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Religious Moderation in Multicultural Society: Guardians and Reinforcers of Moderate Understanding in the City of Pontianak

Research Artic

Abdurrahman¹, Wajidi Sayadi²

Institut Agama Islam Negeri Pontianak, Pontianak, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: abdurrahman@iainptk.ac.id

Abstract. Pontianak City which is famous for its plurality is an interesting research location to study in terms of moderation because when other regions have conflicts due to differences such as the conflict between the Dayak and Madurese tribes in Sanggau and Sambas but the city of Pontianak still remains harmonious and peaceful from split conflicts, therefore this study tries to reveal the parties that make religious moderation still exist and survive until now as well as activities conducted to strengthen community harmony in the city of Pontianak. The research method used is qualitative with an analytical descriptive approach which the data were collected by direct interviews and in-depth observation from informants which is the key to the existence of moderate ideas in Pontianak City. There are several parties who are the key to the existence and strengthen moderation in the city of Pontianak such as religious leaders, leaders or administrators of houses of worship, such as administrators of mosques, churches and temples or temples, city governments and intellectuals and academics, they maintain moderation through their respective duties and responsibilities and are more active in anticipating the possibility of disputes in the community.

Keywords:

Religious Moderation, Multicultural, Pontianak City.

Introduction

One of the regions in West Borneo that has rich religious, tribes, ethnic groups, and cultural diversity is Pontianak City. This city has a very important position because it is the capital of West Borneo Province. In terms of history, Pontianak City is an old city full of various historical events that have been 252 years old since its establishment on October 23, 1771 A.D. The population of Pontianak City in 2022 reaches around 673,400 people. In terms of religious composition, the majority of the population of Pontianak City (Statistik, 2023) adheres to Islam at 77.1%, followed by Buddhists at 11.6%, Christians at 4.8%, Catholics at 5.9%, Confucians at 0.46%, and Hindus at 0.05%.

Based on information from the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of West Borneo Province, it was revealed that the number of houses of worship in Pontianak City varies according to the number of religious adherents available, except for temple houses of worship which are sacred places of worship for Hindus

which are not available. Hindus generally conduct their worship at the temple located in Sungai Raya District, Kubu Raya Regency, which is on the border of Pontianak City for particular reasons. In detail, houses of worship for each religion in Pontianak City (Agama, 2022) consist of 345 mosques, 107 prayer rooms, 97 Christian churches, 30 Catholic churches, 51 monasteries, and 17 temples.

This diversity, if it is viewed from ethnic diversity and the tribes in Pontianak City, has a diverse demographic distribution, with the majority of the population coming from the Malay tribe reaching 34.50 percent, followed by the Chinese tribe with 18.81 percent, Bugis 7.92 percent, Javanese 13.84 percent, Madura 11.96 percent, and the remaining 12.98 percent are other tribes.

Historical records regarding ethnic differences in West Kalimantan provide evidence that ethnic-based conflicts often occur, especially between the Dayak and Madurese communities. From 1962 to 1999, 11 incidents of conflict were recorded between these two groups, including riots in Sanggoledo in 1996-1997. One of the big events was the conflict in Sambas in 1999 between the Malay and Madurese communities which resulted in the expulsion of the Madurese community from Sambas Regency (Suparlan, 2004). The conflict, which initially started as a personal dispute, then developed into an inter-ethnic war with religious nuances.

Pontianak City as the capital of West Borneo is certainly a conflict-prone area with great ethnic and religious diversity as the percentage described earlier, between events that have the potential for conflict and threaten diversity when the National Dayak Customary Council (MADN) conducts national gadgets centered on Radakn house with parade areas around the Pontianak city area. At the same time the Alliance of Malay and Muslim organizations also carried out the same march centered on the courtyard of the Pontianak Mujahidin Grand Mosque, but interestingly the potential conflict could be suppressed and eliminated by the people of Pontianak.

However, the interesting thing that the researchers experienced was that in the midst of differences in religion, ethnicity, culture and ethnicity in the city of Pontianak, it turned out that there is still harmony, moderation and good harmony from these differences. On that basis, the researchers feel it is important to know the parties who have made religious moderation exist and remain awake in the city of Pontianak, so that it becomes a reflection and lesson for other regions whose harmony is not as harmonious as the city of Pontianak.

Method

This research uses qualitative methods focusing on a deep understanding of the phenomenon of Pontianak society through accurate data collection with an emphasis on data quality (Nawawi & Martini, 1996). The goal is to explain the phenomenon holistically so that data related to religious moderation becomes more accurate. Within the framework of this study, an analytical descriptive approach is used which aims to present a systematic picture of the facts or characteristics of a

population factually and accurately (Umar, 2003), with results that can be used as a basis for decision making on the object under study.

The descriptive approach in the context of this study also aims to obtain a clear description of the speech, writing and observed behavior of individuals, groups, communities, or organizations in a particular setting. This approach is directed to provide a comprehensive view of the observed phenomenon, with emphasis on qualitative aspects and in-depth explanations of the context under study (Rosyadi, 2004) The selection of methods and approaches is done with the hope that researchers are more adaptable to informants and their environment and can create good relationships so that the data received are in line with existing reality.

Data collection in this study focuses more on interviews with certain informants who are considered to be steeped in this study, in addition to interviews, researchers also collected data through in-depth observation and documentation from writings and media that have published news about the existence of religious moderation in the multicultural city of Pontianak. The data that has been collected is then processed and entered in writing systematically to the final conclusion.

Results: Maintaining and Strengthening Religious Moderation in Pontianak City

Religious moderation is a middle attitude that a person takes in the understanding and application of daily life (Akhmadi, 2019) so moderation implies a balanced approach and avoidance of extreme attitudes. Moderation in a religious context is also known as the concept of wasatiyyah (Abdurrahman et al., 2023), which reflects a commendable state that ensures individuals do not go beyond the limits of two extremes of exaggeration (ifrāt) and deprivation (igshar) in matters that have been ordained by Allah Almighty.

In simple terms, religious moderation can be known when the indicators inherent in it have been met, guoted from the thematic interpretation book of religious moderation published by Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an indicators of religious moderation, which are as follows (Hanafi & Dkk, 2022):

- 1. Respect plurality
- 2. Realizing peace and nonviolence
- 3. Open and accepting of traditions
- 4. Obey national commitments
- 5. Love of the motherland
- 6. Obey Ulil Amri and the law
- 7. Maintain unity and unity
- 8. Maintain intra- and inter-religious synergy as fellow citizens
- 9. Understand the essence of religious teachings/religious texts comprehensively
- 10. Understand reality and priorities

After conducting in-depth research and studies in the city of Pontianak, it can be said that the indicators that have been previously disclosed have been fulfilled well, it is not formed by itself but because many factors and related parties synergize with each other so that it is fulfilled and survives religious harmony and moderation in the city of Pontianak. Religious moderation that has been created in Pontianak City cannot be separated from the role of predecessors who taught the importance of harmony in a multi-religious society, because small frictions from a difference can trigger major conflicts and lead to disputes between religious communities. This is something that is avoided so that the predecessors always taught religious tolerance which has recently been popularized with the term religious moderation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Currently, religious moderation in Pontianak City has been running well, it is inseparable from the role of several elements so that religious moderation still exists and survives, therefore the elements that maintain religious moderation in Pontianak City even make various moderation strengthening programs so that Pontianak City is stronger and more solid if it is hit by issues of division and differences from inside and outside Pontianak.

Elements that have important roles in maintaining and strengthening religious moderation in Pontianak City consist of religious leaders, leaders or administrators of houses of worship as well as the role of the government or affiliated with it and finally the role of intellectuals with academics. They have a central role in maintaining religious moderation in the city of Pontianak.

1. Religious Leaders

Religious leaders have a very important role in maintaining moderation in society. Moderation in this context refers to the attitude of middle or balance in various aspects of life, such as religious, cultural, political, and social (Ali, 2017) So that the existence of religious leaders is even considered as a reflection of religious moderation that is best and easy to emulate by the society because it provides a lot of balance in these various aspects.

The trust of the Indonesian people is still very high in religious leaders regardless of any ethnicity and religion, this is what makes the role of religious leaders in every place very central and important, because it is a reference for local communities to solve certain problems. In fact, sometimes religious leaders not only solve the problems of a group of people but also the problems of individuals from the community.

Religious leaders in this moderation study refer to those who are considered competent in religious affairs and trusted by the wider community such as members or administrators of FKUB and religious counselors. Members of the FKUB Pontianak city are actually experts in religion who are believed from their respective religions and then recommended to become members of the FKUB, so they directly become representatives of their religion and become a connector of news to their religion as well.

FKUB members as trusted representatives in their religion certainly have a great influence because whatever is conveyed will be considered by their religious adherents, such as the rejection of church construction by the local Muslim community on Ampera street in Pontianak City, making the community quarrel because some demanded the construction of houses of worship and some rejected its construction, finally one of the administrators of FKUB Pontianak City, Drs. H. Abdul Syukur came to the location. The incident resolved the problem after deliberation with local Muslims and reviewed the root of the problem, saw the fulfillment of the requirements for the construction of houses of worship and then gave recommendations for the construction of churches (Drs. H. Abdul Syukur, SK, 2023). It was well received by the Muslim community because of his position as a respected and respected religious leader so that it had a great influence in resolving a problem that could trigger conflict.

Regional conflicts are often triggered by issues of difference as happened in the Ambon area in 1999 because the basis of differences in beliefs then began with a small dispute from a group of irresponsible people eventually became a major conflict and was handled nationally by the government (H., 2009). Of course this happened not only because they had different beliefs but there was a trigger between the two which eventually ignited the division of Ambon society, this situation is not much different from Pontianak which has religious diversity that even exceeds Ambon, but because of the role of religious leaders and FKUB members who are fast and solutive in solving problems that can disrupt harmony so that conflicts can be avoided.

Although FKUB Pontianak city does not have a budget in conducting activities related to inter-religious harmony, its members still conduct the task of counseling and religious guidance independently in their respective religions and are more involved in joint activities with certain agencies related to harmony, tolerance, religious moderation or religious issues (Drs. H. Abdul Syukur, SK, 2023).

The awareness and dedication of FKUB members to create harmony is one of the reasons for maintaining religious tolerance because activity programs, tasks and even problem solving can be done regardless of the budget or no budget at all, meaning that this strong desire makes him continue to do things that are beneficial to the people so that harmonization is always created in the life of a multi-religious community.

One of the important roles done by FKUB is to reconcile or even anticipate conflicts that can occur triggered by large religious or cultural activities involving large masses. One example is when there is a large march carried out both religious and cultural activities, the FKUB asks for commitment and guarantees from the organizing committee about the path, event, and time of implementation, even when the parade requires using traditional clothes that carry weapons, the FKUB prohibits the carrying of these weapons or replaces them with replica weapons only. This is done to avoid the possibility of criminal acts that can disrupt the harmony of the people.

In its role as a forum for religious harmony, sometimes FKUB members even go to the field to solve problems of certain groups that are not related to religion. Group problems also sometimes carry tribal or regional attributes so that the solution done by FKUB is to communicate and ask directly with traditional officials or leaders to be handled more quickly, and those directly involved with the problem are collected to solve the root of the problem and then asked to make a statement of attitude not to repeat again.

2. Leaders or administrators of houses of worship, such as mosque administrators, church administrators, temple or temple administrators

The leaders or administrators of houses of worship that the researchers refer to in this paper are Priests, Pastors, Monks, or leaders and members of the board of houses of worship. Their role in maintaining moderation in the city of Pontianak can be said to be very large because they are examples of the lives of pilgrims and their people, this example is an example that will always be used as a benchmark by their people who always hear lectures and sermons from their leaders.

The attitude of tolerance and help regardless of religion practiced by the leaders of houses of worship is a simple example of what is done but has a great influence on cultivating character in the people to follow this attitude. If religious leaders do this, worshippers and people should also follow suit, only leaders who are closer to their gods can live tolerantly with followers of other religions, especially ordinary people whose knowledge is still far below the leaders and administrators of houses of worship.

For example, the form of help regardless of religion implemented by the leader of the house of worship is the provision of health services to the community and free vaccines in the era of Covid-19, organized by the management of HKBP Jeruju Church in collaboration with the Health Office. This health service is conducted within the HKBP Jeruju Church but does not limit its services only to Christian congregations, but to all residents regardless of religion and belief (Pastor Bonar Pasaribu, 2023). So, this opens people's eyes and should serve as a lesson that no matter how different people are in faith and religion, if it is related to help, different beliefs cannot be a barrier to doing so.

Furthermore, religious leaders who act double as spiritual leaders are certainly obliged to maintain community morals by providing direction on social ethical values that are the basis of religious understanding such as religious figures who also serve as administrators of houses of worship helping each other in the construction of houses of worship, even in the Jeruju area of Pontianak city, the Nurbaitillah mosque was given partial assistance of church land when building the previous mosque by the congregation and Church administrators who were beside him (H. Mustafa, 2023). These good ethical values will maintain inter-religious harmony or religious moderation in the city of Pontianak, because an understanding of ethical values has been formed in public consciousness, so the community is no longer easily divided by negative issues and differences of understanding.

In addition to providing direction for ethical and moral values, religious leaders who are also spiritual leaders are obliged to provide an understanding of religious science that is closely related to establishing relationships with God and establishing relationships with fellow humans as well, so that people know the importance of social life and do not distinguish treatment even to someone of different religions, but the existence of religious science also limits the community from mixing their beliefs with beliefs of other religions and do not cross the line in behaving towards followers of other religions.

It is important to note the position of the leader of the house of worship who is also a spiritual teacher, if they spread extreme beliefs or beliefs that make people divided and hate different beliefs, of course this will also facilitate conflicts and divisions in the city of Pontianak. This is because people still consider the leader of a house of worship to be a role model who must be followed and listened to his lectures and sermons. Therefore, religious moderation can be maintained because of the teachings and understandings of religious leaders who are also moderate and tolerant of their own congregations and followers of other religions.

For example, religious conflicts that occurred but are rooted in the leaders of houses of worship are conflicts that occurred in Poso. The conflict that occurred in Poso started from many small problems and personal conflicts (Yunus, 2014), eventually carrying the name of Religion. One of them was in 1992 Rusli Laboio, initially a Muslim, then converted to Christianity and became a pastor, but made a writing and statement that blasphemed the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and denigrated his previous religion. Such a statement made by a spiritual leader certainly has a profound impact on the public, both for Christians and Muslims. Therefore, a leader of a house of worship whose position is an important figure must always maintain statements and attitudes in daily life.

By implementing these habits that are oriented to moderation, house of worship leaders can establish an inclusive atmosphere and educate their people about the importance of harmonious coexistence. It helps foster a better society and provides dignity for all. Awareness of these values can be internalized by worshippers and devotees, resulting in positive changes in the way they communicate and interact with others so as to create religious moderation.

3. The Role of Government

The role of the government in this case is that the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Pontianak has the function of conducted education, training, research, and development in the field of religion and religion. So that the Ministry of Religious Affairs becomes the organizer or supporter of community groups or religious organizations in the context of scientific development and understanding in the community.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is slightly different from FKUB in terms of implementing activities because the Ministry of Religious Affairs is a government institution that has a source of funding, such as from the State Budget (APBN), so that it can independently design activity programs related to its goals and functions. Such as the implementation of Moderation Village and Harmony Awareness Village activities which are conducted on the Labor Intensive Road, Belitung River Village, West Pontianak District. The adjoining church and mosque witnessed and hosted the launching activity.

As an interview conducted to the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Pontianak City, Mr. H. Mi'rad, explained that the government's way in this case the Ministry of Religious Affairs in maintaining Religious Moderation is very diverse, following the conditions and developments of the times, such as by conducted activities involving youth and followers of different religions in an event, using digital technology and social media in spreading messages of moderation and counteracting the spread of news and ideas that break religious harmony. So that the dissemination of moderate ideas is not only through direct speech, but oral and written on social media which lately more effectively disseminate information (H. Mi'rad, S.Ag. MAP., 2023). This was done in order to maintain and strengthen religious moderation in the multireligious city of Pontianak.

Even in an effort to strengthen religious moderation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs through Bimas Islam organizes a religious study program to deepen religious understanding every Monday morning, so all extension workers in Pontianak City are gathered and follow regular studies led by someone who has been recognized for his scientific and religious understanding. One of the goals is that these activities add religious insight and become counseling materials at their respective counseling locations.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs in its function to organize education and development in the field of religion to the community distributes many religious counselors in every corner of the region, so it can be said that religious extension workers who provide religious education and understanding are the spearhead in spreading and maintaining religious moderation, because they are the ones who come into direct contact and teach religious understanding in more detail.

Religious counselors who are directly involved in the community can also straighten and counteract issues including rumors and negative stereotypes between communities so as to prevent the seeds of division and disputes that are not visible to the naked eye, small disputes resolved by religious extension workers although not major conflicts but small disputes that are silenced and not given solutions can become major conflicts that include tribes, race to religion.

In addition, religious counselors, especially Islam, can be categorized as muballigh because they are conveyors of da'wah, the main task of Muballigh or religious extension workers involves handling extremism and radicalism in the community(Akhmadi, 2019). They play a role in presenting an accurate understanding of religion, with the aim of preventing misinterpretation or abuse of religion by extremist groups. Through active participation (Andrian, 2020), they can engage the community in various activities, such as seminars, discussions, and social events aimed at encouraging moderation. Last but not least, muballigh and religious counselors are also expected to be exemplary examples in moderate religious practice. By living according to the values of moderation, they have the potential to inspire people to adopt approaches that are in line with moderation in practicing religion (Muhibbinsyah, 2021).

4. Intellectuals and academics

Religious moderation is not only tied to social relations but cannot be separated from the values around religion itself such as in the field of education (William Chang, OFM. Cap., 2023). Intellectuals play an important role in maintaining moderation by presenting moderate narratives in various aspects of life. They often serve as a link between diverse views and ideologies, encouraging constructive dialogue, and avoiding extremism in thought and action. With a rational and evidence-based approach, they help society to understand the complexity of contemporary issues and offer balanced solutions.

Moderate intellectuals have the ability to understand different perspectives and find common ground among them. They serve as leaders in easing social and political tensions by promoting tolerance, mutual understanding, and cross-group cooperation. With strong analytical and argumentation skills, they open up space for dialogue rooted in wisdom and justice, not in emotion or bias.

More than just providing moderate views, intellectuals are also responsible for shaping healthy and responsible public opinion, it applies to both individuals in education and those outside education. They challenge dogmatic thinking and provide deep insight into the complexities of today's world. By combining knowledge, ethics, and sensitivity to differences, they play a key role in promoting peace, justice, and sustainable social progress especially in multicultural areas such as Pontianak city so that they are not exposed to radicalism (Widiatmaka et al., 2022).

Religious moderation in Pontianak has become increasingly prominent thanks to the active role of academics in spreading moderate teachings in various educational institutions. It is also further strengthened by the existence of subjects / courses that teach specifically the theme of moderation and harmony in religion (Abdurrahman et al., 2023). These academics are not only teachers, but also role models for students and university students in practicing the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and deep understanding of different religions. Through inclusive and dialogical educational approaches, they help shape critical thinking and open attitudes toward diversity of beliefs.

Educational institutions in Pontianak play an important role in strengthening religious moderation through a balanced curriculum and activities that promote interreligious tolerance. The academics work hard to ensure that the course material not only emphasizes on the dogmatic aspects of religion, but also introduces students to a broader understanding of the culture, history, and philosophy of religion. Thus, students in Pontianak not only learn about their own religion (Nai'ma & Bakri, 2021), but also understand different worldviews with respect and tolerance.

The result of education led by academics who put forward moderate teachings is a more inclusive and harmonious society in Pontianak. The graduates not only have extensive knowledge of religion and culture, but also the skills to communicate effectively with individuals from different backgrounds (Rosyidah,

2021). This helps foster interfaith cooperation in building communities that support each other and value diversity as a wealth to be preserved and celebrated.

Conclusion

Religious moderation that has been created and persisted in the city of Pontianak despite being in the midst of diversity and turmoil of dispute issues cannot be separated from the role of several parties who are the key to the existence and strengthen moderate understanding in the city of Pontianak such as religious leaders, leaders or administrators of houses of worship, such as administrators of mosques, churches and monasteries or temples, city governments and intellectuals and academics, They maintain moderation through their respective duties and responsibilities and more actively anticipate the possibility of disputes in the community. Moderate understanding in Pontianak city is also strengthened through programs and activities such as launching religious moderation villages and harmony aware villages, providing interactive dialogue space to representatives of each religion in Pontianak city and the activity of Agma-religion extension workers in spreading moderate ideas in the community directly.

This research is academic evidence of the existence of religious moderation in the city of Pontianak and a reference for other researchers who want to uncover the diversity that exists in the city of Pontianak. This paper certainly has shortcomings in it, but it is hoped that these shortcomings will be a lesson for the development of researchers for the better.

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