

Religious Moderation Among Students and Religious Leaders in Palu City

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ABSTRACT: This Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) Central Sulawesi Province plays an important role in building dialogue, accommodating and distributing aspirations, as well as implementing the socialization of laws and regulations related to religious harmony. This role has been able to strengthen and increase religious moderation, especially among students and religious leaders in Palu City. This study was conducted with the aim of describing the level of understanding and attitude of religious moderation among students and religious leaders in Palu City which is measured by four main indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local culture. The research methods used were quantitative and qualitative with data collection techniques using questionnaires to student respondents and religious leaders in Palu City. The data were then processed and analyzed descriptively to illustrate the tendency of religious moderation. The results of the study found that involving two important elements of society, namely students as the next generation of the nation and religious leaders, as guardians of moral and social values, had an important impact on strengthening religious moderation. This shows that the city of Palu Central Sulawesi has a strong social foundation in maintaining national harmony.

KEYWORDS: religious moderation, students, religious leaders, and harmony

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian nation was built on the basis of diversity (Miharja, 2020). Since its inception, Indonesia has realized that ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious plurality is an inseparable part of national identity (Latifa & Fahri, 2021). Therefore, the spirit of unity in the framework of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* is the main foundation in managing the life of the nation and state. However, maintaining this diversity in harmony is not an easy matter, it requires continuous efforts to foster national values, encourage tolerance, reject all forms of violence, and take care of local cultural heritage (Hermanto, 2022).

It is in the context of the diversity of Indonesian society, Central Sulawesi Province is a small reflection of Indonesia's diversity. With a dynamic socio-political historical background, the region has undergone various important phases in the process of establishing a peaceful social order. The events of SARA-nuanced conflicts in the past have become valuable lessons about the importance of dialogue and harmony. From this experience, a collective spirit was born to encourage a more inclusive, peaceful, and respectful social life.

In this context, the role of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) is very vital. The Central Sulawesi Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) is not only present as a forum for discussion between religious leaders, but has developed into a social institution that bridges relations between people, fosters interfaith communication, and becomes a coordination center in reducing conflicts that have the potential to arise. Through an approach based on dialogue and mediation, FKUB builds a network of cooperation between religious leaders, the government, the community, and the education community.

The younger generation, especially students, play a strategic role as the guardian of the Nation's future. In the midst of the fast-paced development of the times, students are required to be not only academically intelligent, but also have a strong, tolerant, and nationalistic character (Gunawan, 2021). However, the challenges faced by students today are not few. The rapid flow of information through social media, increased exposure to transnational ideologies, and the fading appreciation for local culture are factors that affect the formation of the character of the younger generation. Likewise, the role of religious leaders plays a strategic role in strengthening religious moderation. Religious figures are essentially the guardians of the nation's future in religious harmony. In the personality of this religious figure, there is a role and responsibility in maintaining religious harmony and conveying messages of peace in the midst of religious diversity in particular. It is through the existence of these religious leaders that religious moderation can be realized properly (Maknun, 2023).

Seeing the importance of the role of students and religious leaders, it is important to identify synergy between young groups or students and religious leaders, in the context of religious moderation. For this reason, the study in this study aims to evaluate the

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extent to which national values, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local culture are understood and carried out by students and religious leaders in Palu City, Central Sulawesi. This study not only produces quantitative data as a social indicator, but also explores a qualitative dimension that reflects the relationship between social groups in maintaining social cohesion in this multicultural area.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The population in this study is students consisting of junior and senior secondary students in Central Sulawesi, while the population of figures includes religious leaders GPID, Catholic, Salvation Army (BK), GPDI, GKST, Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) Central Sulawesi Province, Muhammadiyah Central Sulawesi Region, DDI Central Sulawesi Region in Palu City, and in 12 Central Sulawesi Provincial Regencies. From the number of this population, the sample of this study was selected to be 10 students in each school and 5 religious leaders in each religion and religious organizations determined by *probability sampling*. Every member of the population has the same opportunity to be selected as a sample in the form of Simple random sampling, which is a purely random sample selection from the entire population (Morissan, 2021).

The instrumentation of this study used a questionnaire used to measure the respondents' understanding and attitude of religious moderation through various types of questions arranged based on the Likert Scale. The questions that will ask respondents to provide a level of approval or disapproval: Strongly Agree (SS), Agree (S), Disagree (TS), and Strongly Disagree (STS) on statements related to religious moderation (Singarimbun & Efendi, 2020). Meanwhile, the measurement indicators of this questionnaire are designed to measure the four main indicators of religious moderation consisting of: national commitment, anti-tolerance, tolerance, and accommodation to local culture. Data collection was carried out by distributing questionnaires to a predetermined sample and collecting respondents' answers, while data analysis was carried out quantitatively by calculating the frequency and percentage of respondents' answers to each question or indicator and then analyzing the data to see the tendency of religious understanding and moderation attitudes among respondents (Asra, et al., 2022).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious moderation is essentially derived from planned behavior (*Theory of Planned Behavior* or TPB). SDGs can be used to understand how attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral controls affect a person's intentions and behavior in the context of religious moderation. It is in this context that TPB, developed by Icek Ajzen, states that a person's behavior is influenced by the intention to do the behavior (Ajzen, 2021). In turn, the attitude of religious moderation is influenced by three main factors: (1) Attitude towards behavior: a person's perception of whether the behavior is good or bad, beneficial or harmful. In the context of religious moderation, this can mean a person's attitude towards tolerance, interreligious dialogue, or acceptance of differences; (2) Subjective norms: a person's perception of social pressure to do or not to do the behavior. This includes the views of others who are considered important, such as family, friends, or religious figures; and (3) Perceived behavior control: a person's perception of how easy or difficult it is to perform the behavior. In this case, it could have to do with their understanding of religious moderation, the availability of information, or environmental support.

In the context of *aqidah* and interfaith relationships, religious moderation is believing in one's own religious truth —radically and respecting, respecting adherents of other religions who believe in their religion, without having to justify it (Abror, 2020). Religious moderation is not a superficial creed at all, as some people misperceive it. In the socio-cultural context, religious moderation is part of religious teachings. In the context of the nation and the state or as a citizen, there is no difference in rights and obligations based on religion. All are the same in the eyes of the nation (Anzaikhan, 2023). In a political context, partnering with people of different religions is okay. There is even a need to *commit* to the political agreements that have been built even with different religions, as exemplified in the empirical experience of the prophet in Medina and a number of verbal narratives from the prophet.

Religious moderation is opposed to identity politics and populism. Because, in addition to being contrary to the basic teachings and moral ideas or *the ultimate goal* of religion, which is to realize benefits, it is also very dangerous for the pluralistic Indonesian context. In the context of intra-religious people, MB does not add and subtract religious teachings, respect and respect each other if differences occur (especially in the public sphere) while still referring to scientific methods. It is not permissible in the name of religious moderation, all can express their opinions and speak freely, without maintaining scientific methods and without having adequate background and knowledge (Suciati, 2021).

This kind of moderate religious way has been maintaining our diversity and Indonesianness. Then why does the government, in this case the Ministry of Religious Affairs, make it a priority program, if from the past until now most of the population of this country has been moderate? There are several underlying sociological dynamics and facts. The following is a brief theoretical explanation of the function of the variables of understanding Religious Moderation, Religious Moderation attitudes, Commitment to nationality, Tolerance, Anti-violence, and Acceptance of traditions: (1) Understanding of Religious Moderation, this variable measures the extent to which respondents understand the concept of religious moderation, including core values such as *tawassuth* (middle way), *i'tidal* (balance), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and others; (2) Attitude of Religious Moderation, this variable measures respondents' attitudes towards various aspects of religious moderation, such as tolerance for differences of opinion, acceptance of

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other groups, and rejection of violence; (3) National commitment, this variable measures the extent to which respondents have a sense of love for the homeland, loyalty to the state, and awareness of the importance of national unity and unity; (4) Tolerance, this variable measures the respondent's attitude towards differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, and other views that are different from his/her own; (5) Anti-violence, this variable measures respondents' attitudes towards violence in solving problems, both in the context of religion and social life; and (6) Acceptance of traditions, this variable measures respondents' attitudes towards local traditions and culture, including the extent to which they are willing to accept and preserve them (Maknun, 2023).

Students are people who are involved in the educational process to acquire knowledge and knowledge, both in formal educational institutions such as schools and in the process of lifelong learning. This term often refers to students, students, or students at the primary and secondary education levels (Gredler, 2013). A learner is anyone who is actively involved in the educational process to develop themselves and acquire knowledge, not limited to school age. Students are also often equated with students, namely individuals who are undergoing education to develop themselves and become quality human beings. Thus, students are an important component in the education system that plays the role of individuals who are learning and developing themselves for the future (Shunk, 2010).

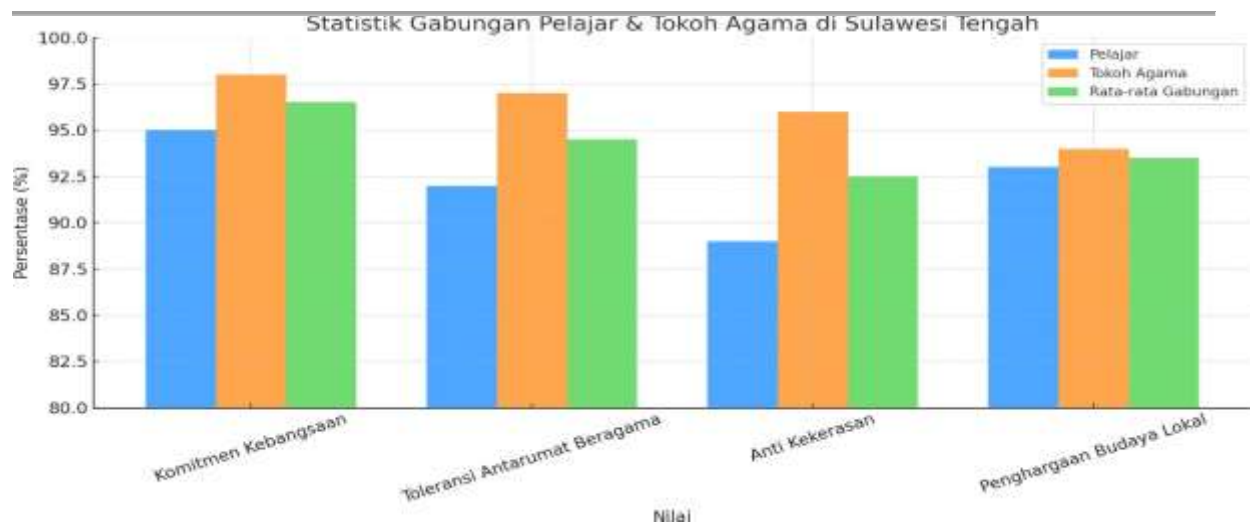
Meanwhile, religious figures are figures or role models in the community in religious matters who have extensive knowledge and high integrity, and are trusted as a source of reference and advisor in religious and social affairs. They play an important role in providing spiritual, moral, and social guidance, as well as being role models for the community. Examples of religious leaders include clerics, kiyai, pastors, priests, and monks, whose duties include delivering religious teachings, solving problems for the people, and being active in community development. The characteristics of religious leaders are: (1) Knowledgeable and integrity, have deep religious knowledge and have morals and behavior in accordance with religious teachings; (2) Role models and role models, trusted as role models for the community and become the best example in daily life; (3) Have influence: have great influence in society because of its excellence and position; and (4) Consistent, his actions must be consistent with his words, show example.

Meanwhile, the roles of religious leaders are (1) Distributors of religious knowledge and guidance: Conveying religious teachings, providing advice, lectures, and sermons to the community; (2) Problem solvers: Helping people overcome various problems in life, both religious and social, by referring to religious teachings; (3) Development drivers: Encouraging active community participation in development and overcoming negative impacts; and (4) Creator of the nation's character: Contributing to building a generation of the nation with character through religious education.

The following is a statistical overview of the results of a joint survey between students and religious leaders based on four indicators of Religious Moderation in accordance with Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 concerning Strengthening Religious Moderation, namely Commitment to Nationality, Tolerance, Anti-violence, and Acceptance of local cultural traditions or Awards.

Statistics of Coalition of Students & Religious Figures (Percentage of Respondents Who Support Each Value):

Value	Students (%)	Religious Leaders (%)	Combined Average (%)
National Commitment	95%	98%	96.5%
Tolerance Between Religions	92%	97%	94.5%
Anti-Violence	89%	96%	92.5%
Local Cultural Awards	93%	94%	93.5%



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Based on the results of a survey of students and religious leaders in Palu City, Central Sulawesi with a focus on: National Commitment, Tolerance, Anti-Violence, and Respect for Local Culture, it is explained as follows. Support for national values, tolerance, peace, and local culture is very high among both students and religious leaders. This shows a strong and harmonious social foundation in the city of Palu, Central Sulawesi. The synergy between the two is the main strength in maintaining harmony and preventing potential conflicts in the future: (1) National Commitment: Both groups are very solid in maintaining the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia and Pancasila; (2) Tolerance: Religious leaders are higher because of their experience in fostering harmony, but students are also very open; (3) Anti-Violence: Religious leaders tend to be more assertive, while a small number of students are still vulnerable to the influence of radicalism; (4) Local Culture: Both pay great attention to the preservation of traditions as regional identity.

A bar graph showing the comparison of support between students, religious leaders, and their average combination of four indicators of Religious Moderation in Palu City, Central Sulawesi: (1) The highest score is in Commitment to Nationality and Tolerance; (2) Anti-Violence is slightly lower in students, showing the importance of further education; and (3) the Local Culture Award is consistently high in both groups.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a survey of students and religious leaders in Palu City, Central Sulawesi, with a focus on: National Commitment, Tolerance, Anti-Violence, and Respect for Local Culture. The results of the study involving two important elements of society—namely students as the next generation of the nation and religious leaders as guardians of moral and social values—show that Palu City, Central Sulawesi, has a strong social foundation in maintaining national harmony. The level of commitment to the state ideology, namely Pancasila and the Republic of Indonesia, is very high in both groups. Students show enthusiasm for national symbols and reject transnational radical ideas such as the caliphate. This is supported by the role of FKUB religious leaders who actively voice the importance of maintaining the integrity of the nation in every religious and social forum.

The tolerant attitude is reflected in the openness of students in establishing interfaith and faith friendships, as well as from the consistency of religious leaders in fostering communication between people. FKUB plays a big role as a dialogue space that nurtures diversity and avoids horizontal conflicts. Both groups show a firm rejection of all forms of violence, especially those in the name of religion. Religious leaders are superior in this regard because of their experience in social mediation and peaceful preaching, while students show great potential to become future peace agents with the right educational support. Respect for local culture is a mutually agreed value. Culture is not only considered as heritage, but also as an adhesive of regional identity. FKUB together with traditional leaders and religious leaders have played a role in integrating cultural values into religious and social activities. Students, on the other hand, show an active interest in getting to know and preserve culture through extracurricular and social activities. The combination of the idealism of the younger generation and the wisdom of religious leaders creates a productive social synergy. Both show the harmony of values in caring for nationality, building tolerance, rejecting violence, and appreciating local cultural richness. FKUB Central Sulawesi has proven itself to be an effective collaborative space in strengthening harmony between religious communities in this area.

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