

RELIGIOUS MODERATION AND ITS CHALLENGES IN INDONESIAN EDUCATION: CASE STUDY AT MTSN 1 TRENGGALEK

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Abstrak

This article examines religious moderation in Indonesia, with a focus on students at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) 1 Trenggalek. The study utilizes surveys and data analysis using Power BI. Survey results indicate a high level of religious moderation and tolerance among students. They acquire religious knowledge from various sources, including religious leaders, religious teachers, Quranic teachers (guru/ustadz mengaji), and social media. However, there is a shift in the trend of sources for religious preaching information, with social media platforms like TikTok becoming the primary source. The article also discusses the role of kiai and challenges in maintaining religious moderation in the digital age.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Student, Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has been ranked 37th globally in terms of terrorism cases, with a series of terrorist attacks occurring since the 2000s. Religious diversity in Indonesia has made the issue of terrorism more complex, especially with negative views towards Islam. However, every individual who practices religion has a duty to prevent the growth of

radicalism and global terrorism by working together with the government to ensure a just, prosperous and prosperous society.¹

Indonesian history records attempts to challenge the state ideology based on Pancasila and demands to establish an Islamic state after independence in 1945. In the 1970s to 1980s, there were several attacks on the government and after the fall of the New Order in 1998, these attacks is increasing because terrorist groups are launching their attacks. In the Indonesian parliament, after the fall of the New Order, several parties openly demanded the implementation of Islamic law and Pancasila became the battleground for this demand.²

Religious moderation has become a trending issue in Indonesia in the last five years, with efforts to minimize violence against people of different faiths. One approach to promoting religious moderation is through the concept of Neo-Sufism, which emphasizes spiritual and social truths that can adapt to various religious beliefs while maintaining harmony.³

The government has also promoted the concept of "Islam Nusantara" to strengthen theological-nationalism and moderate religious practices. However, this approach has not been completely successful, and alternative approaches such as spiritual-humanist dialogue have been proposed to build religious moderation in an era of disruption. Education is a pillar in promoting religious moderation, especially among teenagers who are the nation's next generation. One of them is carried out at the State Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTsN) education level.

¹ Lu'lu' Husnul Muthia and M. Falikul Isbah, "‘Poor but Happy’: Life Struggle and the Meaning of Happiness among the Poor in Yogyakarta," *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)* (2022).

² Syaifudin Zuhri, "Religious Moderation in an Eastern Javanese Town," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* (2023).

³ Tutik Nurul Janah and Umdah El Baroroh, "Pluralism in the Fiqh Sosial's Perspective," *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial* (2021).

Schools as educational institutions can play an important role in developing the intellectual and creative potential of students to form humans who have religious spiritual strength, noble character, high personality, intelligence, aesthetics, physical and spiritual health.⁴ A character-based education approach and religious moderation can help create a moral vocabulary that guides society towards a good life in the digital era.⁵

The religious moderation project was also launched by the Ministry of Religion as an effort to strengthen the values of moderation and tolerance among society. This project focuses on four main pillars, namely nationalism, tolerance, non-violence and acceptance of local traditions. However, there are still challenges in maintaining social harmony in Indonesia, especially in dealing with groups that have extreme and intolerant views. Therefore, efforts to increase knowledge and understanding of religious moderation and tolerance among society continue to be carried out.⁶

In the context of a post-secular society, religion is no longer hidden or disappears from the public sphere as happens in a secular society. On the other hand, religion is increasingly visible on the surface and active in the public sphere. José Casanova called this phenomenon the "deprivatization of religion." Religion in the public sphere tries to assume a more significant character, function and role in social and political life.⁷

The sharp distinction between "private" and "public" that adheres to secular society no longer seems to apply. Religion is no longer considered a private matter that must be kept in the private

⁴ Muaz Muaz and Uus Ruswandi, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Islam," *JIP - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* (2022).

⁵ Jasminto Jasminto, "Etika Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama Di Era Digital," *Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars* (2022).

⁶ Zuhri, "Religious Moderation in an Eastern Javanese Town."

⁷ Adam B. Seligman and Jose Casanova, "Public Religions in the Modern World," *Sociology of Religion* (1994).

sphere, but instead, religion plays a more open and active role in the public sphere. This could result in a blending of religion, politics, and culture in a way that may not have occurred before in a secular society.

This research was conducted using a survey based on a questionnaire that focused on students' level of religious moderation and reference sources for religious knowledge among MTsN Negeri 1 Trenggalek students. Power BI is used as an analysis tool. Power BI was chosen because it has an analysis service that provides interactive visualization and adequate business intelligence capabilities as well as a user-friendly interface for creating final reports. The respondents in this study were 148 students with an age range of 12-18 years.

STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Religious moderation is an important concept in building harmony between religious communities which aims to strengthen moderate religious understanding and prevent extremism and conflict based on religion, ethnicity and culture. In religious moderation there are four indicators, namely: loyalty to the state; tolerance attitude; rejection of violence; and the ability to adapt to local culture. These four criteria can provide an idea of the extent of religious moderation applied by individuals in Indonesia as well as their level of vulnerability.⁸

The survey results showed that 101 respondents (69.18%) strongly agreed and 45 respondents (30.82%) agreed with the importance of religious moderation. This support is based on exposure to data on religious knowledge, national commitment, non-violence, and adaptation to local culture. This shows that MTsN 1 Trenggalek has succeeded in creating a conducive environment for the development of religious moderation. A conducive environment is of course also supported by students' religious knowledge. Students'

⁸ Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), h.43.

religious knowledge can influence their academic performance and behavior.

Several studies show that there is a positive correlation between students' religious knowledge and academic performance in Islamic Religious Education and Moral Education.⁹ In addition, students who have higher levels of religious knowledge and moral considerations tend to have lower levels of aggressiveness.¹⁰ However, a study on vocational school students found that there was no significant correlation between students' religious knowledge and their sexual behavior.¹¹ Nevertheless, religious education can have a positive impact on students' academic performance and behavior, but the relationship may vary depending on the context and the specific outcome being measured.

Students' religious knowledge, specifically students' access to religion, from the survey results showed that as many as 96 students (64.86%) obtained religious knowledge from religious figures, 31 students (20.95%) from religious teachers at school, 15 students (10, 14%) from teachers/clerics reading the Koran in the environment, and 6 students (4.05%) from social media/kiai books. This shows that students at MTsN 1 Trenggalek have good access to religious knowledge through various sources. To see whether the da'wah information really only comes from religious leaders. Cross checking was carried out by conducting a further survey about where the information about religious preaching came from.

⁹ Syahrudin Ramadhan, "Implikasi Materi Bahasa Indonesia dalam Buku Tematik Terhadap Perkembangan Pengetahuan Siswa SD/MI Kelas IV," *eL-Mubabbib: Jurnal Pemikiran dan Penelitian Pendidikan Dasar* (2020).

¹⁰ Nugrananda Janattaka and Anggita Maschelina Sabatini, "Analisis Kesalahan Ejaan Siswa Dalam Teknik Menulis Tegak Bersambung Materi Bahasa Indonesia Tema 6 Kelas II SDN 1 Gondang Tahun Ajaran 2018/2019," *Jurnal Pena Sd* (2019).

¹¹ Syarifudin Syarifudin and Muhammad Rozi Iskandar, "Impelementasi Permen No 50 Tahun 2015 Tentang Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia Pada Mata Kuliah Bahasa Indonesia / Teknik Penulisan Karya Ilmiah Di Institut Agama Islam Qamarulhuda Bagu Lombok Tengah 2023," *JUPE : Jurnal Pendidikan Mandala* (2023).

Information about religious da'wah shows that 56 respondents (37.84%) got information about religious da'wah through Tiktok, followed by 39 respondents (26.35%) through Madrasah Diniyah/TPQ, 22 respondents (14.86%) through Youtube, 10 respondents (6.76%) through community studies, 10 respondents (6.76%) through television, 5 respondents (3.38%) through Islamic boarding schools, and 4 respondents (2.7%) through Instagram. This shows that social media and information technology play an important role in spreading religious da'wah among MTsN 1 Trenggalek students. This contrasts with surveys of students' religious knowledge in terms of students' access to religion, which consumes a lot of religious preaching information through the TikTok platform, not from madrasah diniyah/TPQ and Islamic boarding schools, even though the schools have a strong Islamic boarding school background.

THE ROLE OF KIAI AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Sources of religious knowledge from the survey results show that students obtain religious knowledge mainly from religious figures and religious teachers at school. However, the survey results also show that religious knowledge can be obtained through social media and not kiai. This can illustrate the diversity of sources of religious knowledge that students have. It is important to further assess whether these sources provide credible and accurate information about religion.

However, information about religious da'wah shows that most of the information about religious da'wah is obtained through social media such as Tiktok and YouTube, while traditional sources such as madrasah diniyah/TPQ, community studies and Islamic boarding schools have a lower contribution. This indicates a changing trend in the way students access information about religious proselytizing, who may be more exposed to content presented on social media. This needs to be considered in the context of religious education to ensure that the information conveyed via social media is in line with the desired values of religious moderation.

These two irregularities can be the subject of attention in efforts to improve religious education at MTsN 1 Trenggalek to ensure that accurate sources of religious knowledge and a moderate approach to religious preaching continue to be emphasized in student education. In this case, Kiai and social media are the two sources of religious information most accessed by students. On the one hand, Kiai is a source of traditional religious information, on the other hand, social media is a source of modern religious information.¹² Of course the alpha generation prefers to access social media because social media offers interesting audio visuals so that students become interested in learning religious knowledge. Compared to kiai or studying at Islamic boarding schools where the delivery method is still conventional, you have to come to the place of study and listen to *tausiyah* to gain religious knowledge.

The increasingly open information space in the digital era can bring about fanatical opinions and debates that often ignore ethics. Moderation-based knowledge and ethics filters are needed to control religious behavior that is influenced by online communication that crosses cultural and religious local boundaries.¹³ This is caused by several factors, such as the increasingly rapid development of technology and easy access to information via the internet and social media.¹⁴ Apart from that, students can also choose material they like and listen to *tausiyah* from their idol *ustad*. Research conducted in Yogyakarta shows that generation Z high school students more often seek religious knowledge through social media rather than extracurricular activities such as *Rohis*.¹⁵ This confirms that social

¹² Generasi Alpha, generasi ini lahir pada tahun 2010-an, merupakan generasi yang lahir dan tumbuh di era digital.

¹³ Jasminto, "Etika Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama Di Era Digital."

¹⁴ Eka Yeni Winantika, Budi Febriyanto, and Shopia Nida Utari, "Peran Media Sosial dalam Pembentukan Karakter Siswa di Era Digital," *Jurnal Lensa Pendas* (2022).

¹⁵ Romario, "Generasi Z, Media Sosial, dan Pencarian Agama: Studi Terhadap Tiga Sekolah Menengah Atas di Yogyakarta" (UIN Sunan Kalijaga, 2019).

media is now increasingly popular with students to access religious information.

Although historically kiai have played an important role in disseminating religious information in Indonesia. Kiai or spiritual and intellectual leader of Islamic society. According to Dhofier in his Moesa origins, the term kiai in Javanese is used in three different contexts. Firstly, kiai is used as a tribute to objects that are considered sacred, as for example in the name Kiai Garuda Kencana, which refers to one of the keris horses belonging to the Yogyakarta palace. Second, this term is used as a respect for parents in general. Lastly, kiai is also used as a title given by society to Islamic scholars who lead Islamic boarding schools and teach classical books to their students.¹⁶

Kiai has extensive knowledge and insight into the Islamic religion. Kiai also have the ability to convey religious information in a way that is easy to understand. Social media is also an important source of religious information for MTs students. Social media provides various kinds of content about the Islamic religion, ranging from lectures, studies, to entertainment content with an Islamic theme. Social media also allows students to interact with others who have similar interests in the same field.

There are several factors that cause MTs students to access religious information from kiai and social media. The first factor is the trust factor. MTs students tend to trust religious information conveyed by kiai. Kiai is considered a figure who has credibility and integrity in conveying religious information. The second factor is the ease of access factor. Social media is an easily accessible source of religious information. Students can access religious information via social media anytime and anywhere.

¹⁶ Ali Machsan Moesa, *Nasionalisme Kiai; Konstruksi Sosial Berbasis Agama* (LKIS Pelangi Aksara, 2007), h. 56.

There are also several differences between kiai and social media in providing religious information. Kiai provide religious information directly to students. Kiai also have the ability to answer student questions directly. On the other hand, social media provides religious information indirectly. Students have to look for the religious information they need on social media, but social media provides speed and freedom of access to be opened anywhere. Kiai and social media each have advantages and disadvantages.

Contestation between kiai and social media in providing religious information among MT's students is normal. Both sources of religious information have their respective advantages and disadvantages. Kiai has advantages in terms of credibility and integrity, while social media has advantages in terms of ease of access.

KIAI CHALLENGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA

The challenges faced by kiai in the era of social media are very significant. Social media has presented a series of new challenges for kiai in their efforts to maintain the relevance of Islamic boarding schools and develop curricula in the digital era. To face this challenge, kiai need to improve their ability to utilize social media. Kiai need to create interesting and informative religious content on social media. Kiai also need to actively interact with students on social media. The role of kiai in providing enlightenment to society is still considered important. In terms of religious knowledge, kiai in their environment are still the main reference for society. However, social media can provide benefits for kiai to get developments in the outside world. Social media is also used as a medium for da'wah by preachers because it is more effective and practical in spreading messages.¹⁷

¹⁷ Wiwik Setiyani Setiyani and Citra Orwela, "Otoritas Keagamaan Kiai Kampung Dan Peran Media Sosial Di Jawa Timur: Kasus Ngawi, Magetan, Dan Madiun," *Kontekstualita* (2023).

Moreover, social media has a significant influence on people's lifestyles but does not have much influence on religious attitudes. Even though some people look for sources of religious knowledge on social media, they still ask experts (kiai) whether there is a difference in looking for information on social media.¹⁸ Therefore, social media is not the main reference for gaining enlightenment regarding religious knowledge.¹⁹ Gus Iqdam is one of the Indonesian figures who has successfully used social media as a forum for spreading religious knowledge. Has many followers on various social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, as a place to preach about Islamic teachings. It is necessary to pay attention to this success for religious teachers or kiai to be able to synergize with social media, it is hoped that MT's students in particular can obtain quality and comprehensive religious information.

The following are recommendations for several ways to face challenges in the digital era. First, determine the policy for the use of digital media by students: One of the challenges faced by kiai is determining the policy for the use of digital media by students. Because modern learning involves digital devices that are familiar with the internet. In addition, many people access information more quickly through digital literacy. Therefore, kiai must be able to determine appropriate policies in the use of digital media by students. Second, by maintaining the relevance of madrasas: the rapid development of technology and social media has brought changes in the way people learn and communicate. This is a challenge for madrasas to maintain the relevance of Islamic boarding schools in the digital era. Third, curriculum revision: Technological developments also bring the need for curriculum revision in Islamic boarding schools. Kiai must be able

¹⁸ Marthalina Marthalina, "Kualitas Pelayanan Melalui Website Dan Media Sosial Dalam Menyediakan Layanan Yang Handal Di Masa Pandemi Covid 19 Di Kota Batam," *Jurnal Media Birokrasi* (2022).

¹⁹ Setiyani and Orwela, "Otoritas Keagamaan Kiai Kampung Dan Peran Media Sosial Di Jawa Timur: Kasus Ngawi, Magetan, Dan Madiun."

to revise the existing curriculum to ensure Islamic boarding schools remain relevant in the digital era and produce quality and intelligent students. Fourth, dealing with the impact of digital media on students: social media has a significant impact on students, and kiai must be able to overcome this impact. They must be able to guide students to use social media wisely and avoid negative impacts on their mental and physical health.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a survey conducted on 148 respondents, it can be concluded that religious moderation at MTsN 1 Trenggalek receives high support from students and teachers. Religious knowledge, students' access to religion, information about religious preaching, national commitment, and anti-violence attitudes are important factors in developing religious moderation in this school.

In conclusion, the survey results show that students have a high level of religious moderation and tolerance. The use of Power BI in analyzing survey results has proven effective in providing a clear and concise picture of the data. The results of this survey can be used to develop programs and policies that encourage religious tolerance and moderation among students in Indonesia.²⁰

From the survey results, it can be concluded that students at MTsN 1 Trenggalek have good access to religious knowledge from various sources, including religious figures, religious teachers at school, Koran teachers/chaplains in the neighborhood, and social media/kiai books. Most students acquire religious knowledge from religious figures, which shows that religious figures play an important role in conveying religious knowledge to students.²¹

²⁰ Syaifudin Zuhri, "Religious Moderation in an Eastern Javanese Town," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* (2023).

²¹ Tutik Nurul Janah and Umdah El Baroroh, "Pluralism in the Fiqh Sosial's Perspective," *Santri: Journal of Pesantren and Fiqh Sosial* (2021).

However, when looking at information about religious da'wah, there is a change in the source of the information. Most students obtain information about religious da'wah through social media platforms such as Tik Tok, followed by Madrasah Diniyah/TPQ and YouTube. This shows that social media and information technology have a significant role in spreading religious da'wah among MTsN 1 Trenggalek students. This creates a contrast with the more diverse sources of students' religious knowledge, where religious preaching information does not only come from religious leaders.

Recommendations for several ways to face challenges in the digital era, namely: determining policies for the use of digital media by students, maintaining the relevance of madrasahs, revising the curriculum, dealing with the impact of digital media on students

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