

The Urgency of a Moderate Islamic Spirit for the Liberation and Empowerment of Women Movement

1st Muhammad Nasrudin

STAI Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta

nedursan1899@gmail.com

2nd Siti Muliana

STAI Sunan Pandanaran Yogyakarta

s.muliana362@gmail.com

Abstract

Moderate Islam usually only understood as a counter narrative to radical Islamic movements or conservative Islam such as acts of radicalism, terrorism, and intolerance. Moderate Islam also has an important role in the liberation and empowerment of women. This can be seen in the NU and Muhammadiyah mass organizations as the two main currents of moderate Islam in Indonesia. Therefore, this study will examine the values or spirit contained in moderate Islam in Indonesia, especially the NU and Muhammadiyah mass organizations as the main drivers of moderate Islam in Indonesia and its urgency for the movement of women's liberation and empowerment. This research is a type of descriptive qualitative research with a literature study method. The results showed that Islamic organizations Nahdlatul 'Ulama and Muhammadiyah use contextual interpretation in understanding religious texts. This then gave rise to various women's organizations such as Muslimat or 'Aisyiyah and gender activists who participated in fighting for women's rights through movements, studies, and workshops. The expected conclusion shows that moderate Islamic values with their contextual interpretation are closely related to the spirit of maqashid sharia which is none other than in accordance with the principles of Human Rights (HAM) so as to support gender equality.

Keywords: *Moderate Islam, Nahdlatul 'Ulama, Muhammadiyah, Women.*

Introduction

Moderate Islam is an ideal model of diversity, especially in the reality of diversity in Indonesia. Apart from being in line with the values and principles of Human Rights

(HAM), which in Islam are better known as *maqashid syari'ah*, moderate Islam also has principles that are more contextual towards the understanding of religious texts so that it also becomes the main actor in the liberation of women. This is considering that the



Indonesian people are among those who adhere to the teachings of their religion. Thus, one of the solutions to the problem of women's liberation and empowerment can be solved using enlightening religious languages, which are none other than contained in the principles of moderate Islam. Moderate Islam within the scope of Indonesia is represented by the mainstream movement of the largest religious organizations namely NU (Nahdlatul 'Ulama) and Muhammadiyah.

However, in its development, Indonesia as a nation that is geographically in the middle of the equator and has become one of the nations that has long connected trade between continents, cannot be denied that it is also open to the influences of transnational ideologies, including religious ideology. Although Islam in Indonesia was initially spread through the path of Sufism which produced a moderate Islamic style, it is also possible that in the end people will be influenced by other religious patterns. This is bearing in mind that in the post-New Order era, the development of ideologies and religious organizations with all the surrounding characteristics such as exclusivity, inclusiveness, and pluralism spread massively and systematically.

Moderate Islam is usually only understood as *counter*-narratives and movements of radical Islam or those who are close to it are known as conservative Islam. In this paper, the author tries to broaden the

scope and enrich the study of moderate Islam. If examined more deeply moderate Islam does not only become *counter* narratives on conservative Islamic movements related to radicalism, terrorism, and intolerance. However, moderate Islam also has a very important role and urgency for women's empowerment. Reality shows that women are often shackled by patriarchal culture and not a few are legitimized in the name of religion. In the end, this leads to the decline and underdevelopment of women's resources and the next generations. Given that the character of the Indonesian people still adheres to their religious principles, any solution that is implemented without involving religious factors, especially in efforts to liberate and empower women, is threatened with failure because stereotypes in this case are still strong. Therefore, the discourse on the spirit of moderate Islam and its correlation to efforts to liberate and empower women is significant for further study.

The discourse on women in moderate Islamic discourse has been studied in previous studies. Ghulam Falach and Assya'bani, for example, have conducted research entitled "Dakwah Islam Progresif dalam Menyikapi Kesetaraan Gender". The results of this study indicate that Progressive Muslim dakwah emphasizes several things such as; the importance of being critical, moderate, not

textual, not apologetic, and educative.¹ Meanwhile, Ihab Habudin in his research on aspects of Islamic family law on two Islamic websites in Indonesia found that women in the view of conservatives are objects of law. Meanwhile, for moderates, women are legal subjects.²

Although this research has examined how the da'wah principles of progressive Muslim groups promote the issue of gender equality and how the position of women is in the views of conservative and moderate Islamic groups, especially within the scope of Islamic family law, researchers have not found how the urgency of moderate Islam has for the liberation movement and women's empowerment in the Islamic organizations Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. This then becomes the formulation of the problem as well as the goal in writing this research. In addition, this article also aims to see how women's discourse in the history of the struggle of Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah and compare it with women's discourse in the view of conservative groups. Thus, a common thread can be drawn between the spirit of moderate Islam which is

in harmony with the principles of human rights on women's issues through the movements of the two organizations.

Method

This research is a qualitative descriptive study using the literature study method (*library research*). The primary data that the author refers to is the book "Rezim Gender NU" by Jamal Ma'ruf and the book "Rezim Gender Muhammadiyah" by Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin. Data collection using the literature study method was obtained from books, journals, and articles that were relevant to the topic of discussion.³ After the data is collected, data analysis is then carried out using the Miles and Huberman technique in the form of reduction, *display*, and verification. This technique is carried out by collecting as much data as possible through relevant sources. After that the data is arranged based on needs and trimmed if not needed. The remaining data is then displayed in narrative form. Furthermore, a more conical conclusion is drawn based on the existing findings.⁴

¹ Ghulam Falach and Ridhatullah Assya'bani, "Dakwah Muslim Progresif Dalam Menyikapi Kesetaraan Gender," *Lentera* 4, no. 2 (2020): 116–34.

² Ihab Habudin, "Diskursus Feminisme Dalam Hukum Keluarga Islam Pada Situsweb Islam Indonesia: Respons Kelompok Islam Konservatif Dan Islam Moderat," *Al-Ahwal: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Islam* 12, no.

1 (2020): 99, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ahwal.2019.12108..>

³ Wahyudin Darmalaksana, "Formula Penelitian Pengalaman Kelas Menulis," *Jurnal Kelas Menulis UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung* 2, no. 1 (2020): 3–4, <http://digilib.uinsgd.ac.id/32620/>.

⁴ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif dan R&D* (Bandung: CV Alfabeta, 2013), 247.

Discussion

Patterns and Characteristics of Mainstream Moderate Islam in Indonesia

Contemporary Islamic studies show that there are various faces of Islam (*multifaceted*) in response to changes due to modernization. This discourse gave rise to various groups with different patterns, characteristics, and paradigms of thinking in addressing increasingly complex multidimensional problems. Some groups respond to this with the spirit of modernization that was born from Western thought. Meanwhile, other groups prefer to withdraw from Western thought and return to the path of Islamic tradition which is based on the Qur'an and Hadith. This difference in views then gave rise to the terminology of traditionalist Islam and modernist Islam⁵.

Traditionalist groups in that era were known as groups that tended to be exclusive (closed). Religious orientation that is based on old ways, starting from methodology to the establishment of a law makes this group more rigid towards new ideas that come from outside the group. This point of view contrasts with the modernist group which is more open to change. This group believes that to face the

times, it is necessary to re-read the thoughts, understanding, and interpretation of previous scholars contextually. In this case Rahma in his research stated that the modernist group did not try to change the narrative of religious texts (Al-Qur'an and Hadith) but rather to renew the interpretation of the two holy texts.⁶

In the Indonesian context, this traditionalist group is often pinned on the Nahdlatul Ulama social organization (Ormas) which always adheres to old traditions that are following Islamic teachings.⁷ Meanwhile, modernist groups can be seen in the Muhammadiyah mass organizations which are very keen to promote the spirit of renewal (*tajdid*).⁸ However, in its development, both the traditionalist and modernist groups have received internal criticism along with the young generation's intellectual contact with Western thought. According to Rahma, this has led contemporary Islamic thinkers to initiate new movements, namely post-traditionalism and post-modernism. These two concepts seek to align old traditions with modern ideas in responding to the times.⁹

Historically, the birth of Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) itself was fostered by pesantren kiai such as KH Wahab Chasbullah, KH Bisri

⁵ Vicky Izza El Rahma, "Sekular, Tradisionalis, Dan Modernis (Sejarah, Karakteristik, Dan Refleksinya Di Indonesia)," *SYAIKHUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pranata Islam* 8, no. 1 (2017): 56–74.

⁶ Rahma.

⁷ Muhammadong and Lukman, "Gerakan NU Dalam Memahami Ajaran Islam Dari Tradisionalisme Ke Post Tradisionalisme," *CENDEKIA: Media*

Komunikasi Penelitian Dan Pengembangan Pendidikan Islam 12, no. 02 (2020): 223–43.

⁸ Muhammad Anis, "Muhammadiyah Dalam Penyebaran Islam," *MIMBAR: Jurnal Media Intelektual Muslim dan Bimbingan Rohani* 5, no. 2 (2019): 65–80.

⁹ Rahma, "Sekular, Tradisionalis, Dan Modernis (Sejarah, Karakteristik, Dan Refleksinya Di Indonesia)."

Sansuri, and KH Hasyim Asy'ari as the central figures. The establishment of this organization on January 31, 1926 was more of an effort to respond to external political dynamics. The international arena, especially Arab countries which have been controlled by the Wahhabi sect, is a particular concern for traditionalist Muslims. The portrait of the Wahhabis led by Ibn Saud is known as a radical, puritanical and uncompromising sect, it is feared that it will cause the uprooting of religious traditions from the land of the Hijaz (Mecca).¹⁰ This is an important issue because the Hijaz is not only a destination for worship but also a destination *scientific knowledge* for Indonesian youth.

Whereas Muhammadiyah, which is 14 years older than NU, which was founded on November 18, 1912 M, was initiated by KH Ahmad Dahlan. He, whose nickname is Muhammad Darwis, is the son of a Khatib at the Great Mosque of Kauman, Yogyakarta, where his thoughts were influenced by one of the leading reformers from Egypt, Muhammad Abduh.¹¹ Muhammadiyah was born as a reformist movement that seeks to purify Islamic teachings that deviate from its corridors. Through the reading of QS. Al-

Imran (3) verse 104, KH Ahmad Dahlan considers that religion is not only represented by religious symbols but must be manifested in the form of da'wah calls *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* in order to free people from the shackles of poverty, ignorance, and misery.¹²

If traced further the establishment of Muhammadiyah was influenced by two factors, namely from internal and external factors. Internally this organization exists as a response to the condition of Indonesian Muslims who are considered to have deviated a lot from the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. Meanwhile, externally the birth of this mass organization was inseparable from the political influence of the Netherlands, which at that time was still colonizing Indonesia. Apart from that, there was also the influence of ideas and reform movements from the Middle East so as to raise awareness of the importance of reform, such as the progress that had been achieved by the West through its industrial revolution. In the end, several of these factors contributed to KH Ahmad Dahlan's background to carry out a reformist movement by establishing a Muhammadiyah mass organization.

¹⁰ A. Jauhar Fuad, "The Historical Roots of Islamic Moderation in Nahdlatul Ulama," *Tribakti: Journal of Islamic Thought* 31, no. 1 (2020): 153–68.

¹¹ Anis, "Muhammadiyah dalam Penyebaran Islam."

¹² Ilham dan Ihwan P. Syamsuddin, "Pendidikan Islam: Telaah Sejarah Sosial Keagamaan dan Modernisasi Pendidikan Muhammadiyah," *Tajdid: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman dan Kemanusiaan* 5, no. 2 (2021): 199–216.

Since the founding of NU in 1926 and Muhammadiyah in 1912, both have grown to become the largest mass organizations in Indonesia. The results of a survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Circle (LSI) stated that NU is in the first place for mass organizations with the most mass in Indonesia with a total percentage of 49.5%. This means that currently Indonesia's population is 250 million people, then the population that claims to be part of this organization is 108 million people. While Muhammadiyah occupies the second position with a percentage of 4.3%.¹³ Historically, NU and Muhammadiyah have done a lot for Indonesia, both before and after independence.

Looking at the developments and various internal dynamics contained within NU and Muhammadiyah, Krismawati said that the labeling of traditionalist Islam and modernist Islam attached to these two mass organizations is now no longer relevant. Although normatively some of the characteristics of the division of these two groups are still visible. Krismawati agrees more with categorizing these two groups based on the thoughts of Khaled Abou El Fadl, namely as moderate Muslims.¹⁴

Moderate Islamic terminology refers more to the condition of Muslims who prioritize dialogue in finding solutions to a problem. This group is more inclusive, humanist, and aligned with modern ideas. This is different from puritan groups, according to Khaled Abou El Fadl, who reveal more truth claims (*truth claim*) textually or based on an absolute context. This group tends to be exclusive, giving rise to fanaticism and leading to the emergence of radical attitudes and intolerance towards other groups.¹⁵ Even though Islam is a religion that is universal, beautiful, and teaches peace and not violence as practiced by puritan Muslim groups. Krismawati further stated that NU and Muhammadiyah are the mainstream portraits of moderate Islam in Indonesia that are polite and not extreme. Although the two are not uniform entities and sometimes create their own confusion because within NU and Muhammadiyah there are many masses with different views. According to him, if there are people who claim to be NU or Muhammadiyah but do not show their moderation, then this comes back to personal problems and cannot be generalized.

¹³ Suarainvestor, "Survei LSI Denny JA: NU sebagai Ormas Terbesar yang Tak Tertandingi," suarainvestor.com, 2020, <https://www.suarainvestor.com/survei-lsi-denny-ja-nu-sebagai-ormas-terbesar-yang-tak-tertandingi/>. Diakses pada 26 Juni 2022.

¹⁴ Dyah Ayu Krismawati, "Nahdlatul Ulama dan Muhammadiyah: Sekelumit Sejarah, Komitmen dalam

masyarakat Plural," *MISSION SPARKS: Academic Journal of Asia Region*, no. July (2020).

¹⁵ Nurun Nisaa Baihaqi, "Hermeneutika Khaled Abou El Fadl; Analisis dan Kritik Tipologi Islam Moderat dan Islam Puritan," *TAJDID* 28, no. 2 (2021): 212–232.

The Form of the Women's Liberation Movement in Islamic Community Organizations as the Main Base of Moderate Islam in Indonesia

As previously explained, NU and Muhammadiyah are known as the mainstream of moderate Islam in Indonesia. This can be seen in the dynamics of these two groups in addressing contemporary issues which are not extreme but instead prioritize dialogue. The process of *ijtihad* in establishing a law is not theoretical in nature which departs from *salaf* thinking with a literalist and rigid style. On the other hand, it also does not facilitate liberal law which only pays attention to the interests of the fatwa requester. In determining the law, the moderate group is balanced by taking into account the principles of *ijtihad*, the benefit of the people, and the provisions *nash* religious. The socio-cultural dynamics in which the *ulama* live is also a consideration in determining the law. In other words, the moderate group also pays attention to historical studies in looking at the determination of previous Islamic law. This will show what the essence of the legal products of the previous scholars is so that they can be contextualized in responding to increasingly complex contemporary issues.¹⁶

¹⁶ Jamal Ma'mur, *Rezim Gender di NU* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2015).

¹⁷ Nur Syamsiah, "Wacana Kesetaraan Gender," *Sipakalebbi* 1, no. 2 (2014): 265–301.

One of the contemporary issues that has attracted the attention of many academics from both NU and Muhammadiyah circles is the issue of gender equality. Refer to *Women's Studies Encyclopedia*, gender is defined as a cultural concept that indicates differences (distinction) in behavior, roles, and emotions between men and women in a society. This definition is agreed upon by feminists and women's advocates such as H.T Wilson, Illich, and Julia Cleves Musse. Furthermore, Elaine Showalter does not only see gender as a differentiating element between men and women which is reconstructed by the socio-cultural society, but also has its own concept of analysis.¹⁷

The patriarchal culture formed by the socio-cultural reality of society influences the subordination of women. Moreover, this is legitimized by several religious texts with gender-biased interpretations. In other words, efforts to liberate women from patriarchal culture can only be carried out by reviewing the paradigm of absolute Islamic theology towards an Islamic theological paradigm with a humanist-transformative character.¹⁸ Gender discourse itself entered Indonesia in the early 1990s as a result of the ups and downs of the international community on

¹⁸ Ririn Fauziyah, "Perempuan Perspektif Hukum Islam Modern," *Jurnal Hukum Islam Nusantara* 3, no. 2 (2020): 91–105.

human rights issues. At that time, gender issues were found in Indonesia, both in domestic, public, and political issues.¹⁹

NU's struggles in responding to gender issues can be seen in the dynamics in congress forums, National Conferences, NU Conbes which are driven by NU women activists who are members of IPPNU, Fatayat, and Muslimat. Gender studies known as *fiqh an-Nisa'* has colored the Fatayat forum since 1990. Meanwhile, at IPPNU a study has been carried out on strengthening women's rights (*empowering women*) in 1996. Gender discourse was first discussed at the NU Congress in 1989 which discussed interfaith marriage. Women's participation in the 28th Muktamar has not been seen considering that the gender equality movement only started in the early 1990s. In the next stage, gender discourse continued to be one of the studies in NU discussion forums, such as the 29th NU Congress in Cipasung in 1994 (discussed career women working outside the home at night), the 1997 NU National Conference in NTB (discussed mut'ah marriage), the 30th NU Congress in Lirboyo, Kediri (discussed women's leadership), NU National Conference at the PBNU Jakarta office in 2006 (discussed *trafficking*/human trafficking process). Of the several forums, the National Conference in NTB in 1997 was the first time that women

actively participated in deliberations. It was only after this activity that women activists from the IPPNU, Fatayat, and Muslimat circles participated in the running of the National Conference, Konbes, and NU Congress. These studies have brought out gender equality fighters such as Masdar Farid Mas'udi, Said Aqil Siradj, Maria Ulfah Anshar, Neng Dara, Nur Rofi'ah, KH Husein Muhammad, Machrusah Taufiq, and Badriyah Fayumi.²⁰

Gender studies then became massive after the reform era which gave birth to non-government organizations (Non-Government Organizations) within NU such as Fahmina-Institute, LKiS, Puan Amal Hayati, and Mubilah. Some of these organizations conduct gender studies in the form of seminars, discussions, bulletins, books, and *websites*. Movements were carried out such as advocacy programs for women's rights to protect women from subordination and discrimination. This activity was carried out using the model of training, discussions and workshops for kiai, ustadz, ustadzah, and non-Islamic boarding schools. Usually the issues that are often the subject of study relate to women's jurisprudence, violence against women, education and other issues.²¹

Muhammadiyah as the mainstream carrier of moderate Islam along with NU also

¹⁹ As'ad Said Ali, *Pergolakan di Jantung Tradisi* (Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES Indonesia, 2008).

²⁰ Ma'mur, *Rezim Gender di NU*.

²¹ Ma'mur.

contributes to the discourse on gender equality in Indonesia. The Muhammadiyah movement, which is known to be more reformist, practically-sociologically has paid attention to women's empowerment since its inception. This can be seen in the efforts of KH Ahmad Dahlan and his wife, Siti Walidah, by providing batik and crochet skills while giving religious advice to poor women around their houses. Her work aims to change the paradigm of the wife's role *behind the scenes* becomes a fighting comrade both in the household and in society.²²

As is the case in NU, studies on gender are often found at Muhammadiyah congresses from the beginning of the period until now with various dynamics. The distinction between the roles of men and women is still classified based on Muhammadiyah congresses and congresses of other autonomous organizations (ortom) such as 'Aisyiyah, Nasyi'atul Aisyiyah, and the Muhammadiyah Student Association. After the revolution in 1965, the Congress decisions looked more optimistic regarding gender discourse. This can be seen in the membership of female figures, Baroroh Bared and Aisyah as members of the Muhammadiyah Central Executive for the period 1965-1968 at the

36th congress held in Bandung. Several Muhammadiyah responses related to gender are formulated in several handbooks, including *Toentoenan Mentjapai Jang Mean Wives: Priyanization of Santri Kota, Adabul Mar'ab fii Islam: Policy Responses to Women's Dual Roles, Guidance Towards Sakinah Families: Hegemony of the New Order Gender Regime, Breaking the Silence: Religion Hears the Voices of Women Victims of Violence For the sake of Justice: From Domestic to Issues Strategic, Muhammadiyah Perspective Women's Fiqh: Across the Age of Equality*²³.

Discourse on Women in Conservative Islamic Views

Conservative Islamic terminology is a label attached to a group that according to Khaled Abou El Fadl is called a Puritan group.²⁴ As quoting by Azyumardi Azra, conservative Islam is defined in terms of *"religious conservatism"* which refers to a group of people who adhere to holy scriptures and orthodox teachings. This group tends to reject ideas of renewal and reinterpretation of interpretations because they are considered contrary to the teachings they hold, including the concept of gender equality.

Conservative Islamic groups view women have limited space. This is according to Jajat Burhanudin and Oman Fathurahman

²² Siti Ruhaini Dzuhayatin, *Rezim Gender Muhammadiyah* (Yogyakarta: Suka Press UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, 2015).

²³ Dzuhayatin.

²⁴ Afif Dzakyawan, "Deideologisasi Islam Konservatif Perspektif Abdul Karim Soroush : Sebuah Tinjauan" (UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2022).

as quoted by Hulwati departs from the notion that women are weak creatures that must be protected in every aspect of life. According to them, this view is legitimized by religious texts which are understood literally so that it leads to subordination and inferiority towards women.²⁵ The paradigm of thinking like this is identified with a textual understanding of religion and considers it the most correct. In this context, they do not accept the ideas of gender equality promoted by feminist groups because they are considered contrary to Islamic law.²⁶

Habudin further explained that the rejection of the ideas of feminism in Islam can be seen on the website almanhaj.or.id which tends to be conservative. This site continues to spread writings that try to provide an understanding for women about the virtues in domestic affairs that lead to true happiness, namely life in heaven. Meanwhile, ideas about women's emancipation, gender equality, and women's freedom in the public sphere are considered contrary to the Qur'an and Hadith and can damage the family structure. Conservative groups in practice continue to echo the call to "return to the Qur'an and Hadith" as an effort to purify Islamic

teachings. However, understanding that tends to be textual without paying attention to the social context makes conservative groups more closed to dialogue on contemporary issues in the feminist movement.²⁷

Femininity and masculinity in Muslim society refer to fiqh texts or the Prophet's Hadith which tend to be conditional, Al-Qur'an texts and the views of male-dominated scholars. Gender-biased interpretations are often found on the issue of human creation, the quality of women's minds which are weaker than men's, the role of women which is domestic in nature, and matters of educating children. Even terrorist groups with puritanical Islam forbid women from entering the world of education. Radical organizations such as ISIS, the Taliban and Boko Haram are also trying to return women to the domestic sphere according to Islamic teachings. They consider this to be a product of gender equality promoted by Westerners in addition to the concepts of democracy, capitalism and Western hegemony which have become world views (*worldview*). The irony is that they reject these things not by way of rational dialogue, but through emotional involvement, feelings, violence and religious sentiments.²⁸

²⁵ Hulwati, "Memahami Kesetaraan Gender Dalam Fiqh : Analisis Teori Evolusi Kontinuitas Fiqh," *Kafa'ah: Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Gender* 5, no. 1 (2015): 22–40.

²⁶ Habudin, "Diskursus Feminisme Dalam Hukum Keluarga Islam Pada Situsweb Islam Indonesia: Respons Kelompok Islam Konservatif Dan Islam Moderat."

²⁷ Habudin.

²⁸ Aniek Nurhayati, "Dekonstruksi Feminitas Dalam Gerakan Teroris Di Dunia Islam," *Jurnal Review Politik* 5, no. 1 (2015): 84–99, <http://jurnalfuf.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/JRP/article/view/1084>.

Dzakyawan said their views were a consequence of a conservative understanding of religious teachings. Furthermore, as Soroush said that conservative groups cannot distinguish between religious levels which are sacred and which are profane.²⁹

There are at least three agenda issues of religious interpretation identified by Mansur Fakhri and considered strategic. First, it concerns the issue of women's subordination as a result of interpretations that place women in positions and dignity that are not subordinate to men. Second, an understanding that gender bias not only reinforces the problem of women's subordination but also results in issues of inheritance and testimony. Third, about women's production and reproductive rights.³⁰

Spirit of Moderate Islam towards the Movement for Women's Liberation and Empowerment

Moderate Islamic values are needed in the women's liberation and empowerment movement because Indonesian society as a religious nation is very attached to religious patterns. Thus, the liberation of women for their involvement in various sectors of life cannot be separated from the understanding

of religion that develops within them, one of which is the movement of women in religious interpretation. Religious interpretations can not only accelerate the pace of development but can also undermine it.³¹

Therefore, there is a need for gender-friendly religious interpretations as implemented in the NU and Muhammadiyah community organizations through their women's organizations as the main basis of the moderate Islamic movement in Indonesia. There are at least two spirits embodied in large Islamic community organizations in Indonesia as the mainstream of moderate Islam, which can have an impact on women's liberation and empowerment.

a. Contextual Interpretation of Religious Texts

Religious interpretation still plays an important role in legitimizing the domination of women. Therefore, it requires an understanding of the contextual interpretation of the problems faced today. Where there are very contrasting differences in the moderate Islamic movement and conservative Islam in Indonesia, especially in the spirit or values of its content.

²⁹ Dzakyawan, "Deideologisasi Islam Konservatif Perspektif Abdul Karim Soroush : Sebuah Tinjauan."

³⁰ Mansour Fakhri, *Analisis Gender dan Transformasi Sosial* (Yogyakarta: Insist Press, 2020), 111–112.

³¹ Yaqut Al-Amnah, "Islam dan Semangat Pembebasan Perempuan," *Suara Kebebasan*, 2021, <https://suarakebebasan.id/islam-dan-semangat-pembebasan-perempuan/>. Diakses pada 12 Juni 2023.

Siti Muliana, for example, classifies reason between moderate and radical Islam which is often seen in the reality of religion in Indonesia. Where, moderate Islamic reasoning is characterized by a relative understanding, an understanding of the scriptures that tends to be contextual, and a rejection of all kinds of violence. To make it easier to understand, the following table includes a classification of the differences between moderate Islamic reasoning and radical Islam.³²

Table 1.

Moderate Islamic Reason and Radical Islam

No	Moderate Reason	Radical Reason
1	Truth is relative	Truth is absolute
2	Understanding of the scriptures tends to be contextual	Understanding of the scriptures tends to be textual
3	Reject violence	Justify violence

One of the reasons for moderate Islam as mentioned above is the understanding of the holy book (Al-Qur'an) which tends to be contextual. This contextualized understanding of the Qur'an is part of the modern tendency in the interpretation of the Qur'an which offers a very important alternative for

contemporary Muslims to balance the textual interpretation that is so dominant by radical Islamic groups today. Adherents of textual interpretations such as radical Islamic groups may consider the contextual approach often used by moderate Islamic groups to be un-Islamic or even anti-Islamic, but according to Abdullah Saeed that contextual approach is very Islamic and has strong roots in Islamic tradition.³³

The implications of the understanding of the Qur'an which tends to be textual by radical Islamic groups is the basis for acts of injustice experienced by women. Because, in the Qur'an, there is a form of conceptualization of women that is inequality. This is usually alluded to in special verses such as household life, marriage, and so on. In addition, the impression of inequality in the Qur'an and hadith as religious texts for Muslims often arises as a result of literal readings (textual). The literal reading model believes that the truth of the Qur'an and hadith lies in sound *literally* from these texts. In addition, reading the Koran also aims to fulfill the ideological needs carried out by these radical Islamic groups. Where in the process of reading the Koran is done to support their interests so that women are subordinated.

³² Siti Muliana, "Membumikan Islam Wasathiyah Di Internet Dakwah Islam Wasathiyah Dalam Website Arus Utama Islam Moderat Indonesia Islam wasathiyah merupakan model keberislaman yang ideal terutama di dan beragam . Selain itu , tidak

dipungkiri pula Islam Indonesia merupaka," *Jurnal Studi Sosial Keagamaan Syekh Nurjati* 2, no. 1 (2022).
³³ Abdullah Saeed, *Al-Qur'an Abad 21: Tafsir Kontekstual*, Terj: Erva (Bandung: PT Mizan Pustaka, 2016).

With a patriarchal ideology, also makes it patriarchal in reading the Qur'an and hadith.³⁴

b. Rejection of Violence

The implications of reading the Koran textually by conservative Islamic groups are also represented in the form of their acceptance of acts of violence in the name of religion, one example is acts of violence against women in the understanding of its meaning *nusyūz*. Based on Komnas Perempuan's Annual Records (CATAHU), acts of violence against women have increased every year.

In 2022, Komnas Perempuan will again publish its Annual Records with the fact that the highest gender-based violence against women occurred in the personal sphere, namely 335,399 cases, while in the public domain, there were 3,045 cases and in the state realm there were 52 cases.³⁵ Violence in the personal realm is one of them in Domestic Violence (KDRT). It is undeniable that the phenomenon of domestic violence gains legitimacy in the Qur'an if it is understood textually or literally as understood by conservative clerics who are gender biased.

Q.S. an-Nisa verse 34 is one of the verses of the Qur'an which often legitimizes the permissibility of beating women because

nusyūz. Ironically, related discourse *nusyūz* this only happens and focuses on women, but on the other hand, men as husbands in the household are free from context *nusyūz*. Perhaps the justification for committing violence is based on the legitimacy of Q.S. an-Nisa 34 became the basis for the development of Domestic Violence (KDRT). This is not in line with Sachiko Murata's perspective of Gender Cosmology, who says that the assumptions are related *nusyūz* which can upset the order of balance *do* and *which*. Men are likened to occupying positions *which* and women are in position *do* so that women are passive but that does not mean they are inferior to men. According to Murata, the distinction between the roles of men and women is complementary, so there is no justification for oppressing one another. In this case, interpretation *do* and *which* shows that rebellious behavior does not only come from wives but can also come from husband.³⁶ In addition to these cases there are still many religious texts that are gender biased such as polygamy even though polygamy itself is still a problem whether it is included in the category of violence against women or not.

Therefore, this is where the urgency of the spirits of moderate Islam is. Where, a

³⁴ Syafiq Hasyim, *Bebas dari Patriarkhisme Islam* (Depok: KataKita, 2010).

³⁵ Komnas Perempuan, "Catatan Tahunan 2022," 2017.

³⁶ N S Kamalia, "Konsep Nusyuz Perspektif Teori Kosmologi Gender Sachiko Murata," *Journal of Islamic Law and Family Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020): 54–56.

contextual understanding of the Qur'an is important because the problems of society, especially women, always experience significant changes along with the times. As already mentioned, the understanding of the Qur'an and hadith textually or *harfiyyah* it does not only perpetuate violence against women such as domestic violence because it gets legitimacy from Q.S an-Nisa verse 34. But it also positions women as second-class creatures or rather castration of women's existence. Therefore, moderate Islam, with its understanding of the Qur'an and contextual hadith, hopes that the castration of women's existence will be erased along with the interpretation of the Al-Qur'an and hadith that is friendly and open to the dynamics of developing problems. As already mentioned, NU and Muhammadiyah are the main bases of moderate Islamic movements in Indonesia, through women's organizations within them, it is undeniable that they have contributed greatly to the issue of gender inequality in Indonesia. Therefore, NU and Muhammadiyah can be seen not only as religious organizations within which Islamic da'wah develops, but also as religious organizations with the liberation of women.

In the end, Islam as a religion was revealed by Allah SWT to emphasize the issue

of guaranteeing justice for the benefit of mankind or what is commonly referred to as *maqashid shari'ah*.³⁷ This is also in line with Fazlur Rahman's view, that Islam as a religion is derived as morality and social justice. Where, Islam as a religion instructs humans to pay attention to the concept of balance, harmony, wholeness, both fellow human beings and with their environment. Islam introduces the concept of gender relations which refers to substantive verses which are at the same time the general goal of shari'ah (*maqashid al-shari'ah*), among others; realizing justice and virtue (Q.S. al-Nisa, 4: 58), and calling for good and preventing evil (Q.S. ali-Imran 104), as well as security and peace (al-Nisa verse 58). These verses of the Koran then become the framework for analyzing gender relations in the Koran. Men and women have the same rights and obligations in carrying out the roles of caliph and servant.³⁸ These values are in line with the values upheld in Human Rights (HAM) which form the basis of humanitarian law throughout the world by upholding the right to freedom without sex and gender discrimination.

³⁷ Jasser 'Auda, *Membumikan Hukum Islam Melalui Maqasid Syariah*, Terj: Rosi (Bandung: Mizan Media Utama, 2015).

³⁸ Nasarudin Umar, "Teologi Pembebasan Perempuan," Islamiclib.com, 2016, <https://islamlib.com/keluarga/perempuan/teologi-pembebasan-perempuan/>. Diakses pada 10 Juni 2022.

Conclusion

Overall this paper provides an understanding that moderate Islam participates in efforts to liberate and empower women in a social order in Indonesia through the interpretation of its contextual religious texts and the rejection of acts of violence. Apart from that, moderate Islam is also useful in preventing the acceptance of conservative Islamic doctrines by Indonesian women which has no small impact on the decline of the human resources themselves. So far, various forms of discrimination and subordination to women are often legitimized by religious texts with gender-biased interpretations. In this case, moderate Islam also provides space for women with a contextual interpretation according to the developments and needs of the times.

The Islamic organizations Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah are the mainline agents of moderate Islam in Indonesia. Autonomous organizations such as Muslimat and 'Aisyiyah, with their various activities, are real examples of how women are involved in fighting for women's rights. The NU and Muhammadiyah movements have contributed greatly to the issue of gender equality in Indonesia. With the moderate Islamic spirit that is owned by NU and Muhammadiyah, it is a breath of fresh air for women who,

according to conservative groups, only have a role in the domestic sphere.

In the end, Islam can be understood as a religion that was sent down by Allah SWT to emphasize the issue of guaranteeing justice for the benefit of mankind or what is commonly referred to as *maqashid syariah*, especially for women.

This research is expected to provide implications for theoretical benefits as material for academic Islamic studies to add to the body of knowledge, and practical benefits for the community so that they can also echo the spirit of moderate Islam in positioning women as Indonesian citizens according to their rights and obligations.

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