

Efforts of Religious Leaders in Building Attitude of Religious Moderation in the Village of Pada Nubatukan Lembata, East Nusa Tenggara

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the efforts of religious leaders in building religious moderation attitudes in villages in terms of the role of religious leaders and obstacles and challenges. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type. The data was collected through observation, interviews and documentation, and analyzed using Miles and Huberman interactive techniques. The validity of the data was tested using source and technical triangulation techniques. The results of the study show that the efforts of religious leaders in building religious moderation attitudes in various ways such as; Open dialogue, socialization activities, and deliberations, however, religious leaders also experience obstacles and challenges such as; the influence of social media and the lack of religious understanding.

Keywords; Religious Figures, Religious Moderation

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is interesting to discuss, because in our country there are various religions, ethnicities, cultures and languages that can trigger religious conflicts. The problem is that we accept all kinds of differences in building a moderate attitude to the regeneration of the continuation so that they understand how differences and togetherness are beautiful if applied in the midst of daily activities (Megawati et al., 2022) .

To build a harmonious and harmonious nation and state, it is important to implement religious moderation. Lukman Hakim Saifudin invites the public to deeply understand religious moderation, because religious moderation is a powerful tool to respond to the dynamics of the digital era that continues to develop, as well as to fight various manifestations of extreme intolerance and fanaticism that have the potential to destroy and damage harmony between religions. (Saifuddin, 2019)

Maintaining a moderate attitude towards religion is very important. By adopting a moderate religious attitude, individuals can refrain from succumbing to fanaticism and avoid alienating parties of different beliefs. The promotion of moderation serves as an important tool in preventing the emergence of divisive ideologies in Indonesia. In addition, religious moderation also serves as a means to foster harmony, fortify the nation, and protect the Indonesian state from radical doctrines (Saifuddin, 2019) .

However, in many regions in Indonesia, conflicts between religious communities often occur. Even in the same religion, conflicts between communities can still arise because they are considered different sects or sects. (Fajarini, 2014) Cultural, ethnic, and religious sentiments are some of the causes of conflict, but religious sentiments are the most dominant.

Indonesia has witnessed many conflicts in the name of religion in recent years, including the religious conflict in Poso in 1992, the Sunni-Shia conflict in East Java in 2012, the religious conflict in Bogor in 2011, and many others. The conflict occurred because of a lack of understanding of religious moderation. (Yunus, 2014)

Therefore, it is important to strengthen religious moderation in various ways, including playing religious leaders. Religious leaders have a very important role to help people better understand differences and understand religious moderation. (Samuel & Tumonglo, 2023)

Religious leaders act as leaders in the sense that they are not just instructing or proposing others, they are also acting as fighters, with their own values for what they do. To become a fighter, one must be able to mobilize the masses for the sake of religion and devotion to others, and then provide protection (Samuel & Tumonglo, 2023) .

Diversity is an undeniable reality that affects daily life that has an impact on social relationships (Firmino & Echeverría, 2021) . With diversity, it is possible to have a lot of potential and richness of colors in life that have their own characteristics. Each society has the ability to be able to develop an attitude of tolerance that leads to an attitude of religious moderation that produces harmony in a harmonious life in the midst of society. The concept of religious moderation can affect diversity. (Aliyandi A. Lumbu et al., 2024)

Strengthening religious moderation in society including teaching tolerance, unity in diversity, and respect for people of different religions is essential to prevent radicalism and intolerance. All of this shows that tolerance is essential to maintain religious moderation and create a harmonious coexistence in a diverse society. (Mulyana, 2023) (Ramadhani & Setyoningrum, 2023)

By providing an early understanding to the public about the attitude of religious moderation, it is possible to minimize the problems that occur. Therefore, encouraging religious moderation from an early age can give birth to successors who understand the importance of accepting differences in order to achieve social harmony (Astuti et al., 2018) .

The impact of religious moderation is very profound, because it fosters an attitude of tolerance, peace, and harmony among religious communities with diverse customs and cultures, so that a sense of unity and unity can emerge from the existing diversity. (Evimalinda et al., 2023a)

Some studies suggest that religion can be a medium to foster religious moderation, but on the other hand it can trigger violence if taught incorrectly. Several studies also show the importance of the role of religious and community leaders as well as educational institutions to strengthen religious moderation attitudes. And there are many strategies that can be used to build attitudes of religious moderation (Mala et al., 2023; Wahid, 2024) (Haryani, 2020; Nur & Lubis, 2015) (Mussafa, 2018; Senjaya, 2020; Suharto, 2017) (Luqmanul Hakim Habibie et al., 2021; Mualimin et al., 2021) .

Pada Nubatukan Lembata Village is one of the villages that has various religions. Pada Village has a population of 1,561 people with details of 1,062 Catholics, 294 Muslims, 202 Protestant Christians and 5 Hindus. The number of houses of worship in Pada Village is 1 mosque, 1 Catholic church, and 1 Protestant Christian church, while Hindu houses of worship still use the house of one of the residents.

The diversity of customs, cultures, tribes, and religions in the village is very likely to be a source of conflict, but in the context of spiritual development, every religion that exists actually teaches harmony, there is no one religion that teaches violence. But in practice in the field, we often hear conflicts so far. The conflict is caused by a lack of understanding of religious moderation.

But the reality on the field is not like that. The people of Pada village strongly maintain the value of harmony, even though they are different religions, ethnicities, races and cultures, they are able to coexist with full tolerance and mutual respect. The values of togetherness continue to be maintained through the tradition of mutual cooperation, deliberation in solving problems, and joint celebrations at important moments, both religious and cultural.

In their daily lives, the people of Pada village always live in harmony and uphold religious moderation. This is inseparable from the efforts of religious leaders to develop a moderate religious attitude among their people. So to understand more deeply how the efforts of religious leaders in Pada village in building religious moderation attitudes, researchers are interested in conducting this research with a focus on:

1. What are the efforts of religious leaders in building religious moderation attitudes in Nubatukan Village, Lembata Regency?
2. What are the obstacles and challenges faced by religious leaders in building diverse moderation attitudes in Nubatukan Village, Lembata Regency?

METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach, which is an approach that seeks to understand the phenomena experienced by the researched person in a natural, thorough, and in-depth manner which is described in the form of a description of words and language by utilizing various methods (L.J. Moleong, 2022) . The researcher chose this approach

because the researcher seeks to understand and describe various phenomena, events, social involvement and thoughts of both individuals and groups in building religious moderation attitudes.

The research subjects in this study consist of Catholic religious leaders, Islamic religious leaders, Protestant religious leaders, Hindu religious leaders and the Head of Pada Village. Research data is collected using observation techniques, where researchers observe and systematically record the elements that appear in a symptom in the object of research, either directly or indirectly. In this study, observation is carried out participatory to observe all activities related to building religious moderation. (Sugiyono, 2015)

In addition, the researcher also uses interview techniques by communicating and asking questions directly to the subject or respondent (L.J Moleong, 2022; Sugiyono, 2015). Interviews were conducted with Catholic religious leaders, Islamic religious leaders, Protestant religious leaders, Hindu religious leaders and the Head of Pada Village to dig up data on the efforts of religious leaders in building religious moderation attitudes. In addition, researchers also use documentary techniques by researching written objects such as books, magazines, documents, regulations, meeting minutes, diaries and so on (L.J. Moleong, 2022)

To test the validity of the data, the researcher uses the triangulation technique by checking the validity of the data by utilizing something other than data for the purpose of checking or as a data comparison (Sugiyono, 2015). In this study, the researcher uses a source triangulation technique by consulting five different sources, including each religious leader and village head. In addition to source triangulation, researchers used a technique called technical triangulation, which involves verifying data through three different methods; interviews, observations, and documentation.

To analyze the data, the researcher used the interactive technique of Miles and Huberman and Saldana data through three stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, conclusion drawing and verification (Miles et al., 2014). In this case, the researcher seeks to collect data first and then select data that has relevance to the focus of the research. After that, it is presented narratively and then interpreted so that it can describe what is desired from this research.

RESULTS

Efforts of Religious Leaders in Building Religious Moderation Attitudes

Religious leaders in Pada Nubatukan Lembata village made various efforts to build collective awareness of the importance of religious moderation through an inclusive approach in a diverse society, such as conducting open dialogue, holding social activities and holding deliberations.

Open dialogue is carried out when there are differences of view, potential conflict, or the need to build a common understanding between groups or individuals who have different religious, cultural, or belief backgrounds. Open dialogue is carried out in a neutral, inclusive, and safe place for all parties involved, such as village meeting halls, interfaith houses of worship and community halls. It takes the form of directed discussions, seminars, or small group meetings that prioritize two-way communication. Open dialogue is considered as one of the media to understand each other, share knowledge and perspectives, strengthen friendship, and build togetherness. This is as conveyed by the Catholic Religious Figure, Mikael Bala Matarau as follows:

"By having an open dialogue, the Christians I guide can hear and can share knowledge and share their views on religious beliefs and practices towards each religion, especially we as the majority religion in this village, so we must play a more active role in efforts to prevent issues that smell of SARA."

Islamic Religious Leader Hudani Abdul Kadir also added that;

"The purpose of this dialogue is to establish friendship by gathering in one place and sharing advice without giving in and hindering the opinions of others. The purpose of this dialogue is to make people aware that differences are not bad and there is no reason to be hostile to the dominant beliefs of any religion."

Meanwhile, according to Yohanes Kia Lerek, a Protestant religious figure revealed;

"Through dialogue, we can accept differences in religious beliefs and practices. It helps to promote tolerance and respect for the rights of individuals to practice their respective religions."

Yoman Swardani, a Hindu religious figure, added that;

"Sitting and deliberating is one of the best solutions so that we understand each other's worship rituals so that tolerance and mutual understanding arise in

community life, then it can be an effective way to prevent and reduce the commotion that exists in the community, especially we as minorities really need comfort in worshipping and coexisting with the community."

From the interview above, it can be concluded that one of the important efforts to instill religious moderation in Pada Village is the role of religious leaders in conducting open discussions. With open dialogue, religious people can understand each other, respect differences, and work together to build a harmonious and peaceful life.

In addition to open dialogue, the efforts of leaders to build an attitude of religious moderation are to hold social activities. Socialization is carried out when efforts are needed to convey information, introduce ideas, or build common understanding in the community regarding certain issues. The socialization place is carried out in a strategic location and relevant to the goals and audiences to be reached, such as village halls for the general public and schools for young people. The forms of socialization are various, such as seminars, field counseling, public campaigns and social media. This activity is a means to strengthen relationships between religious communities and instill the values of togetherness in community life. This is as expressed by the Islamic religious figure Hudani Abdul Kadir:

"Almost all people are usually involved in social activities such as the construction of houses of worship and the security of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha. For example, when a mosque is built, brothers from other religions come to help, and when a church is built, Muslims are also involved. Not only does it strengthen friendship, but it also makes people of different religions become closer to each other."

Meanwhile, Mikael Bala Matarau added:

"As long as I have lived in Pada village, since 1999 there have been no religious conflicts, because the community and religious leaders maintain interfaith friendship. We must take care of this kinship and live in harmony between religious people, otherwise we must be brothers and sisters. As Catholic religious figures, we are always involved in social activities, as stated by the priest above. On the other hand, when we have children who want to welcome us, we don't forget to invite them, which is unique here when we have been offered to eat with them, they have a different place from us, because the dishes served are our Muslim

family or our close neighbors who cook, even from the spoons and plates from our brothers who brought to appreciate the difference."

Meanwhile, according to Yohanes Kia Lerek, a Protestant religious figure;

"As a Protestant religious figure, I see the lives of people of various religions in Pada village becoming harmonious, good, and supportive of harmony between religious communities. This is shown by their involvement in social activities, such as being directly involved in the construction of mosques, maintaining Islamic holidays, and other social activities. "

Yoman Swardani, a Hindu religious figure, added that;

"As religious minorities, we play an active role in building religious moderation through social activities. With involvement in activities such as social services, distribution of aid to the underprivileged and environmental activities such as reforestation. Through this step, not only strengthens the relationship with his own community but also establishes closeness with other people."

The results of the above interviews show that religious leaders have played a role in social activities in Pada village and have helped create harmony between religious communities. It is proven that mutual cooperation activities, cooperation, and mutual assistance in various social activities help foster trust and respect between religious communities. This can be a good example for people in other places to develop religious tolerance and moderation.

Another effort made by religious leaders to build an attitude of religious mediation is to hold a deliberation. Deliberation is an important step that religious leaders can take to build religious moderation. Through deliberation, various parties can dialogue, share views, and find solutions together, so that understanding and harmony are created in the midst of differences. This is as conveyed by Hudani Abdul Kadir:

"This deliberation is carried out to prevent social jealousy in this village between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities. This deliberation is not far from the previous socialization, only important people came. Religious leaders can hold meetings involving people from various parties, such as leaders of other religions, the community, and the government. Issues related to religious moderation can be discussed and resolved at this meeting."

Mikael Bala Matarau also stated that;

"Religious leaders can help reach an agreement that is accepted by all parties through deliberation. It can also reduce tensions and strengthen unity. With our presence here, we can gather, brainstorm, and find solutions to the problems at hand. Representatives from each religion were sent to represent them because we could not understand if there were so many people who came to attend."

The same thing was also expressed by John Kia Lerek, a Protestant religious figure:

"Deliberation has a very important role in various aspects of life, especially in the religious context, in this way we convey the importance of moderation values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and peace, and associate them with our respective teachings. If this is already in each of us, then peace and harmony exist by itself in our lives. "

Hindu religious figure Yoman Swardani also added that;

"Because deliberation is a very important tool to make decisions that are wise, fair, and acceptable to various parties. It also helps build a society that respects each other's beliefs without feeling disadvantaged by other religious beliefs. Therefore, we have been deliberating in the village of Pada so far."

The results of the interview above show that deliberation is one of the important ways to increase religious moderation in Pada village. This allows various parties in the village to sit together, share opinions, and find solutions to create a harmonious and peaceful life.

Obstacles and challenges in building religious moderation attitudes

Building an attitude of religious moderation in the midst of a multicultural society is not an easy task. This process faces various obstacles and challenges in the village of Pada Nubatuan Lembata such as the influence of social media.

The impact of social media in encouraging religious moderation is very significant because it makes it easy for individuals to access information through digital devices. But on the other hand, social media is also a trigger for disharmony. By utilizing this platform, one can search for reliable information about SARA (Ethnic, Religious, Racial, and Intergroup) that may not be available elsewhere. This is as conveyed by Catholic religious leader Mikael Bala;

"The influence of social media in cultivating religious moderation has a great influence. The impact of social media has an effect on people who have excessive fanaticism because they can access news from the internet that is not necessarily true and cannot be held accountable for the truth."

Meanwhile, Islamic religious leader Hudani Abdul Kadir explained;

"Social media cannot hold religious information, both positive and negative. Through the use of social media, everyone can access their own religious teachings and the religious teachings of others, so that everyone can deepen their religious teachings and know the religious teachings of others, and with the media, people can worship online. All information collected from social media can have an impact on the nature of the people who access that information. If the information they receive is positive, they will be more tolerant in society. However, if the information they receive contains religious conflicts, it will have a negative impact on people's tolerance."

Protestant religious figure John Kia Lerek also added;

"The role of religious leaders is very important in controlling their people on social media, so that the naming of religious moderation attitudes is always maintained, especially for teenagers who are still labile in consuming information on social media."

Meanwhile, Mr. Yoman Swardani also added;

"Social media must be used as a means to increase the value of tolerance and harmony of religious people and must be applied in the lives of people in the midst of diverse village communities both in terms of customary, cultural and religious diversity."

From the results of the interview above, it can be concluded that social media is very important to increase understanding of religious teachings and as a means to increase the dredging between religious communities in Pada village. Social media is also used as a means for people to dialogue to learn about religious teachings, which in turn can increase the value of tolerance between religious people.

In addition to social media, religious insight is also an obstacle and challenge to building religious moderation attitudes in the village of Pada Nubatukan Lembata.

Religious understanding concerns two things, namely religious people's ignorance of their own religion and the religion of others. Many people are still trapped in a symbolic understanding of religion, so they forget the material value of their religion. As stated by Mikael Bala Matarau as follows:

"There are still people who do not understand their religious teachings and understand religion only as a symbol and lack of appreciation and practice of the teachings of other religions in society. So that they are less tolerant of other religions. A concrete example is Christians who feel disturbed when Muslims who want to worship with the sound of reciting and adhan before prayer."

The same thing was also conveyed by Hudani Abdul Kadir who said that;

"The understanding possessed by Muslims is still only limited to the sharia that can be carried out, so they consider the differences they understand to be a benchmark for difficulty living with other religions. For example, when the celebration of the new welcome party is synonymous with alcoholic beverages, it makes it difficult for Muslims because of cultural doctrines and customs related to appreciating the banquet given."

Meanwhile, according to Yohanes Kia Lerek, a Protestant religious figure, said that;

"The understanding possessed by Protestants, especially young people, still considers religion as an additional need that prioritizes customs and culture so that they have difficulty interacting with other people."

Meanwhile, Yoman Swardani, a Hindu religious figure, added that;

"Until today we do not have a house of worship and still worship using residents' houses as places of worship so that we rarely conduct studies or deepening related to religious teachings. This is the lack of understanding of the teachings of Hinduism itself, let alone the teachings of other religions."

From some of the opinions above, it can be concluded that there is still a lack of understanding of the religious teachings that he adheres to and the religious rituals that other people believe. Here, the role of religious leaders is urgently needed in the midst of these limited understandings to communicate in opening interfaith dialogue involving youth elements to understand each other and improve religious moderation.

DISCUSSION

From the above explanation, it can be seen that religious leaders have made many efforts to strengthen religious moderation, including open dialogue, where they try to bridge differences of views, build mutual understanding, and promote the values of tolerance. The dialogue includes discussions on social, cultural, and religious issues, so as to create harmony in the midst of diversity. Tom Campbell (2016) according to the results of his research said that with open dialogue is one of the effective things to build religious moderation. In addition, it is also carried out by living socially, by living socially, religious moderation can run well, this is in line with the results of research conducted by Fahri and Zainuri (2020) which shows that social life has an important role in building harmony and solidarity in a diverse society. The leaders also do it by deliberation, they deliberate by involving all interested parties in an atmosphere of open, transparent, and mutually respectful dialogue. Religious leaders often act as facilitators in deliberations and ensure that the values of justice, wisdom, and inclusivity are maintained. Through this approach, deliberation not only results in fair decisions but also strengthens the sense of togetherness and harmony among participants. Deliberation is one of the effective media to build tolerance. This is also in line with the results of Mualimin (2021) (Campbell et al., 2016) (Fahri & Zainuri, 2020) research which shows that deliberation has an important role as a means of joint decision-making in society, especially in the context of maintaining social harmony and resolving conflicts. (Mualimin et al., 2021)

However, religious leaders also experience obstacles, according to them the obstacle is the influence of social media, social media does play a big role in instilling religious values of moderation, but on the other hand, it is also a challenge in itself. This is also in line with the results of Wibowo's (2024) research which shows that social media is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, social media offers a variety of benefits to improve connectivity, innovation, and community empowerment. However, on the other hand, social media also presents significant challenges that affect people's social, psychological, and privacy lives. Therefore, the wise and targeted use of social media is indispensable to maximize its benefits while minimizing its negative impact. (Wibowo et al., 2024) . In addition, the lack of religious insight in religious moderation can lead to the emergence of exclusivity, fanaticism, and intolerance in society. This often triggers misunderstandings of the teachings of other religions, a lack of respect for differences, and an increase in the potential for horizontal conflicts. This is also in line with the results of Rizki's research. N

(2024) which emphasizes that the lack of religious insight not only has an impact on individual lives, but also on social harmony as a whole. Therefore, collaborative efforts between religious leaders, educational institutions, governments, and communities are needed to promote religious understanding that is inclusive and relevant to today's diverse context (Rizki Nazlia, 2024)

CONCLUSION

Based on the above explanation, it can be concluded that the efforts made by religious leaders in the village of Pada Nubatukan Lembata in order to build religious moderation through open dialogue carried out at village halls, interfaith houses of worship and community forums, social activities carried out such as mutual cooperation, celebration of religious holidays and the provision of assistance to people in need and the deliberations carried out aim to reach a mutual agreement through discussions involving various opinions and views from all parties involved. However, religious leaders also experience obstacles in the form of the influence of social media that instills religious fanaticism and the lack of inclusive religious insights.

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