data analysis uses the Miles and Huberman model (Hashimov, 2015), which consists of four stages, namely data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

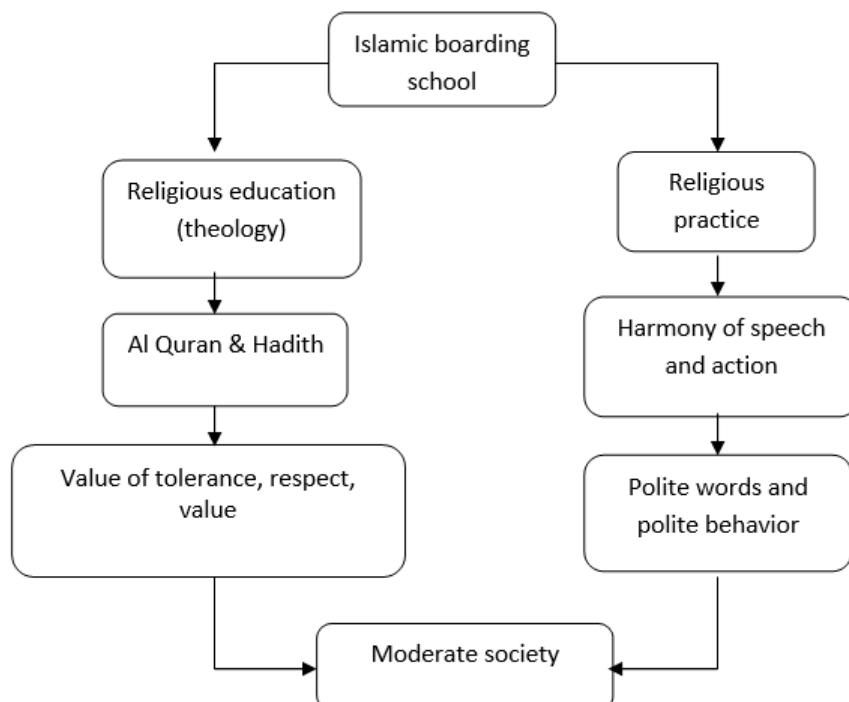
Based on the analysis and research findings, several keywords become the main points of research, namely the construction of exercise moderation based on theological values and the implications or impacts of religious moderation based on theological values that have been taught by the Islamic boarding school are the research subjects.

Construction of Religious Moderation based on Theological Values

The results of an interview with an *ustadz* in East Java were informed that "there are many ways that *pesantren* do to build a society that is by Islamic teachings. One of the emphases on Islamic boarding school education is the value of tolerance. An excerpt from an interview with one of the caregivers of a *pesantren* in Southeast Sulawesi also explains that "The religious values instilled by the *pesantren* emphasize more on the values and human nature created by Allah. Our essence is to live in harmony and peace. So if it is by nature, it violates much hostility, then it is not by the teachings of our religion." Another *ustadz* also added that "one of the important things taught by Islamic boarding schools is that we must respect and respect those around us. We are different but all of us are God's creatures. when we can respect and appreciate each other it will create a sense of working together." The students also as citizens of the community also provide feedback about education in this *pesantren*. One of the students stated that "the *Kiai* and *ustadz* of the *pesantren* usually set an example in responding calmly to conditions that occur in society. The *Kiai* or *ustadz* gives advice not always to take careless actions before we know the root of the problem. It could be that there is friction in the name of religion because of the actions of a single person."

The existence of explanations and descriptions of the results in the field can be understood that the *pesantren*, in this case, represented by the *Kiai* as caregivers and the *ustadz* as teachers, have provided a clear example of the form of religious moderation that must be applied. The values of religious teachings should ideally be the basis for daily behavior. Religion teaches love, mutual respect, and cooperation as creatures created by Allah SWT. The construction and practice of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools can be described in Figure 2.

Figure 1 The cycle of teachings and practices of religious moderation in Islamic



Implications of Religious Moderation Based on Theological Values

The construction and implementation that has been built and implemented in Islamic boarding schools on the values of religious moderation have a significant impact on society. As central figures in Islamic boarding schools, *Ulama* or *Kiai* has a strategic social role. Many people respect and want to follow what has been suggested by the *ulama* or *pesantren Kiai*. One *Kiai* from a boarding school in East Java explained that "Islam is a religion of humanity, where the teachings of the Qur'an and the hadith must be used and applied by humans. So automatically, if you understand the teachings of Islam then yes, we humans should respect and appreciate each other. Do not vilify each other or even quarrel between religious communities. If we think other groups are worse than us, then we automatically vilify Allah SWT who has created everything."

An *ustadz* at one of the *pesantren* also added that "the values of religious teachings must be practiced in society. If you can implement it, it will grow a society that is *Baldatun Toyyibatun Warrobbun Ghafur*, a society that is prosperous, safe and peaceful and able to carry out its functions as servants of Allah and *Khalifah* or world leaders" (see QS. Saba' verse 15). Another *ustadz* added that "Islamic boarding schools usually have a very large influence on the surrounding environment, so if for example the *pesantren*, especially the *Kiai*, teach and practice the values of religious teachings, especially about the meaning of humans as social beings, the value of *muamalah*, cooperation, mutual respect for others. then the community will follow. Socially it will automatically form a moderate society".

The findings above imply that in this modern era, as the world and society develop, deviant forms of behavior appear in social life. Radicalism and religious intolerance are examples of this. This phenomenon is supported by the research of Azizah (2021), that more than the last two decades, especially in Indonesia, the Islamic radicalism movement has increasingly burst. This is indicated by acts of terrorism, both small and large scale. Also mentioned in the research of Muthohirin (2015), the emergence of the existence of pages on social media which was deliberately made to promote the ideology of violence, utterances of hatred, the establishment of an Islamic state, and blasphemy to products originating from the West. This phenomenon could be due to a rigid understanding of religious texts. This narrow understanding is then practiced in real life in the community and then creates friction and conflict. Indeed, this is like a statement in Nashohahi's research (2021) that this thought sees that Islam is a religion of text and constant, not accepting changes and new things in its teachings, especially in *aqidah*, worship, law and *muamalat*. *Pesantren*, as a religious and educational institution has an important role in teaching and forming a more moderate society. Theological values can be practiced more broadly, comprehensively, and dynamically. Religion is not only related to the law of *halal* and *haram* or heaven and hell but also teaches the quiet life of *muamalah*, namely activities that regulate the lives of fellow human beings both religiously, socially, economically, or otherwise. In addition, at other levels of education, it has also developed and implemented the moderation of religion as is concluded by Jamaludin and Daheri's Research. (Jamaluddin, 2022; Daheri, 2022).

An understanding of perfect religious values usually forms a moderate attitude. This condition also encourages scholars or religious leaders who then encourage the concept of Islamic moderation (*wasathiyyah al-Islam*) as an alternative

solution to socio-religious problems. However, there are people who disagree with this concept of moderation because it is considered to sell religion to other parties. Whereas the *wasathiyah* doctrine is one of the characteristics and essence of religious teachings. This word has at least three meanings, among others: first, it means middle; second, meaning fair; and third, meaning the best. These three meanings do not mean that they stand alone or are not related to each other because the attitude of being in the middle often reflects a fair attitude and the best choice.

In this framework, it is clear that moderation is a middle ground between two opposing and/or opposing parties or parties (camps). The meaning of the signs regarding moderation is quite varied, which cannot be separated from the religious understanding and attitudes of each *ulama'*. There are several signs of religious moderation that characterize *pesantren* residents, including a comprehensive understanding of Islam; balance between shari'ah provisions and changing times; support for peace and respect for human values; recognition of religious, cultural, and political plurality; and recognition of minority rights. In this context, it is necessary to strengthen the attitude of religious moderation. The Indonesian Ministry of Religion itself tries to explain that the strengthening of religious moderation is carried out with three main strategies, namely: first, socializing ideas, knowledge, and understanding of religious moderation to all levels of society; secondly, the institutionalization of religious moderation into binding programs and policies; and third, the integration of the formulation of religious moderation in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020~2024 (Tim, P. K. A, 2019). Therefore, *pesantren* can be positioned as a place for developing religious moderation attitudes through a socio-religious approach in religion and society.

The attitude of moderation in Islamic boarding schools is oriented toward the pattern of forming attitudes or behavior of Muslims rather than characterizing Islam. Because the attitude of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools emphasizes attitude, this form of moderation can also differ from one place to another. In Islamic boarding schools, the attitude of religious moderation includes at least: acknowledging the existence of other parties, having and also practicing a tolerant attitude, respect for differences of opinion, and not forcing one's will using violence (Abdullah, 2021). It is natural for *pesantren* to develop an attitude of religious moderation that is oriented towards humanist values based on Qur'an ethics or humanist-religious moderation (Idris, 2021).

These basic criteria can also be used to characterize moderate *pesantren* residents amid society. Although in practice, there are still differences, especially related to the relationship between religion and social order. In Muslim minority countries, moderate Muslims are people who express Islam in a friendly manner and are willing to coexist peacefully with followers of other religions. They even feel comfortable with the democratic system and/or also within the scope of the separation of politics and religion. Thus, the attitude of religious moderation in *pesantren* can be likened to a clock pendulum that moves from the edge and tends to the center or axis (centripetal), it never stays static. The moderate attitude of Islamic boarding schools is a dynamic condition, and it continues to move because it is a process of continuous struggle that is carried out in people's lives. Religious moderation continues to contest the values on its right and left.

The religious attitude of *pesantren* residents is strongly influenced by two things, namely: reason and revelation; dignified and socialistic dimensions. Alignments that go too far in reason can be considered as extreme left, which often

results in the birth of an attitude of ignoring the text. On the other hand, a literal understanding of a religious text can also lead to a conservative attitude if it only accepts the absolute truth of a religious interpretation. The implication is that other interpretations are considered inconsistent with the "truth" contained in the religious text. This monolithic paradigm of interpretation is not in harmony with the values of religious moderation. Naturally, moderate *pesantren* residents will continue to try to compromise both sides within the anthology dialogical framework. He can move to the left using his wits to relate the text to context, but on the one hand, he does not stay in extreme places. It swings to the right to guide the text while still understanding the context. In this context, the moderation of Islamic boarding schools can be formulated as the basis for determining their religious perspectives, attitudes, and behavior. This means that their dynamic and elastic pattern of self toward the meaning of religious texts is closely related to the moderation attitude of Islamic boarding schools. In more detail, as the conclusion of Wasehudin's research (2021), rational Islamic schools in Lampung integrated the general curriculum and religious curriculum by studying the buku kuning (tarath book), yasinan, tabligh akbar, placement of rooms based on ethnic background, and bahtsul masail activities. So, students have strong thoughts and characteristics of existing differences and views.

Moderate boarding schools in this context are Islamic institutions that have religious understandings that are very relevant in the religious context in all aspects, both religiosity, customs, ethnicity, and the nation itself. Therefore, it is unavoidable if the diversity of religious understanding is a historical fact amid society. One of the causes of diversity is dialectics, text, reality, and/or one's perspective on a position of revelation and reason to solve social problems. As a result, in reality, there will be terms that follow behind the word Islam, such as fundamental Islam, liberal Islam, progressive Islam, moderate Islam, and many other labels (Tambunan, 2019).

Indeed, the construction of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools includes the concepts of *tawassut* (moderate), *tasammuh* (tolerance), *tawazzun* (balance), *justice* (*i'tidal*), and love for the homeland (nationalism). In fact, in an applicative manner, it does not only provide the religious understanding and shape the attitudes of *pesantren* residents, but it is necessary to construct educational and community institutions that answer current problems. The purpose of the *pesantren* is not only to teach religious knowledge but also to produce a cadre of *ulama*, where the *pesantren* prepares students to become pious people in religious knowledge. And guiding the residents of Islamic boarding schools to become human beings with Islamic personalities who are able with their religious knowledge to become Islamic missionaries in the surrounding community through their knowledge and deeds. But at this time it is urgent to shape the attitudes of the *santri* in social life with differences in religion, belief, and understanding in religion, it can be avoided that there are disputes in religion that have an impact on radicalism. The conclusion of the Maskuri research also states that through the education applied, Kyai and Ustadz, as Qudwah Hasanah, internalized the value of justice, balance, harmony, and moderation (Maskuri, 2020).

One of the findings of this research found that the emphasis on Islamic boarding school education in Southeast Sulawesi was the value of tolerance. Meanwhile, the value of religion, nationalism, cooperation, integrity and independence, which is a priority character in the integration of religious moderation values, also needs to be strengthened; this is what has stated by Nashohah in his research (Nashohah, 2021).

Therefore, even using indicators of religious moderation include national commitment; tolerance; non-violence; and accommodating to local culture. These four indicators are still very much in line with the religious moderation attitude of the *pesantren*. This indicator can be used to identify how strong the religious moderation practiced by *pesantren* residents in the community is, and also how much vulnerability they have. These vulnerabilities need to be identified to find appropriate and concrete steps to strengthen religious moderation. National commitment is a very important indicator to see the effectiveness of *pesantren* residents' views, attitudes, and religious practices. Included in this context is the impact of this attitude on loyalty to the basic national consensus, especially on the acceptance of Pancasila as the state ideology. His attitude towards ideological challenges that are contrary to Pancasila and nationalism can be anticipated early on. The de facto fact is that part of the national commitment is acceptance of the principles of a pluralistic nation from a religious or cultural aspect.

This national commitment is important to serve as an indicator of religious moderation because, in the perspective of religious moderation, it can practice religious doctrine massively. And this is in the perspective of nationality, practicing religion in moderation is the same as carrying out obligations as citizens. So fulfilling obligations as a citizen is a form of practicing religious teachings that do not interfere with the rights of others to have beliefs, express their beliefs, and express opinions. Thus, the attitude of religious moderation gives rise to a tolerant attitude which refers to an open, generous, voluntary, and gentle attitude in accepting differences. Tolerance is accompanied by respect, accepting different individuals or communities as part of oneself, and positive thinking.

At this time, the moderation of religion has been formed into the personality of *pesantren* members, which integrates religious attitudes for reason and revelation, dignified and socialist dimensions. The education system of religious moderation based on Theo-Anthropocentric increases the values of Islamic religion and social awareness of the attitude of toleration as an action that contacted *pesantren* students and the community. The implications in the district increase the philosophy of mutual respect and respect for differences in religious beliefs. On the other hand, this contributes to the learning process, creating science integrated with the values of revelation (religion). Both religion and science share the same orientation to achieve the highest truth, namely, God.

However, this research is, of course in the process is still limited, and the writing is still not perfect—lack of extent of research data and the limitations of the validity of the instruments used. Likewise, the depth of the analysis is an important note that needs to be resolved in the future, both for the researchers themselves and the next researcher. The investigation is not only in *pesantren* but also requires an in-depth analysis of how the community responds to the attitudes of *pesantren* students in the social community.

CONCLUSION

Based on the description of the data and data analysis, this research can conclude that the construction of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools arises from the basis of religious textual-spirituality combined with ratio (sense) performance. This combination gave birth to a dialogical pattern of harmony between the text and the context to color the behavior and social actions of the community. Precisely this attitude of religious moderation can prevent *pesantren* residents from behaving radically both in attitude and thought so that the output of *pesantren* can

accept all forms of differences in religion and respect the beliefs believed by others in the community. The moderation attitude of Islamic boarding schools also gives birth to religious behavior that is tolerant and respects differences in society. *Even the religious attitude of the pesantren residents is strongly influenced by two things, namely: reason and revelation; both profanity and socialistic dimensions.* This is what ultimately teaches people to be able to be religious in a comprehensive manner, namely: not only oriented to the theocentric dimension (*habl min Allah*) but also the anthropocentric dimension (*habl min an-nas*).

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