

**EXISTENCE OF NON-MUSLIM STUDENT IN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY:  
REPRESENTATION OF UIN SUNAN KALIJAGA IN IMPROVING  
RELIGIOUS MODERATION**

Ikhsan Rifai<sup>1</sup>, Shofia Dewi Achyati<sup>2</sup>, Fahriza Indah Nuraini<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga

[rifaiikhs3@gmail.com](mailto:rifaiikhs3@gmail.com)

**ABSTRAK**

Moderasi beragama sangat penting karena ada berbagai kasus perpecahan yang terjadi hanya karena perbedaan agama. Moderasi beragama adalah sikap atau cara pandang seseorang terhadap umat beragama selain dirinya secara inklusif. Nilai-nilai tersebut dapat diterapkan dalam kehidupan umat beragama. Berkaitan dengan hal tersebut, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan moderasi beragama dengan kasus yang terjadi di UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitik dengan subjek penelitian mahasiswa nonmuslim di Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa universitas mempromosikan moderasi beragama. Selanjutnya penelitian ini menjelaskan tentang keberadaan mahasiswa non muslim di UIN Sunan Kalijaga dan langkah-langkah program penerimaan mahasiswa baru untuk nonmuslim. Implikasinya, UIN Sunan Kalijaga representatif dan dapat menjalankan kehidupan antar umat beragama secara moderat.

**Kata kunci** : moderasi beragama, mahasiswa, universitas Islam, UIN Sunan Kalijaga

**ABSTRACT**

*Religious moderation is very important because various cases of divisions occur only because of religious differences. Religious moderation is a person's attitude or perspective towards religious people other than himself inclusively. These values can be applied in the lives of religious people. In this regard, this study aims to describe religious moderation with the case at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. This study uses a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytic approach with non-Muslim students as research subjects at the State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga. The results showed that the university promotes religious moderation. Furthermore, this study explains the existence of non-Muslim students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and the steps for the non-Muslim new student admission program. The implication is that UIN Sunan Kalijaga is representative and can carry out inter-religious life moderately.*

**Keywords:** *religious moderation, university student, Islamic universities, UIN Sunan Kalijaga*

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently intensifying its attitude of moderation in religion. Various kinds of studies, discussion forums, and webinars on religious moderation are widely carried out by various institutions in Indonesia. Indonesia, through the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, has mainstreamed the religious moderation program as an effort to encourage the development of religious moderation in the lives of religious people (Arif, 2020, p. 97). This is intensified considering that Indonesia itself is a plural country consisting of various cultures, races, languages, and also religions (Akhmadi, 2019, p. 47). Religion itself in Indonesia has around 6 religions inaugurated by the government, not including the belief systems found in various tribes (see *Portal Data Kementerian Agama*, n.d.).

The role of religion in human life has a very large role, religion here plays a role in organizing and directing humans into good deeds to other fellow human beings (Sunardin, 2021, p. 10). More deeply, the role of religion in human

life is as a guide and handle in acting and interacting both with fellow adherents of the religion being embraced and with adherents of other religions. That way, life in society will be intertwined safely, comfortably, and also full of happiness if inter-religious people practice the teachings of that religion. The same is true in the teachings of Islam (Mubarok, 2018, p. 155; Pajarianto et al., 2022, p. 2).

Islam has a Qur'an and Hadith which are used as a guide for Muslims in living life. Islam also regulates how Muslims appreciate and respect people of other religions. Islam as *a rahmatan lil 'alamin* teaches its adherents as taught by the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ to always do good to all beings in this universe. As taught by the Prophet Muhammad SAW, Muslims in Indonesia also strive to always do good to all beings in the universe, including humans who embrace religions other than Islam (non-Muslim).

Although both a problem and an opportunity, this is conducted to inspire a more moderate interpretation of religious texts,

strengthening dialogue and activity connected to religious moderation. This is certainly done as an effort to provide understanding and knowledge to the Indonesian people regarding religious moderation to create a safe and peaceful life in this Indonesian country. Thus, the attitude of moderation in religion has an important role in maintaining the integrity and unity of the Indonesian state.

Even though, the ideal conditions described above cannot properly occur. As the New Order in the late 1990s regime fell, cases of radicalism and terrorism increased (Hamayotsu, 2013, p. 658; Ma'rifah, 2012, p. 243). Data from SETARA Institute reported that in 2020 there were at least 180 events and 424 acts of violations of freedom of religion and belief (Sigit & Hasani, 2021, p. 24). From the report, there were at least 3 victims among students regarding violations of freedom of religion/belief. In line with this, according to a report from the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP), cases of intolerance in Indonesia are always increasing

(BPIP: *Kasus Intoleransi Di Indonesia Selalu Meningkat*, n.d.). It is also inseparable from the fact that such cases can occur in any educational institution, including in this context universities (Faizah, 2021, p. 302).

In this regard, a concrete solution is to eliminate the exclusivity of religion. Furthermore, in this case, it can be seen from the example in UIN Sunan Kalijaga which is moderate. This is evidenced by the absence of the exclusiveness of the label 'Islamic campus' to provide access to higher education to all religious believers.

Regarding religious moderation research, there are previous studies that focus on educational institutions in general (Faizah, 2021; Sutrisno, 2019) as well as within the scope of Islamic higher education (Hefni, 2020). In contrast to this, this research focuses more on uncovering stories and facts about religious moderation contained in UIN Sunan Kalijaga as one of the moderate universities in Indonesia by researching one of the nonmuslim students who continued their studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

Religious moderation can be understood as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that always takes a middle position, always act fairly, and not be extreme in religion (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019a, p. 17). The term moderation comes from the word *moderatio* (Latin). In English, the word can be translated as medium-ness. In other words, the diction is interpreted as not excess and not lack. The *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI) mentions moderation is defined as *reducing violence and avoiding extremes* (*Hasil Pencarian - KBBI Daring*, n.d.). Examples of the use of the sentence are "the person has a moderate attitude", the sentence means that the person is mediocre, reasonable, and not extreme (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019b, p. 15; Ratnasari & Fahmi, 2022, p. 825). Whereas in Arabic, moderation can be known as "*wasath*" or "*wasathiyyah*", in rhythm with the word *tawassuth* which means middle, *i'tidal* which means fair, and *tawazun* which means balanced.

A person can be said to be *wasith* if he applies the principle of *wasathiyyah* in his daily life. The

word "*wasith*" has been absorbed in Indonesian into the word "*wasit*" which has three definitions, namely: a) mediator, intermediary; b) the difference between the disputants; and c) the match leader. In addition to being middle, fair, and balanced, *wasathiyyah* can also be interpreted as the "best choice" in Arabic. This hints at the same meaning, namely fair, which in this context means choosing a middle path or occupying a middle position between various extreme positions or paths (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019b, p. 16). Another term related to moderation is tolerance. Linguistically, tolerance comes from tolerance, tolerance which means a quality of patience or openness to opinions, beliefs, behavior, and customs, which are different from what a person has (Hornby in Zainuddin, 2010, p. 15). This moderation/tolerance when connected with religious diction then it can be said that this attitude is very good if applied in everyday life.

Religious moderation is needed as a cultural strategy in caring for the Indonesian state (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019a, p. 10). This kind

of moderation is a religious understanding that is by the compound state of the Indonesian nation. It needs to be a limitation, religious moderation in Islam does not mean mixing the main matters of religion (*ushuliyah*) with other religions but rather tends to be balanced and fair and tolerant of people of other religions (Hashim Kamali in Sutrisno, 2019, p. 328). Being moderate is enough just to respect it (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019b, p. 5).

In this case, from an Islamic perspective, Muslims should not worship God in the same way as people of other religions. In other words, religious moderation is practiced as a religious attitude that balances practicing one's own (exclusive) religion and respecting the religious practices of those who have other views (inclusive) (Jamaluddin, 2022, p. 3; Rasyid, 2016, p. 114).

The opposite of this attitude of religious moderation is excessive. In Arabic, it is *a tatharruf* (standing at the end or far from the middle) which in English is called *extreme, radical,* and

*excessive*. Also, a treatment that aims to corner or treat an unbalanced individual or group subject due to differences in religion, belief, race, ethnicity, or social class is a form of discrimination (Khadafi & Mardiasih, 2021, p. 18).

This research uses qualitative methods. Qualitative methods are used to explain of experience of people in the research environment in this case discussing the practice of religious moderation (Emzir, 2019, p. 174).

This study used data collection methods with triangulation techniques: observation techniques, interview techniques, and documentation techniques. Triangulation techniques are used to test the credibility of the data obtained. Furthermore, the interview is detailed (in-depth interview). The main function of this interview is to know the vivid experiences of others and their meaning from those experiences (Seidman, 2013, p. 9).

The sampling technique uses a *purposive sampling* technique using an informant from one of the non-Muslim students studying at UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Non-Muslim

students at UIN Sunan Kalijaga are a minority group so they become key informants. The number of participants in the study was not limited by numbers but was limited by two criteria, namely sufficiency and saturation (Seidman, 2013, p. 58). The research time is May 9 and May 16, 2022. Data analysis using Miles and Huberman's model, namely using steps to reduce, present, and verify data (Miles et al., 2014, pp. 10–12).

## DISCUSSION

### Promotion of UIN Sunan Kalijaga as a Moderate University

UIN Sunan Kalijaga a higher education institution located in Yogyakarta, Indonesia has appeared several times in various media carrying the theme of religious moderation. Let's take an example with the statement of Al Makin, suggesting to all components of society to give attention to specificities and traditions that differ from one another (antaranews.com, 2022). This university also leans towards moderate Islam (Sujadi et al., 2016, p. 97)

Not only that, UIN Sunan Kalijaga held a *syawalan* event filled with various religious leaders and enlivened by art performances from each interfaith community. It is interesting to understand that *syawalan* event as *halal bi halal* or *riyaya* in Javanese culture is a form of Indonesian culture that is carried out during the month of Syawal. According to Geertz (in Hakam, 2015, p. 390) *riyaya* can be a real action of tolerance between ideologies and plural religious systems. This is relevant to that event.

Furthermore, UIN Sunan Kalijaga also provides a religious moderation workshop (see *UIN Sunan Kalijaga Cetak Agent Moderasi Beragama Melalui Rumah Moderasi Beragama dan Kebinekaan*, n.d.). This is under the statement of Al Makin who served as rector that moderation and tolerance cannot be carried out orally alone but it is necessary to recognize the differences in religious traditions according to each belief (in *Syawalan di UIN SUKA, Perkuat Kesadaran atas Keragaman, Tradisi, dan Seni*, n.d.)

### **Catholic Nun as a Student**

The first undergraduate non-Muslim student recorded at UIN Sunan Kalijaga was a student named Ambrosia Maria Magga. In addition to working as a nun, she took study at UIN Sunan Kalijaga by taking a bachelor's study program in Library Science. She became a new student of UIN Sunan Kalijaga in 2019 (see *PDDikti - Pangkalan Data Pendidikan Tinggi*, n.d.).

According to her confession, she registered for UIN Sunan Kalijaga by choosing the portfolio path. This path is one of the three independent selection paths for new students. Initially, when she wanted to sign up she felt hesitation, fear, worried, and restlessness. This feeling arises because of the base of the university which is an Islamic university.

In the initial phase when she became a student at UIN Sunan Kalijaga she was grateful to be admitted to the university but she found herself feeling uncomfortable. This is because it has differences in adhering to religion with other students.

With the passage of time and frequent communication with her friends, both within the scope of the Library Science study program and the scope of the Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, she was increasingly courageous.

During the campus environment introduction period, she also encountered a requirement stating that all female students must wear a hijab, a question arose in her mind, so in the end, she decided to ask about these requirements and it turned out that she was allowed to continue wearing the nun's clothes. As she said in an interview "When PBAK, I asked, can I wear nun clothes? and they replied that sisters can wear nun clothes because we have jilbab and you also have jilbab." (A. M. Magga, personal communication, May 10, 2022).

Problems also come with her studies, especially when she got Islamic courses such as Arabic and Tawhid. At first, she found it difficult but without despair, she still tried to understand it. The lecturers are also very kind and helpful as she said "The lecturers are also good, from the way they teach, it helped

me so that until now I still survive." (A. M. Magga, personal communication, May 10, 2022).

Furthermore, during the interaction with friends, she felt that her Muslim majority friends gave her a warm welcome. The informant said she was well received like family. As a nun who lives in silence and is detached from her family, she can live and have a new family at UIN Sunan Kalijaga.

Aside from her Muslim friends, she also has moderate views. This was preoccupied with the unheeded response she made by answering the recitation of "wa'alaikumussalam" when her friends said *salam* to him. Her friends don't mind if she says it wrong and always correct it.

UIN Sunan Kalijaga has at least a campus mosque. Things like this do not make the non-Muslim students object to entering the mosque area. In terms of praying, she often joins her friends. She even entered the mosque and she also tried to pray. According to her confession, in the Catholic tradition, there are also five daily prayers like Muslims perform the obligatory

prayers. From here, the nun became aware and learned that inside the mosque there is a sacred boundary so they have to take off their footwear when entering the sacred boundary area. The nun also always told her friends to remind her if there were certain rules that she didn't know so that she could respect each other. When her friends prayed, the nun waited for their friends while guarding the bags belonging to their friends while also praying.

Until now she has never felt any difference, united with her friends at UIN Sunan Kalijaga and felt proud of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. Although the base of the university is Islamic, it can be open and the tolerance is very high. She did not hesitate to suggest both to prospective new students who are Muslim and non-Muslim. According to her, UIN Sunan Kalijaga is open, has high tolerance, protects all students, and does not differentiate between religion, race, and ethnicity.

### **UIN Sunan Kalijaga's Next Step**

Moving on from the existence of this non-Muslim undergraduate student, UIN Sunan Kalijaga as a State Islamic Religious



College (PTKIN) opened a new path specifically for prospective students who adhere to religions other than Islam. This can be proven by the acceptance of new students on the diversity path. Of course, this gives a new alternative for non-Muslim students when they have to continue their study period on a campus labeled as Islam with an environment and friends who are predominantly Muslim.

This step is enough to be a tangible form of UIN Sunan Kalijaga in seeding the frame of religious moderation of the Indonesian people. This is also the first time the only one of the PTKIN has opened a diversity path. Such a policy is a form of attention to the importance of understanding moderate religious life.

The exclusive paradigm for only Muslim students is now irrelevant. In general, students from various backgrounds can join the academic community of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. In particular, UIN Sunan Kalijaga accepts all religious believers and places them in an equal position and without discrimination.

## **CONCLUSION**

Even though UIN Sunan Kalijaga is an Islamic university, it is an example of a model for implementing a life of religious moderation. Several times the academic community expressed the idea of moderate life among religious communities.

Also, UIN Sunan Kalijaga's religious moderation can be proven by the presence of non-Muslim students. The student's life is moderate without any discrimination due to religious differences. Lesson from that, through its admission, this university provides a new student registration path by holding the diversity path.

This study focuses on attempting to uncover the virtues of moderation in a general framework. Also, this study, only reveals a non-Muslim case of religious moderation. Thus, UIN Sunan Kalijaga from the three discussion topics above, especially the presence of non-Muslim students, has represented a moderate Islamic university.

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