

## Research Article

# Study of Religious Moderation from the Muhammadiyah Perspective: Efforts to Realize Harmony Among Indonesian Citizens

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**Abstract.**

Acts of violence in Indonesia often affect various other aspects of life, resulting in a loss of harmony in society and various shocks in several aspects of Indonesian society. This article aims to discuss religious moderation from Muhammadiyah's perspective through an in-depth analysis of its basic principles and implementation. This paper is the result of research at LPPM Unisba with qualitative methods. While, the techniques are observation, interviews, and literature study. Muhammadiyah has been able to establish intense relations between citizens of different religions. The findings of this study are that Muhammadiyah is a moderate ideology that seeks to have a dialogue between text and context in the relationship between religions and nations in general. Religious Moderation in the Muhammadiyah perspective is aligned with the frame of social, national, and *ummah* reality. Religious moderation is not meant to reduce religious practices in order to achieve harmony. It is neither in the realm of worship, nor in the social order of nation's citizens. Muhammadiyah has moderate opposing views in the context of multiculturalism. The update in this article is that religious moderation from the Muhammadiyah perspective does not mean abandoning the roots of Islamic teachings. But it is done selectively and functionally.

**Keywords:** religious moderation, Muhammadiyah, interreligious dialogue, multiculturalism

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Muhammadiyah is a historical organization that has participated in building the civilization of Indonesia. He existed before this country's independence, so his experience beyond the hardships of the times needs to be listened to carefully. All these challenges can be faced and resolved properly. The pluralistic society in Indonesia, with more than 17.000 of islands [1], make all of them able to learn from life to give eternal meaning. It need to continuously interreligious dialogue [2].

Not all countries can maintain well in their country's condition. All success must be achieved with eternal struggle. Indonesia is a rich country whose area is as large

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as mainland Europe. Indonesia's population reaches 275 million [3] which is the 4th largest population in the world. In contrast to the history of tribal society in the Arabian Peninsula, we grew up with a typical heterogeneous society and moderat Islam [4]. Religious organizations become strategic partners in life that have no equal meaning for civilized life in this country, until it can spread the mainstream though [5]. One of the issues that surfaced was the concept of religious or Islamic moderation [6], and how did Muhammadiyah deal with it? What steps has he taken in dealing with this understanding. Intellectual unrest like this is the challenge of thought in the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia. Therefore, this article brings our concern to explore it in the Sores 2022 forum. During Orde Baru (the New Order Era), Islam was marginalized by the military regime and there was massacre [7]. This need interreligious dialogue [8].

## 2. METHOD

This study is yielded by the qualitative research [9] to obtain material related to the topic through observation and interviews and their implementation in organizational actions, in addition to a literature study.

The nature of the research is Qualitative. Observations at the research site with a sociological approach by reading the signs on the research site [10]. The type of observation is "observation without intervention" [11], with a study of documents around the agenda of the Muhammadiyah Management organization related to the narrative of the relationship between religion and the state.

Interviews were conducted with administrators and activists at the regional leadership (PW) in Jakarta on Jl. Menteng Raya. The informants were interviewed in Jakarta during March-April 2022. Thorough interview and observation data were filtered and classified, so as to obtain valid data as written in this article.

### 2.1. Theoretical Framework

The Steps to reform of Kyai Dahlan as a Muhammadiyah pioneer in Kauman Village, Yogyakarta [12], concludes the findings of his research, in monotheism, A. Dahlan wants to purify the Islamic aqidah from all kinds of shirk; in the field of worship, clearing the ways of worship from heresy; in the field of *muamalat* [13], clearing beliefs from

superstition, as well as in the field of understanding the teachings of Islam, reforming *taqlid* (blind imitation) towards freedom of *ijtihad*.

As for the step of renewal that is “reform” is in pioneering “modern” education that combines religious and general lessons. Kyai Dahlan’s educational idea is a renewal because it is able to integrate aspects of “faith” and “progress” such as women priests [14], so as to produce a generation of educated Muslims who are able to live in modern times without splitting their personalities [15].

Kyai Dahlan’s Islamic reform can be referred to the understanding and practice of *Al-Ma’un* verses, which is another monumental example of social-welfare-oriented charity reform, which later gave birth to the Oemoem Penolong Kesengsaraan (PKU) institution. This momentous step in contemporary Islamic discourse is called “transformative theology”. Islam is not just a set of teachings on rituals of worship and “*habl min Allah*” (relationship with Allah), but instead cares about and is involved in solving concrete problems faced by humans, such as intention to becoming religiously [16]. This is the typical “charity theology” of Kyai Dahlan and the beginning of Muhammadiyah presence in this country.

Kyai Dahlan is very concerned about fortifying Muslims so that they do not become victims of the Christian Zending mission, but in a smart and elegant way. Kyai invites direct and open discussion and debate with a number of priests around Yogyakarta [17]. With the understanding that there are similarities other than the differences between the Al-Quran as the holy book of Muslims and the previous holy books, Kyai Dahlan, for example, thinks that discussions about Christianity can be held in mosques [18]. It is a kind of basic for religious pluralism [19].

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Results

*Muhammadiyah on the Principles of Religious Moderation.* Muhammadiyah responds to religious moderation by understanding Islam more intensely and applying it carefully. Muhammadiyah has done a lot of this, especially first through inclusive education, so Muhammadiyah education is an open education. Anyone can study at Muhammadiyah educational institutions, and Muhammadiyah educational institutions are also open to teach other religions, so it is like Muhammadiyah educational institutions in non-Muslim majority areas such as in NTT, in Bali, in Papua. Students or students are taught religion

according to their religion. There is no interreligious dialogue barriers [20]. In addition, the Muslim Minority also has non-Muslims in Muhammadiyah educational institutions. They are usually offered whether a teacher or lecturer is needed for their lessons or for their religious courses, so it depends on the student or student, if they want, the Muhammadiyah educational institution will provide it. Meet the concept of inclusive education to deradicalization in Indonesia [21].

“This term is very popular, in addition to other well-known terms such as deradicalization as counter violence extremism. And Muhammadiyah from the beginning has consistently used the term religious moderation” in Muhammadiyah.or.id, 2021) [22].

Wasathiyah is taken from the word *wasatha* in the Qur’an which is called five times with all its derivations, namely: 1) wasatna (Surah Al-Adiyat: 5), which is the middle or the best; 2) awsathu (Surat al-Qalam: 28), meaning wise; and 3) wustha (QS. Al-Baqarah: 238), this relates to the times of prayer, “you should keep the times of prayer and wustha prayer.” 4) wasathan (Surat al-Baqarah: 143), meaning fair and choice; 5) awsith (QS. Al-Maidah: 89), which is not extreme and not excessive; *Implementation of Religious Moderation in Muhammadiyah*. Implementation of the policy, Muhammadiyah is a religious organization, although in its actual movement Muhammadiyah is more engaged in education and social services, but this education and social service of course includes efforts to carry out da’wah, both bil-lisan da’wah and da’wan. bill of things. This means that if the da’wah bil oral of course delivery through lectures or da’wah bil kitaba, da’wah through writing and others. In this da’wah, Muhammadiyah develops religious moderation. So religious moderation in Muhammadiyah’s perspective is very important to maintain the integrity of Indonesia as a multi-religious, multi-ethnic country, and so on [23].

Imagine, religion in Indonesia which is not only Islam, if it is taught radically – not in moderation – it is very easy to trigger conflict, both religious conflict and social conflict. So religious moderation is very important for Muhammadiyah. Do not force and do not interfere beyond limits.

Then the social services provided by Muhammadiyah, such as nursing homes, hospitals are inclusive (open to anyone). So Muhammadiyah hospitals are the same as educational institutions in Muhammadiyah, they not only accept patients from non-Muslim circles but also their employees or doctors, they are also open from any group and religion. Institutionally Muhammadiyah has also given birth to a formulation of

Pancasila as darul 'ahdi wal-syahadah. This is important. Pancasila as darul 'ahdi wa-l-syahadah is a guideline for all Muhammadiyah members. Pancasila as the result of the agreement of the Indonesian nation that must be proven in everyday life. By developing inclusive education, developing inclusive social services, it is not permissible to reject groups of different religions in everyday life.

Strengthening Religious Moderation. Programs that need to be carried out by Muhammadiyah in strengthening inter-religious relations; religion and nation, and religion with the state are programs related to strengthening the spirit of nationalism, in Muhammadiyah education there is civic education, in delivering this civic education of course it must be accompanied by concrete examples and also through practice, for example by visiting institutions - educational institutions, social institutions owned by other religions and so on. Thus, civic education is not only cognitive, but will foster affection and also practices on how to establish harmony among the nation's children.

The social services provided by Muhammadiyah, such as nursing homes, hospitals are inclusive (open to anyone). So Muhammadiyah hospitals are the same as educational institutions in Muhammadiyah, they not only accept patients from non-Muslim circles but also their employees or doctors, they are also open from any group and religion. Institutionally, Muhammadiyah has also given birth to a formulation of Pancasila (Five Principles of State) as *dâr al-'ahdi wa l-shahâdah*. This is important. Pancasila as *dâr al-'ahdi wa l-shahâdah* is a guideline for all Muhammadiyah members. Pancasila as the result of the agreement of the Indonesian nation that must be proven in everyday life [24]. By developing inclusive education [25], developing inclusive social services, it is not permissible to reject groups of different religions in everyday life.

There are groups that threaten religious, national and state life, but how big they are, there needs to be more in-depth research, I think if you refer to survey results from accountable institutions, I think these groups are , although it may be small, it is a threat that we need to pay attention to. Who are they, for example, of course the first to consider Pancasila as togut, there are groups who consider it as taghut, democracy as an infidel system or even a satanic system, well this of course threatens the life of the nation and state. The second is those who don't want to respect the flag, don't want to be neighbors with people of different religions, and people of different religions are considered unclean infidels and so on, so that's it.

Muhammadiyah is a religious organization, although in its movement Muhammadiyah is actually more active in the fields of education and social services, but this education

and social services of course also contain efforts to carry out da'wah, both verbal da'wah and verbal da'wah. Da'wah through oral movements, writing and so on. In this da'wah, Muhammadiyah develops religious moderation. So religious moderation from a Muhammadiyah perspective is very important to maintain the integrity of Indonesia as a multi-religious country, a multi-ethnic country, and so on.

We can imagine that religion in Indonesia, not only Islam, any religion, is taught radically and not moderately, so it is very easy to trigger conflict, both religious conflict and social conflict. So religious moderation is very important for Muhammadiyah to uphold.

Muhammadiyah's strategy from the start was the Voice of Muhammadiyah. There is a website, there is TV MU, those are the devices or channels owned by Muhammadiyah. Through these channels, there are two strategies carried out by Muhammadiyah, namely cultural and structural strategies, so to speak. The structural ones are what I said earlier, such as circulars, guidelines, etc., these are issued by the central leadership of Muhammadiyah which are then circulated to regional leaders at the provincial level and also forwarded to regional leaders, namely districts and cities. and so on up to the branch and branch level, branches are sub-districts, branches are sub-districts and villages.

That is the structural strategy, then the cultural strategy is carried out through unofficial channels, meaning that Muhammadiyah, for example, gives freedom to all its members, all its cadres to communicate, to carry out da'wah, both verbally, in terms of things, and in the Bible to anyone, to the whole community. Indonesia, even Muhammadiyah has now spread, not only in Indonesia but also abroad. Muhammadiyah, for example, already has educational institutions in Malaysia and Australia. All of this can be a space for implementing Muhammadiyah's communication strategy, both structurally and culturally.

*Strengthening Religious Moderation.* Programs that need to be carried out by Muhammadiyah in strengthening inter-religious relations; religion and nation, and religion with the state are programs related to strengthening the spirit of nationalism, in Muhammadiyah education there is civic education, in delivering this civic education of course it must be accompanied by concrete examples and also through practice, for example by visiting institutions - educational institutions, social institutions owned by other religions and so on. Thus, civic education is not only cognitive, but will foster affection and also practices on how to establish harmony among the nation's children. Muhammadiyah in solving problems always listens to problems from all sides," said Mu'ti.

### 3.2. Discussion

Muhammadiyah's views were not always the same as others and were not always the most correct. Muhammadiyah is an organization that is very open to criticism and input. For example, the photo of KH. Ahmad Dahlan who was previously not allowed for fear of cults, but now it is allowed for the sake of education, and it is not a form of "*menclamence*" (inconsistency), precisely to avoid truth claims and be open to all scientific criticism.

The Director General of Islamic Community Guidance at the Ministry of Religion (Kemenag), Kamaruddin Amin, explained that the concept of religious moderation is different from religious moderation. He emphasized that religion does not need to be moderated because religion itself has taught the principles of moderation, justice, and balance.

"In the realm of sociology, moderate religious understanding is needed. Meanwhile, the principle of religious moderation is an attitude or perspective of religious behavior that is moderate, tolerant, respects differences, and always manifests the common good," told Kamaruddin in Muhammadiyah.or.id, 2021, [22] (accessed: 9/2/2022).

According to him, the embodiment of the common good is to bring benefits and prevent harm. "We must respect the essence or substance of religious teachings themselves, including respecting humanity. For example, we have different religions, ethnicities, languages, and cultures, but we humans must respect each other, especially since Islam teaches us to uphold human values," he explained.

He said, religion must be able to be translated into common life, both among fellow and different religions. He added that religious moderation is a way of religion that is reflected by all parties, not only Muslims, but also people of other religions.

As citizens of the Indonesian nation, we must be able to translate religion as a basis that reflects coolness, peace, and avoiding conflict, that is what is meant by religious moderation.

In the context of religious life such as in Indonesia, strengthening religious moderation is very important. In fact, he added, religious moderation also needs to be echoed in a global context where religion is an important part in the realization of a dignified world civilization.

Indonesia is a megadiversity country, which is a country that has an extraordinary level of diversity. So that we are among the countries that need the most instruments to can manage that diversity. The most powerful instrument is religious moderation.

He explained that the hallmark of religious moderation in caring for diversity is respect for all differences, as well as fairness and mutual respect for one another. "Religious moderation can be a wasilah to maintain and strengthen the harmony of the Indonesian nation," told Kamaruddin Amin.

Religious Moderation is not a silence of faith. Religious moderation is very important for Muhammadiyah. Do not force and do not interfere beyond limits.

The social services provided by Muhammadiyah, such as nursing homes, hospitals are inclusive (open to anyone). So Muhammadiyah hospitals are the same as educational institutions in Muhammadiyah, they not only accept patients from non-Muslim circles but also their employees or doctors, they are also open from any group and religion.

In Muhammadiyah's perspective, Religious Moderation has 4 (four) indicators of religious moderation, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation for local culture.

In these 4 (four) indicators, Muhammadiyah has taken many roles in accordance with its field of work. So that Muhammadiyah always keeps itself from criticizing other parties.

According to Muhammadiyah, religious moderation is implementing religious teachings well and not imposing religious practices, commands and prohibitions on other parties. But giving a warning to fellow Muslims is a necessity, as a form of *tawashau bil-haq* and *tawashau bis-shabr*. Religious moderation includes both inward and outward. Inward means fellow Muslims, while out means people of other religions outside Islam. Religious moderation does not mean that Muslims deny the strict principles of Islam.

Religious moderation emphasizes national commitment by merging religious divisions in religious narratives. Muhammadiyah does not agree with the theological replacement of the term *kafir*, but for national life it is enough to be declared a citizen or community. A statement on religious moderation that aims to bridge religious barriers in national life.

Reckless and reckless. Muhammadiyah always uses soft language, despite its harsh criticism of the government and various parties which it views as deviant. Muhammadiyah takes various steps that are in line with the moderate category so that it is in accordance with the religious moderation category.



Islamic organization that the legal rights have been revoked by the government still continue to operate underground, secretly. They continue to spread the ideology of the caliphate at the risk of opposing the government and clashing with other socio-religious (Islamic) organizations. Here communication tends to be disharmonious due to differences in struggle ideologies. One - with his *ijtihad* - accepts Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, while the other rejects the presence of an ideology which he views as *taghut*, because it is not based on Islamic law. Pancasila is an icon of resistance to God's laws in the universe. This tension will continue to escalate until the end of time. Here there is disharmony because of the view that Islam is a religion of truth, and apart from Allah's law it is *taghut* which carries *shirk*.

This tension lasted for quite a long time and became something that was difficult to bridge. Because one uses *ijtihad* and comes to the idea of accepting Pancasila – and even participates in formulating it. One day, if this is not bridged, it will have the potential to trigger a non-existent quarrel between the two groups of Islamic organizations who are recipients of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution and those who reject it.

## 4. CONCLUSION

Muhammadiyah is a moderate understanding that dialogues between revelation and ratio, text and context dynamically. So that religion can be implemented proportionally and contextually. Religious moderation in the Muhammadiyah perspective is placed in the frame of social, national and state reality. Religious moderation does not reduce religious values and practices; realm of worship. Religious moderation is present in the realm of social order among the nation's children in order to pursue harmony. He is serious about practicing religion but is not hostile to other religions and internal parties of different religions understand in the context of multiculturalism which is linked to Islamic values.

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