Youths and the Dynamics of Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Semarang

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Abstract. This paper investigates how the mainstreaming of religious moderation within the context of the youth movements in Semarang, Indonesia, may exist and be accepted by the community. This study employed descriptive qualitative methodology and the hypothesis of emerging social movements. This research tried to explain the dynamics of mainstreaming of religious moderation based on youth movements in Semarang. Primary data were acquired through interviews with young members of the Semarang Interfaith Brotherhood (PELITA), the Institute for Social and Religious Studies (eLSA), and Gusdurian Semarang. Secondary data were acquired through a documentary assessment of the literature on religious moderation and the three youth groups. The research discovered discrepancies in the features of the organizational structure of PELITA, eLSA, and Gusdurian Semarang, which altered the network of movements and gave rise to various strategies for mainstreaming religious moderation. In addition, the three communities organized the masses to preserve religious moderation in the public arena by conducting education, campaigning, and advocating for minorities. Through these initiatives, religious moderation was actualized by pioneering inter-faith groups' integration to strive for universal human values.

Keywords: youth; religious moderation; social movements

1 Introduction

Nowadays, there has been an increasingly widespread transformation of religious orientation, and many religious groupings have removed the global humankind spirit. Da'wah merely ends at the halal-haram issue in fiqh, the textual meaning of prophetic treatises, and the restricted explanation of Islam. Consequently, misconceptions occur concerning religious scriptures, which cause conflict, intolerance, and harsh attitudes towards adherents of other faiths.

The Setara Institute reported 846 freedom of religion and belief Between 2014 and 2019 (Kompas, 2020). The Semarang Institute for Social and Religious Studies released an annual report on religious freedom in Central Java and characterized 2020 with terrorism and multiple intolerance incidences. Twenty-three terrorist suspects were arrested in March, May, July, and October 2020. The intolerance issues also arose, such as the terror toward a student at SMAN Gemolong Sragen for not wearing a headscarf, criticism, and question on the logo of the 75th anniversary of Surakarta Sharia Council, rejection on the Ashura Shia Jamaat celebration in Semarang, rejection on the construction and renovation of the Mojolaban Church in Sukoharjo, and attack on the *midodareni* event in Solo (Kholiludin, dkk., 2020: 101-109).

These phenomena propel the discussion of religious moderation as a strategic problem. Several academics have sought to construct notions connected to religious moderation (See e.g., Arif, 2021; Dodego & Doliwitro, 2020; Maghfiroh, Yuwafik, & Rohmah, 2020; Ridho, 2020; Syifa, 2020), various forms and strategies of religious moderation (See e.g., Afwadzi, 2020; Haryani, 2020; Hefni, 2020; Novia & Wasehudin, 2020), and to quantify the degree of religious moderation (See e.g., Adawiyah, Tobing, & Handayani, 2021; Ali, 2020; Pratama, 2020).

These studies primarily position young people as an object of study. However, many youths already have an awareness of religious moderation and become agents to promote it. Therefore, this research will analyze the mainstreaming of youth-based religious moderation in Semarang city. The three youth communities researched were (1) the Interfaith Brotherhood (PELITA), which is an organization that connects many religious communities in Semarang, (2) the Semarang Institute for Social and Religious Studies (eLSA), which comprises of moderate young Muslims-Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and (3) the Gusdurian Semarang, which constituted of young individuals sympathizing with Gus Dur's ideas. Those three communities share the same aims, yet they have distinct features. Therefore, this research explores the roles of these three communities in mainstreaming religious moderation in Semarang City. The outcomes of this research are intended to motivate young people to self-actualize themselves and validate their presence in mainstreaming religious moderation.

2 Literature Review

Islamic Perspective on Religious Moderation

In Islam, religious moderation is known as Moderate Islam or Islam Wasaţiyyah. Linguistically al-wasat'iyyah has the root word al-wasat, which implies not to go over the limit or diminish anything (Ridho, 2020:95). Practically, the word wasat'iyyah is commonly used to push for a comprehensive thinking paradigm related to religious attitudes in Islam (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). In daily life, moderate attitude is categorized into three categories: moderation in religious domain, moderation in the moral domain, and moderation in the sharia (fiqh) domain (Fattah, 2020).

The basis of religious moderation in Islam is the Qur'an chapter al-Baqarah verse 143, which confirms that wasat'iyyah (moderation) is one of the qualities of Muslims. Quraish Shihab interprets the verse by stating that the optimum religious stance for Muslims is the moderate position, which may avoid extreme/excessive attitudes in religion, not leaning to the liberals, and not ignoring the religion (Dodego & Doliwitro, 2020; Zamimah, 2018). Following Quraish Shihab, the moderate attitude contains fundamental foundations such as justice, balance, and tolerance (Zamimah, 2018:88-87). Here, justice refers to considering equal rights in action. Equality means setting everything in its station. In other words, moderation is neither reducing nor exaggerating. Quraish Shihab stated that balance might be produced when various groups have proportions according to their purposes in achieving something. The pillar of tolerance is the acceptable limit of adding or reducing something. In the context of Islam, tolerance refers to not utilizing extreme thinking in religion and not neglecting the holy book (Qur'an), which becomes the root of Islamic beliefs.

Based on Indonesian reality, moderate Islam has various features: (1) not utilizing the doctrine of violence, (2) accepting modern lifestyles, including human rights, democracy, and so on, (3) understanding Islamic teachings through reasoning and studying the sources of Islamic teachings contextually, and (4) establishing laws through ijtihad. Furthermore, on a larger scale, moderation in the Indonesian context may be reflected through characteristics

such as harmony and collaboration among religious believers, tolerance, and so on (Hilmy, 2012: 265-266).

Youth and Social Movements

Youth is usually linked to the advancement of a nation (Naafs & White, 2012:79; Wani, 2019:90). A youth is person aged between 10-35 years or more. A person over 35 years who has the spirit and identity of youth can also be considered a youth (In'am, 2020:69-70). Many young people have played critical organizational roles in nationalism in the Indonesian context, such as in Budi Utomo (1908) and Sumpah Pemuda (1928). Indonesian young generation also had contributed to the declaration of independence in 1945 (Sudiyo et al., 1997) and 1998 reformation. These historical series illustrate the significance of youth in influencing the nation's civilization through social movements.

Social movements are collective conflictual acts that are oriented to issues of common interest. Social movements have some features, including having an opponent, a strategy, a goal, an impact, long-term, and structure (Sukmana, 2016:14-16). The youth social movement issue in this research is religious moderation in Semarang. Thus, the movement carried out by the youth community is a new form of social movement. This research used resource mobilization and social identity theories to study youth movements. First, the resource mobilization theory explains that the fluctuation of resources influences success, failures, and advancement. Therefore, resources must be appropriately managed through organization and leadership. Singh (in Sukmana, 2013) explained that rationality-based resource mobilization theory solely focuses on social processes and economic and political issues. Therefore, it cannot explain the significant manifestation of new social movements (Golhasani & Hosseinirad, 2017:4), such as the mainstreaming of religious moderation.

The second theory employed is the social identity theory which focuses on the integration and unity of groups participating in collective activity. Collective identity suggests that a group of persons share similar interests, values, sentiments, and aspirations. The presence of this identity generates a feeling of togetherness among community members. Furthermore, the collective identity and solidarity will inspire individual commitment in individual activities consistent with the community's efforts (Sukmana, 2016:165).

3 Methods

This research employed a descriptive, qualitative methodology to acquire an in-depth knowledge of the youth community in Semarang (Yusuf, 2017:340). This research focused on three youth communities: the Interfaith Brotherhood (PELITA) Semarang, the Institute for Social and Religious Studies (eLSA) Semarang, and Gusdurian Semarang. The primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews, while secondary data were obtained from documentation studies connected to the PELITA Community, eLSA, and Gusdurian Semarang and other topics related to social movements and religious moderation. The data were evaluated using Miles and Huberman's approach, including data reduction, data presentation, and data verification (Miles et al., 2014:31). In addition, the validity of the data was evaluated by triangulation of sources by comparing the data collected through in-depth interviews with the data gathered during the documentation research.

4 Discussion

Interreligious Integration in Interfaith Brotherhood (PELITA) Semarang

The Interfaith Brotherhood (PELITA) was created on June 20, 2016, as a platform for interfaith people, institutions, communities, and organizations in Semarang. PELITA was founded because of an episode of intolerance in 2016 that included numerous community groups refusing to do iftar (ending daily Ramadhan fast) during Ramadhan with Mrs. Sinta Nuriyah (wife of the late Gus Dur) hosted by Father Aloysius Purnomo at a church. As an organization, PELITA does not have funders or sponsors. Instead, PELITA activities are sponsored by community donations. Twenty-seven communities have joined PELITA as of 2019 (Interview with Setyawan Budi, 11 March, 2020).

The mainstreaming approach of religious moderation carried out by PELITA comprises discussions, outreach, and campaigns. PELITA discussion programs attempt to create a place for the community to explore plurality discourses and work together to promote peace. In addition, the discussion subjects presented were socio-religious concerns as well as humanitarian issues. PELITA's socializing activities were carried out in the form of iftar and interfaith meetings. The hallmark of PELITA's mainstreaming of religious moderation is the Pondok Damai activity. PELITA brings together youths of interfaith and belief as to the first step in developing the seeds of peace and building young people's understanding of distinctions in religious diversity through Pondok Damai (Interview with Setyawan Budi, 11 Maret, 2020).

Institute of Social and Religious Studies (eLSA) Semarang and Minority Assistance

The Institute for Social Studies of Religion (eLSA) Semarang was officially formed on August 16, 2005, to offer an open public debate environment. The eLSA office is situated at Perum Bukit Walisongo Permai Jl. Sunan Ampel Block V No.23 Ngaliyan, Semarang. The founders of eLSA consist of student alumni of the Justisia Student Press Institute, Faculty of Sharia UIN Walisongo, and Nahdlatul Ulama circles. As an official institution, eLSA aims at upholding democracy based on pluralism, ethnicity, race, and gender. The mission is to spread worldwide peace based on human principles without being confined by primal boundaries of religion, ethnicity, race, and gender, to develop social fairness in society, to encourage democratic consciousness, and to teach the value of independence and civil society (Interview with Tedi Kholiludin, 15 Maret, 2020).

eLSA develops five main strategies for mainstreaming religious moderation. First is weekly discussion, which is conducted on themes around pluralism, democracy, and the preservation of the rights of minority groups. Second is the creation of religious moderation campaign media through the website www.elsaonline.com. Next is publishing books, modules, and bulletins. eLSA has been active in promoting religious concepts that are moderate, inclusive, tolerant, and respecting human rights, particularly minority rights since 2009. Next program is advocacy. Before doing advocacy, eLSA performs investigations and monitoring connected to abuses of religious freedom in Central Java. Finally, ELSA also developed a publishing and printing institution (Interview with Tedi Kholiludin, 15 Maret, 2020).

Gusdurian Semarang in the Humanitarian Movement

After Gus Dur's passing, many young people in Indonesia encouraged the birth of a social network devoted to maintaining Gus Dur's ideas. Thus, over 60 organizations at the local level in different locations in Indonesia proclaimed themselves as Gusdurian in 2012. Alissa Qotrunnada, Gus Dur's oldest daughter, co-founded a network of social and cultural movements called Gusdurian Network to connect numerous organizations from Aceh to Papua

(Jaringan Gusdurian, n.d.). At its heart, the Gusdurian network is a social and cultural movement that "deeps in Gus Dur's thoughts, imitates his character and values, and seeks to continue the strive that Gus Dur has pioneered and developed according to the problems of the times." Every year the Gusdurian Network organizes a National Meeting.

Gusdurian Semarang was found in 2013 and comprised of the majority of students. In 2019 regional meeting, the Gusdurian Semarang community organization introduced a coordinator, secretary, treasurer, media regeneration division, studies division, and social movement division. Gus Dur's nine values education method is propagated through monthly discussions around campuses in Semarang. In the social movement approach, Gusdurian Semarang stresses cross-faith srawung (discussion), which aims to diminish the segmentation of diversity. "Even if we cannot meet religiously, we may meet in humanity." Gusdurian Semarang has a characteristic as a social movement that attempts to react to actual issues, discussions, news releases, actions, and advocacy for oppressed people who are vulnerable to threat. Regarding the organization funding, Gusdurian Semarang collaborates with other parties, such as Jari Lima, Club Merby, PELITA, eLSA, Hikma Budi, Ansor, and other organizations to raise funds (Interview with Ahmad Sajidin, 6 April, 2020).

Mainstreaming Youth Movement-Based Religious Moderation in Semarang City

Semarang is a city in central Java that combines many races and cultures. This ethnic variety may be witnessed in settlements such as the Pacinian and Pedamaran regions dominated by Chinese people, Malay Muslim settlements in Kampung Darat and Kampung Melayu areas, and Muslim Arab, Indian, Pakistani, and Persian territories in the Pakojan area (Mawahib, 2019). This multicultural reality needs the necessity of sustaining inter-religious tolerance in Semarang. Thus, communities from diverse circles, including young people, have tried to mainstream religious moderation in Semarang. In this research, the three youth communities emphasized are PELITA, eLSA, and Gusdurian Semarang. Through resource mobilization theory and identity theory, the process and dynamics of a social movement can be viewed from eight aspects, such as social movement organization, leader and leadership, resource and resource mobilization, networking and participation, opportunities and community capacity in carrying out social movements, collective identity, solidarity, and commitment (Sukmana, 2013).

Regarding the social movement organization, PELITA consists of a Coordinator and a Secretary. Even so, the movement might be regarded to be going well. eLSA's social movement organization is more organized and formal since it is registered with a legal entity. Gusdurian Semarang, on the other hand, is an informal group under the national Gusdurian network led by Allisa Wahid (national coordinator). These organizations are led by figures with different qualities. PELITA is coordinated by Setyawan Budi, who is an advocate who masters negotiation skills. Budi can create networks with diverse religious groups in Semarang. eLSA is led by Tedi Kholiludin, a young PhD in sociology of religion, a graduate of the Satya Wacana University in Salatiga. The eLSA director also promotes campaigning based on socio-religious research. Gusdurian Semarang is managed by Ahmad Sajidin, a UIN Walisongo staff involved in numerous campus internal and external organizations. His skill in organizing prompted Gusdurian Semarang to obtain the Gusdurian Award for the best community category in the 2020 Gusdurian Network National Closing Ceremony (Najmudien, 2020).

The three communities have distinct features of resources and resource mobilization. PELITA receives resources from many backgrounds, ranging from religious and beliefs communities. PELITA movement is defined by collective acts that bring people together across faiths and beliefs in every activity. Meanwhile, most resources in eLSA consist of academics, including lecturers and students of UIN Walisongo Semarang. The religious moderation movement that is carried out tends to be research-based. Most Gusdurians in Semarang come from university students affiliated with Gusdurian network, such as Gusdurian at Diponegoro University (Gusdurian UNDIP), State University of Semarang (Gusdurian UNNES), State Islamic University Walisongo (Gusdurian UIN Walisongo), and so on. Therefore, Gusdurian Semarang can provide a swift response to actual social issues.

As a community, PELITA, eLSA, and Gusdurian have networks that actively engage in mainstreaming religious moderation initiatives. PELITA maintains a network with several communities in Semarang. eLSA, being a legal entity, expands its network to official institutions such as the Ministry of Religion and Bawaslu. Gusdurian Semarang has the most comprehensive network since it is part of the national Gusdurian network, which works with numerous Gusdurian communities throughout Indonesia. Through a national network, the Gusdurian movement is increasingly organized and systematic. The presence of different networks in the three organizations has further strengthened the possibilities and capacities of the communities have the same possibilities. Moreover, it is demonstrated that the three communities are frequently engaged and work together in events, such as the commencement of the signing of the Watu Gong Charter on October 10, 2020, which featured PELITA, eLSA, Gusdurian Semarang, and other interfaith communities.

In mainstreaming religious moderation, the three communities share a common identity. Through the motto "It is better to make a light than to curse the darkness," PELITA aspires to build a diversified identity which illustrates that inter-religious individuals can integrate one other and make an excellent contribution to the greater society. Therefore, PELITA actively asks the community to always be in peace, keep brotherhood in the frame of difference. Meanwhile, eLSA creates its identity through the jargon of "Voice the Voiceless" to sustain the public sphere that remains critical, democratic, and non-violent. eLSA continues to promote moderate, open, and tolerant religious understanding hoping that the rights of religious, ethnic, or gender minorities may be maintained. Another group, Gusdurian Semarang, tried to develop a collective identification that corresponds to the nine central cross-religious and cultural values of Gus Dur, including tawhid, humanity, justice, equality, liberty, brotherhood and simplicity, chivalry, and tradition wisdom (Jaringan Gusdurian, 2014).

The characteristics of the collective identity of the three communities are in line with four indicators of religious moderation in Buku Putih Moderasi Beragama published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, which include: 1) national commitment; 2) tolerance; 3) non-violence; and 4) being accommodative to local culture (Badan Litbang & Diklat Kemenag RI, 2019). PELITA, eLSA, and Gusdurian Semarang all decided to fight for national commitment, tolerance, and anti-violence by developing the worldwide spirit of humanity. These three communities also respect local cultural accommodation in Semarang.

In general, the three communities have strong membership solidarity, which can be observed from their movements. Even if these organizations receive no financial backing from outside parties or the government, these communities nevertheless strive to raise funds from their members' personal finances. The presence of voluntary material and non-material donation in these movements reflects the extraordinary dedication of the members participating in mainstreaming religious moderation in Semarang. The community members' religion also promotes solidarity and commitment. Thus, religion becomes the driving force of moral resources, providing legitimacy to social actions carried out.

5 Conclusion

The Interfaith Brotherhood Community (PELITA), the Institute for Social and Religious Studies (eLSA), and Gusdurian Semarang play an active role in mainstreaming religious moderation in Semarang. The three communities implement the principles of religious moderation by pioneering the merging of inter-faith communities to fight for universal human values so that young people develop a positive attitude, such as not easily accusing others of being infidels. The difference in the structural elements of these communities has also influenced their diverse movements, network, techniques, and strategies of mainstreaming religious moderation. In general, the three youth organizations mainstreamed religious moderation through education and galvanized the society to uphold religious moderation in the public domain by campaigning for minorities.

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APPENDICES

No.	Komunitas	
1	Perhimpunan Pemuda Hindu Indonesia (Peradah) Kota Semarang	
2	Komisi Keadilan, Perdamaian, dan Keutuhan Ciptaan Keuskupan Agung Semarang (KKPKC KAS)	
3	DPD Ahlul Bait Indonesia (ABI) Jawa Tengah	
4	Gerakan Mahasiswa Kristen Indonesia (GMKI) Semarang	
5	Gusdurian Semarang	
6	Peace Hub Community	
7	Komisi Hubungan Antar Agama dan Kepercayaan – Keuskupan Agung Semarang (HAK-KAS)	
8	Journalist Creative	
9	Perguruan Trijaya	
10	Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI)	
11	Sekolah Tinggi Teologia (STT) Abdiel	
12	PW Lakpesdam NU Jawa Tengah	
13		
14	Radio Jatayu FM (JFM)	
15	Himpunan Mahasiswa Jurusan Studi Agama-agama (HMJ-SAA) UIN Walisongo Semarang	
16	Himpunan Mahasiswa Budhis Indonesia (Hikmahbudhi) Kota Semarang	
17	Persaudaraan Warga Sapta Darma (Persada) Jawa Tengah	
18	Lembaga Studi Sosial dan Agama (eLSA) Semarang	
19	Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Indonesia (Matakin) Semarang	
20	Lembaga Bantuan Hukum (LBH) Semarang	
21	Forum Persaudaraan Antar Etnis Nusantara (Perantara) Jawa Tengah	
22	Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (PMII) Semarang	
23	Gereja Isa Almasih (GIA)	
24	Garda Nasionalis Patriot Indonesia	
25	Persekutuan Gereja-gereja Kristen Kota Semarang (PGKS)	
26	Jemaat Allah Global Indonesia (JAGI) Semarang	
27	EIN Institute Institute of Peace and Security Studies (IPSS)	

Figure 1. List of communities under PELITA Semarang

No	Nama	Jabatan
1	Dr. Abu Hapsin, PhD	Dewan Pembina
2	Prof. Dr. Sumanto Al Qurtuby, PhD	Dewan Pembina
3	Drs. Sahidin, M.Si	Dewan Pembina
4	Dr. Tedi Kholiludin, M.Si	Direktur
5	Iman Fadilah	Sekertaris
6	Siti Rofi'ah	Bendahara
7	Putri Kirana Dewi	Wakil Bendahara
8	Nazar Nurdin	Dev. Taining
9	Anis Fitria	Dev. Taining
10	Khoirul Anwar	Dev. Kajian
11	Cahyono	Dev. Kajian
12	Ubaidul Adzkiya'	Dev. Penerbitan
13	Abdus Salam	Dev. Penerbitan
14	Yayan M Royani	Dev. Advokasi
15	Ceprudin	Dev. Advokasi
16	Munif Ibnu Syareif	Dev. Dokumentasi
17	M Zainal Mawahib	Dev. Dokumentasi
18	M Maulana Alie	General Support
19	Mustaqim	General Support

Figure 2. Structure of eLSA Semarang

No.	Daftar program yang pernah dilakukan eLSA Semarang		
1	Diseminasi dan Sosialisasi serta Penguatan Korban Diskriminasi Gender dan		
	Orientasi Seksual bekerjasama dengan HIVOS dan Arus Pelangi (2005)		
2	Monitoring dan Advokasi Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan di Jawa		
	Tengah bekerjasama dengan Yayasan TIFA (2011-2012)		
	Monitoring Kehidupan Beragama di Jawa Tengah: Memetakan Potensi		
3	Konflik, Mengembangkan Inisiatif Perdamaian bekerjasama dengan Badang		
	Kesbangpol dan Linmas Propinsi Jawa Tengah (2014-2015 dan 2018-2019)		
4	Penguatan Kapasitas Penghayat Kepercayaan di Jawa Tengah bekerjasama		
	dengan Yayasan TIFA (2013-2014)		
	Penguatan Kapasitas Komunitas Korban Tindak Pelanggaran Kebebasan		
5	Beragama dan Berkepercayaan di Indonesia bekerjasama dengan Yayasan		
	TIFA-Sobat KBB (2015-2016)		
	Inklusi Sosial Kelompok yang Terdiskriminasi atas dasar Kepercayaan		
6	bekerjasama dengan Kemenko Pembangunan Manusia dan Kebudayaan-The		
	Asia Foundation-Yayasan Satunama (2015-2017)		
7	Diskusi dan Penguatan serta Advokasi Korban Diskriminasi Kebijakan Publik		
	atas dasar Gender dan Agama (2017-2018)		
8	Mainstreaming Pendidikan Inklusi di Lembaga Pendidikan Keagamaan		
0	bekerjasama dengan Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019)		
9	Riset Politisasi Suku, Agama dan Ras dalam Pemilihan Umum 2019		
9	bekerjasama dengan Bawaslu Provinsi Jawa Tengah (2019)		
10	Tafsir Keagamaan Progresif atas Seksualitas bekerjasama dengan Gaya		
10	Nusantara (2020)		

Figure 3. eLSA's programs





Figure 4. PELITA Weekly Radio Broadcast discussing diversity issus

Figure 5. Tolerance Day celebration



Persaudaraan Lintas Agama (2) @pelita_smg (2) catatanpelita@gmail.com
Persaudaraan Lintas Agama (2) @pelita_smg

Figure 6. Pondok Damai activity



Figure 7. PELITA Ramadan Command Post distributes free meals on the highway



Figure 8. The signing of Watu Gong Charter, initiated by Gusdurian Semarang. Attended by PELITA, eLSA, and other interfaith communities.



Figure 9. Watu Gong Charter



Figure 10. Gusdurian Care Fundraising



Figure 12. Aksi Saling Jaga Hadapi Corona (Taking care of each other in the face of Corona) program by Gusdurian Semarang, PELITA, and other Communities.



Figure 11. Class discussion: gus Dur's 9 main values



Figure 13. eLSA public discussion



Figure 14. eLSA public discussion

Figure 15. 2020 Report on Religious Freedom in Central Java