

PROMOTING RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH ISLAMIC EDUCATION STUDIES AMID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN BIMA

Azhar*

Abstrak: Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membahas bagaimana moderasi beragama dipromosikan lewat pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di tengah pandemi COVID-19 di Bima. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus. Peneliti melakukan wawancara kepada para guru PAI dan beberapa siswa di SMP Negeri 1 Bima. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam mempromosikan moderasi beragama di tengah pandemi COVID-19, guru PAI di SMP Negeri 1 Bima menggunakan beberapa sikap keberagamaan, antara lain: Sikap adil (*'adalah*), sikap toleransi (*tasamuh*), sikap keseimbangan (*tawazun*), sikap keberagaman (*tanamnu'*) dan sikap keteladanan (*uswah*).

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Agama Islam, Pandemi COVID-19

Abstract: This article aims to discuss how religious moderation is promoted through Islamic Education Studies (Pendidikan Agama Islam / PAI) in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in Bima. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Researchers conducted interviews with Islamic Education Studies teachers and some students at Public Junior High School 1 Bima. The results showed that in promoting religious moderation in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Islamic Education Studies teachers at Public Junior High School 1 Bima used several religious attitudes, they are as follow: justice (*'adalah*) attitude, tolerance (*tasamuh*) attitude, balance (*tawazun*) attitude, diversity (*tanamnu'*) attitude and exemplary (*uswah*) attitude.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Islamic Education Studies, the COVID-19 Pandemic

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* Universitas Islam Negeri Mataram, email: azhar@uinmataram.ac.id



Introduction

Indonesia is the largest multicultural country in the world. There are many ethnic, racial, religious and cultural groups. On the other hand, the diversity of multicultural societies as national wealth, and the situation, is very likely to be a conflict. The diversity of themes themselves can cause religious conflicts and at the same time cause other social conflicts (Nugraha 2020). The difficulties that Indonesia is currently facing in maintaining peace in society have to do not only with the outbreak of COVID-19, but also with the many existing differences, one of which is related to religion (Dany and Risha 2020).

COVID-19 is a global disaster that does not choose its targets based on religious, ethnic and cultural considerations and traditions. Each person is potentially infected if the quality of the body is not strong, does not apply a healthy lifestyle or does not keep a distance (Saenong et al 2020). The effects of COVID-19 are more significant in the lives of human diversity, especially in the lives of Muslims. Using social distance has forced the government to advocate for some time. The mosque was not used as usual, schools and campuses were closed, the learning process was carried out at home through the Internet, and temporarily eliminated the meeting and Friday prayer counseling. This fact causes controversy in the community, including some Muslims. Some understand that closure of places of worship due to COVID-19 should be reasonable, while others dismiss the effects of COVID-19 as closure and regret it (Syatar et al 2020).

Religious conflicts that occur in Indonesia, generally triggered by exclusive religious attitudes, as well as the contestation between religious groups in gaining the support of people who are not based on tolerant attitudes. The establishment of religious moderation values in society, is the strategic for the elimination of various religious conflicts. Conflicts are being waged through moderate and inclusive Islamic education (Akhmadi 2019). The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) of the Republic of Indonesia has actively promoted religious moderation for the past five years

to ensure understanding and practice so that religious teachings can be carried out without extremes. The moderation program has become visible and tangible. However, there are still symptoms of internal conflict within a religion (Sihombing et al 2020). In early 2019, the Ministry of Religious Affairs called it the “Year of Religious Moderation” (Hefni 2020).

Several studies related to religious moderation have been conducted by: 1) Ahdar et. al. (2019) Moderation and Mainstream of Pesantren / Madrasah Education. 2) Harto and Tastin (2019), Development of Islamic Education Studies based *Wasatiyah*-Knowledge: Efforts to Build Religious Moderation Attitudes of Learners. The method of these two studies is library research, so it has not been able to give specific examples. 3) Hefni (2020), Religious Moderation in a Digital Space: Mainstreaming Study of Religious Moderation at the State Islamic University. 4) Purwanto, et. al. (2019) Internalization of The Value of Moderation Through Islamic Education Studies in Public Universities. The two studies focused on the university level need to be undertaken at the primary school level. While the study is similar to this study, the COVID-19 situation, which affects the psychology of learning, makes it different. Furthermore, the topics of Religious Moderation touches are different, so there are new things that will definitely help with previous studies.

Religious moderation becomes something that is fully enhanced by dealing with the effects of such unusual situations. People should be able to stay moderate in their diversity lives, not promoting in various ways, like giving them a certain status on social media. The importance of this article lies in the immediacy of COVID-19 negative effects on the societal fabric. Bima, a district in West Nusa Tenggara, has been classified as an underdeveloped region and prone to violent agitation. In 2017, Bima’s GDP is ranked 411 out of 514 cities/districts in Indonesia. A survey conducted by the SETARA Institute for Democracy and Peace in 2018 classified Bima as in the threshold of the yellow and red zones of intolerance in Indonesia marking a higher tendency of

societal intolerance towards people who were different from the majority (Natsir 2017).

According to Ahmad, et. al. (2017) states that West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) is included in the 14 Indonesian provinces, which are often social conflicts; While the district of Bima is the region where the intensity of social conflict is highest. The social conflicts that occur in the Bima are equally distributed in almost all the sub-districts with the same pattern and style and also differ from each other. Bima's social conflict was caused by the erosion of values, culture and religion. Bima's conflicting community often leads to controversy. According to Anwar, Bima's social conflict occurred due to the collapse of local wisdom (Anwar & Al-Hasyimiyyah 2019).

Bima is known for a higher level of violence and extremism than other parts of west Nusa Tenggara. The number of conflict that occurred in Bima is higher than other regions. Some of the violence that took place in Bima was also carried out by radical elements and groups with extraordinary religious understanding. Several radical and terrorist attacks in Bima, including the 2011 bombing of Umar Bin Khatab Islamic boarding in the village of Sanolo in Bima regent. In 2014, there was also a shot that killed the chief of the Ambarawi police in the Bima district. This shot was later discovered by the protagonist Sharif, a member of the terrorist Mujahidin Indonesian Timur (MIT). In October 2017, police also fired on a terrorist group in the Ambalawi sub-district, Bima regency (Asyari and Kadri 2020).

Research conducted by the Maarif Institute shows that radical groups have massively penetrated radical views among students through educational institutions. There are basically three main ways of understanding and intolerance in the school environment. First, extracurricular activities. Second, the role of the teacher in the teaching process. Third, weaknesses of the school policies to control the entry of radicals into schools. Therefore, religious moderation needs to take a strategic position in the mainstream (Dirga 2020).

The government can take several policy actions; First, religious moderation should be a concern of the government when developing the National Long Term Development Plan (RPJPN), as the government takes religious moderation among religious people in Indonesia seriously. Secondly, it concerns educational institutions: pesantren, madrasah and other universities, as well as other informal institutions in strengthening humanitarian values, values of religious harmony and religious moderation. Third, the development of religious literacy and interfaith education. Fourth, schools should expand the practice of various religious experiences so that we can establish interfaith cooperation (Sutrisno 2019).

The concepts and practices of Islamic education are often criticised for practicing an exclusive educational process, dogmatic and less moving aspects of morality. The indicators are seen in the process of religious education in general, which emphasises the safety of the individual and their own groups rather than the safety that others outside of themselves and their own groups (Abdullah 2011).

Dealing with the above data suggests that the Bima region needs to promote religious moderation in order to combat widespread intolerance and radicalisation amid the COVID-19 pandemic through Islamic Education Studies in Public Junior High School 1 Bima. Because educational institutions are indeed the land of national ideas, inculcating the values of multiculturalism, bringing more peaceful religious messages and spreading love for humanity. It manifests in the curriculum of Islamic Education Studies which is oriented towards religious moderation.

The above conditions should be mutual concern for different parties, especially in the education world. Teachers of Islamic Education Studies must make a strong effort to establish Islamic moderating values, especially through the implementation of Religious Moderation. The role of Islamic Education Studies teachers in Public Junior High School 1 Bima is to present peaceful, calm, enlightening and spirituality values for students while blaming each other for admiring and praising the human side.

In the event of intolerance, the most basic question is actually about the materials used by the institution and the content of the Islamic Education Studies curriculum.

Literature Review

The Concept of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is a term for moderate religious beliefs and knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, ethics, and friendship. The central word refers to the word *Wasathiyah*, which uses the words *wasat*, *al-wusta*, *amsat*, *amsatuhum*, and *fawasatna* in the Qur'anic terminology (Yaakub 2016). According to Schmid (2013), moderate is a category of ideology that represents the rejection of radical or extremist ideas, especially in the context of politics and religion.

According to Shihab (2019), moderation is often called as *wasathiyah* and is compared to liberalism, fundamentalism, extremism and Puritanism. The term *wasathiyah* itself is actually derived purely from Islam, which is illogical, meaning that all its teachings have a characteristic of moderation, therefore followers should be moderate. Moderation refers to the position of *wasathiyah* which is an intellectual current characterised by or proclaiming a characteristic as centrist or moderate (*wasat*) or occupying an intermediate position (*wasat*) between extreme alternatives (Schwedler 2011)

Wasathiyah is a term used in the Quran to refer to the strategic position of believers (Islamic people) in communities (Harahap 2015). According to Ath-Thabari (2008), the term *wasat* in verse 143 of al-Baqarah is interpreted as *khayr*. Someone is called *wasat* if he is selected from among the people. Islam is called "*wasath* religion" due to its status as a chosen religion among religions. At the same time, Muslims are called "*Umat Wasathiyah*" because they are the chosen ones who behave in *wasathiyah* and speak justice in society.

Religious moderation can be interpreted as both the right and the left of the religion, not the extremes, the views, attitudes and actions are always in the middle, always acting justly (Kemenag 2019). The middle position makes the man impartially left and

right, and anyone who seems to be polite and exemplary to others can see it. The moderation of Islam is one of the characteristics and modes of thought inherent in Islam that indicate its authentic origins; As for the extremist attitudes found among Muslims, it has been partially corrected (Zamimah 2018).

Moderate is a term often misunderstood in the Indonesian religious community. There are those who believe that moderate people do not have firmness in establishing, do not take seriously, do not even take religious teachings seriously. Moderates are misinterpreted as a compromise of theological beliefs between one religion and another (Kemenag 2004). Moderation is about bringing different centers together, without trying to find the right balance in which people of different cultures, religions and political views listen to each other and learn to overcome their differences (Kamali 2015).

Religious Moderation Amid The COVID-19 Pandemic

When the COVID-19 virus first spreading in Indonesia, the government immediately collaborated with MUI to issue policies and *fatwa* aimed at creating the benefit of the people and the suggestion of congregational prayer and Friday prayers in the mosque were temporarily abolished. This fact generates controversy in the community, even among some Muslims. Some understand that closing places of worship due to the COVID-19 should be prudent, while others reject the effects of the COVID-9 by lamenting the closures of places of worship (Saputera 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has had a major impact on religious life, has resulted in the introduction of a social distancing policy that later changes the term to physical distancing. This policy implies that he cannot hold mass services in Places of worship. The holy sites that have become centers of religious activity, such as the Great Mosque in Mecca, St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican, the Western Wall in Jerusalem, and other religious shrines normally visited by millions of devotees for worship and pilgrimages, are finally closing. In early March, the government of the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia even temporarily closed Umrah until the Hajj 2020 M / 1441 H was very limited (Sabara 2020).

The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) as an independent institution that supports Muslims in Indonesia has issued fatwas that would directly prevent the COVID-19 outbreak. Nevertheless, MUI must work hard again in educating people about the importance of religious moderation context, so that the *fatwa* issued do not leave conflict in the community and can be adapted to cover all zones in accordance with prevailing circumstances (Sabara 2020). The effects of COVID-19 are most noticeable in the lives of various people, especially Muslims. The use of social distancing forced the government to provide counseling for a period of time, the mosque was not used as usual, schools and campuses conducted the teaching and learning process at home through the Internet (Syatar 2020).

Methods

This article becomes a descriptive study by looking at the facts. This study uses a quality approach with a case study methodology. The researchers interviewed teachers of Islamic Education Studies and some students at Public Junior High School 1 Bima. Observations are also made to obtain a lot of data (Creswell 2012).

Result and Discussion

The Challenge of Implementing Religious Moderation amid of The COVID-19 Pandemic in Bima

Religious concepts of piety are sometimes clashed with government-issued policies and religious organization fatwas regarding the prevention of the spread of COVID-19. For example, the government recommends breaking the COVID-19 propagation chain by applying socio-physical distance patterns. But considered by some religious leaders in Bima as a fear of the disease that God has created according to them, the only faith that a believer should have is the fear of God. In the event of an epidemic, such a vision would only reduce people's awareness due

to the disease outbreak, only the loss of vigilance that would eventually lead to widespread transmission of the disease.

Bima's religious leaders have different interpretations and understandings regarding the plague and epidemics they attack. Theological theories and terminology are often used to analyse or circumvent the pandemic with a religious approach. Religious models have been replaced by the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic is part of theology too. There are many beliefs and mortal attitudes that believe life or death is in God's hands and so they ignore it.

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the local government in Bima to refrain from allowing the crowds to practice religion, which is response to the convention on the bodies of Muslims in Bima. People say that Muslims currently fast during Ramadan. It is usually crowded with people reciting the Qur'an, now visitors like to get lost. With the prohibition of worship in the mosque because it involves so many people, some Muslims feel deprived of their rights in the religion.

The impact of the COVID-19 is most striking in the life of Bima people diversity, more specifically Muslims. The application of social distancing forced the government to give advice for a while the mosque was not used as usual, schools and campuses were closed so that the teaching and learning process was carried out at home via online, and the suggestion of congregational prayers and Friday prayers at the mosque was temporarily abolished. That fact gave rise to polemics in Bima society including in some Muslims themselves. Some understand that the closure of places of worship because of the COVID-19 is something that should be reasonable, but others rule out the impact of the COVID-19 by regretting the closure of the place of worship.

Therefore, based on these facts, it is necessary to further understand that in the COVID-19 pandemic situation like this is beyond the reason and reach of Muslims themselves. Religious moderation becomes something that is absolutely maximized in the face of the impact of such abnormal situations. Bima people should

be able to be moderate in living their diversity lives, not by providing propaganda in various aspects.

Promoting religious moderation through Islamic Education Studies amid COVID-19 Pandemic of the Junior High School in Bima

The Government of the Republic of Indonesia through the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) Nadiem Anwar Makarim has decided to deal with the online learning process announced by circular 36962 / MPK. A / HK / 2020. Online learning is applied at all levels of education (Azhar 2021), including Public Junior High School 1 Bima. Status of students studying with a face-to-face and formal formal learning system. It immediately went online, with an online school system in their homes.

Islamic Education Studies is one of the subjects taught in online learning that has a very important role in shaping the personality of learners towards the moderation of Islam. The introduction of Islamic education studies is expected to enable students to understand Islamic teachings with a comprehensive understanding, rigorous, or even incomprehensible understanding. The rise of extremism and radicalism in a society that is said to have a large following from the students should be used as diagnostic material for various parties, especially for developers and observers. Islamic teachings provide etiquette, communication, balance, and a role model in life. Therefore, the Islamic education Studies is a deliberate attempt by teachers to prepare students for the knowledge, understanding and acceptance of true Islamic values.

Islamic education studies teachers at Public Junior High School 1 Bima have placed the values of Justice (*'adalah*), Tolerance (*Tasamuh*), Balance (*Tawazun*), Diversity (*Tanawwu'*) and Exemplary (*Uswah*) at the edge of content presentation in the online learning process to promote religious moderation amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Justice ('adalah) amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

Treating individuals fairly and civilized throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is to follow all the principles issued by the government to benefits health protocols with the aim of breaking the chain of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. Therefore, the community is trained to be fair to others who will have a positive impact on themselves (Setiawan 2020). Another way to be fair can be done by not needing to give negative stigma to people infected with the Covid-19 virus. Although the goal is good, which is to avoid viruses but this good goal does not need to violate the rights of others (Rika 2020).

Justice (*‘adalah*) attitudes and behavior of Islam promote by Islamic Education Studies teachers for the students through online learning at Public Junior High School 1 Bima amid the COVID-19 pandemic, are as follows:

- Participate in breaking the chain of spread of the virus, being only at home;
- Carefully and actively promote positive social attitudes;
- be an example in leading a clean and healthy lifestyle;
- Engage in daily activities that positively affect you and others;
- Follow the call of the government to implement the health protocol.

Tolerance (Tasamuh) amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

In Indonesia, the phenomenon of intolerance has emerged and is now beginning to develop. Its emergence and development can also rely on education. Both public and Islamic institutions play an important role in prevention and treatment. Efforts towards thoughts, attitudes and actions that reflect intolerance (Mumin 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic is the right time for student of the educational institution from different races and beliefs to weave together, to tolerate, to help, without asking what their race and culture are, but in the name of humanity in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Tolerance (*Tasamuh*) attitudes and behavior of Islam promote by Islamic Education Studies teachers for the students through online learning at Public Junior High School 1 Bima amid the COVID-19 pandemic, are as follows:

- Do not stigmatise patients who the COVID-19 positively towards their families and relatives;
- Supports and prevents COVID-19 patients from receiving social punishments such as exile and social exclusion;
- Do not stigmatising certain religious groups as COVID-19 Carrier;
- Do not delivery hate speech to the teachings of other religions, directly or on social media amid the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Do not spreading hoaxes related to the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Help neighbors of different religions who are COVID-19 positively.

Religious moderation is indeed the key to building tolerance and harmony both locally and nationally amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Religious moderation aimed at rejecting extremism and liberalism in religion and keeping the peace is the key to balance. This is how every religious person can treat others with respect, accept differences and live together in peace and harmony. Islam teaches mutual respect, tolerance, and respect for the values of humanity and courtesy and contains moderate doctrines, often referred to as Islamic moderation (Winata 2020).

Online learning confirms the meaning of tolerance in the social life of the students amid the COVID-19 pandemic, inclusion in the school environment as a social system becomes the importance of existence, because the values of tolerance should not be rejected. The individual or group is restless and anxious that with tolerance it becomes a form of self-respect and worship of others. Not intolerance, selfishness, or pleasure. Tolerance is basically a vision that is actively pursued globally by recognizing human rights and the fundamental freedoms of others.

Islam and *wasathiyah* is manifested in the attitude and behavior of Islam that is inclusive, humanist and tolerant. This attitude should be more highlighted in addressing pluralism and diversity such as in Indonesia amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Muslims should also appear as mediators and be justified in relationships between different groups (Usman 2015).

Balance (Tawazun) amid the COVID-19 pandemic

The daily life of a person includes the lives of individuals, families and society. This person needs to live proportionally and evenly. Living a balanced (*Tawazun*) life does not mean that all aspects of life have to do with equal parts, but consequently part and priority (Siroj 2006). Yusuf Al-Qardhawi stated the middle as *al-tawazun* (balance), i.e. the balance between two paths or two directions facing each other or opposite; *ruhīyah* (spiritualism) with *maddīyah* (materialism); *fardīyah* (individuals) with *jama'īyah* (collective); *waqī'īyah* (contextual) with *mitsaliyah* (idealism); *tsabat* (consistent) with *taghayyur* (changes) (Niam 2019).

The position of Balance (*Tawazun*) is very necessary for the Muslims, the balance aim is that we do not do anything excessive in other things, or even forget it, when what is planned has a right that must be fulfilled in us. Islam is a religion that emphasizes the importance of balance for the people. Balance involves the balance between God and man (*Ibadah*) and the balance between human and human being (*Muamalah*), the balance between the human relationship with the universe (*Kholifah*).

We are currently facing the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the consequences are small and the transmission of the virus is very rapid, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) urged us to stay healthy at all times and try to prevent transmission. Therefore, we are command to worship, study and work from home.

Balance (*Tawazun*) attitudes and behavior of Islam promote by Islamic Education Studies teachers for the students through online learning at Public Junior High School 1 Bima amid the COVID-19 pandemic, are as follows:

- Comply with the prohibition not to pray in mosques to stop the spread of COVID-19 and carry out prayer at home and pray that the COVID -19 pandemic will end quickly;
- Obey government regulations to stay at home, avoid crowds, always wash your hands and maintain cleanliness;
- Provide assistance to people affected by covid-19.

Diversity (Tanawwu') amid the COVID-19 pandemic

Policies made by all countries of the world as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic affect every aspect of a country's life, including the religious sector. The decisions made by the state on all steps of national life often contradict the opposition of the people. A country that contains decisions that are often related to religious principles in the field of religion. In such situations, a religious moderation approach should be implemented (Novia and Wasehudin 2020).

Through religious moderation during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can monitor all activities carried out through social media, including teaching and learning activities. Therefore, how the role of teachers in Islamic Education Studies at Public Junior High School 1 Bima leads social media students intelligently, the online learning process during the COVID-19 pandemic is going well and students can uphold the value of diversity (*Tanawwu'*) in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Diversity (*Tanawwu'*) attitudes and behavior of Islam promote by Islamic Education Studies teachers for the students through online learning at Public Junior High School 1 Bima amid the COVID-19 pandemic, are as follows:

- Do not use social media other than for teaching and learning activities;
- Do not disseminate information that divides religious people through social media;
- Do not commit hate speech and insult the teachings of other religions on social media;

- Not spreading hoaxes related to the COVID-19 pandemic on social media;
- It is necessary to guide and control parents in monitoring the child when learning online at home.

Exemplary (Uswah) amid the Covid-19 Pandemic

Teacher awareness amid the COVID-19 pandemic is needed, especially in complying with health protocols in breaking the chain of transmission. The teachers need to set a good example (*Uswah*) for everyone, especially students (Dunisa 2020).

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the professionalism of Islamic Education Studies teachers at Public Junior High School 1 Bima are currently being tested. The outbreak led all activities carried out at home, including learning activities. Teachers are required to investigate the delivery of materials so that students are served even without having to face up in the classroom (Agustinus 2020).

The professionalism of the teacher is not enough to be measured only against the administrative certificate. In addition, the teacher is a character who teaches, guides, and evaluates students so that they can act independently and nobly. The intended teacher figure is a teacher who is not only academically intelligent but also a humanist, innovative and transformative teacher who continuously learns to develop himself as a whole through various experiences in learning theory and practice.

In an effort to fight the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, continue to receive an education that not only sharpens intellectual intelligence, but touches the hearts of every student. Education focused on the process of human reproduction is an attempt to instill noble values in a new generation, which should be intelligent and human.

Conclusion

The impact of the COVID-19 is most striking in the life of Bima people diversity, more specifically Muslims. The application

of social distancing forced the government to give advice for a while the mosque was not used as usual, schools and campuses were closed so that the teaching and learning process was carried out at home via online. Islamic education studies teachers at Public Junior High School 1 Bima have placed the values of Justice (*‘adalah*), Tolerance (*Tasamuh*), Balance (*Tawazun*), Diversity (*Tanawwu*) and Exemplary (*Uswah*) at the edge of content presentation in the online learning process to promote religious moderation amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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