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The Role Of Religious Moderation In Political Dynamics In Indonesia

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Abstract

Religious moderation plays a crucial role in shaping the political landscape of Indonesia, a diverse nation characterized by various religious beliefs and practices. This research investigates the significance of religious moderation in navigating the complex political dynamics of the country. Through a comprehensive analysis of primary and secondary sources, including academic literature, governmental reports, and media sources, the study examines how religious moderation influences political behavior, policy-making processes, and interfaith relations in Indonesia. By exploring the impact of religious moderation on electoral outcomes, political discourse, and the overall stability of the political system, this research sheds light on the multifaceted role of moderation in promoting democracy, social cohesion, and inclusive governance. Additionally, the study explores the challenges and opportunities associated with fostering religious moderation in the Indonesian context, offering insights into strategies for enhancing interfaith understanding, tolerance, and cooperation in the pursuit of a more harmonious and equitable society.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Political Dynamics, Indonesia, Democracy

1. Introduction

Indonesia stands as a country rich in a myriad of religions, cultures, and ethnicities, a characteristic not found in every nation. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges, as it can foster both unity and potential conflicts among different groups. Embracing and preserving this multicultural identity is essential for our collective well-being. It's our duty to promote tolerance towards the differences that exist within Indonesian society.

According to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2010, there were a total of 1,331 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups identified. In 2013, a collaboration with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) found 633 major ethnic groups. In terms of languages, Indonesia recorded 652 regional languages spoken across the archipelago in 2017. Additionally, Indonesia embraces six major religions: Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, with many still adhering to ancestral beliefs. This reality underscores the significant challenge Indonesia faces in maintaining harmony, security,



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and political stability. From a religious standpoint, the diversity of faiths is seen as a divine decree, fostering dynamic interactions and mutual learning among people of different backgrounds (Meitzner, 2020).

In contemporary times, the intolerance observed among various groups within the framework of democracy presents an intriguing topic for discussion, notably due to the prevalence of identity politics, particularly in local elections (Pilkada). In Indonesia, discussions on identity politics have long been prominent among social science scholars. Clifford Geertz's (1963) exploration of "Primordial Sentiment" suggests that the study of identity politics, particularly concerning ethnicity, indigenous communities, and local moderation becomes increasingly relevant as an effort to promote tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and a deep understanding of pluralism within Indonesian society. Despite Indonesia being known as a country with a Muslim majority, religious and cultural diversity has become a rich characteristic and a major strength in shaping national identity. However, despite religious moderation being acknowledged as an important approach in building peace and stability, there is still limited research specifically examining the role of religious moderation in the political dynamics of Indonesia. Therefore, this research aims to further explore how religious moderation influences political behavior, public policies, and the overall political dynamics in Indonesia.

By understanding the role of religious moderation in the Indonesian political context, it is hoped that this research can provide deeper insights into ways to strengthen the values of moderation, promote tolerance, and build an inclusive and harmonious society amidst the rich religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia.

2. Methods

This research adopts a descriptive approach employing qualitative methods through library research. By utilizing secondary sources, including books, e-books, scholarly journals, research findings, articles, and opinions from local print media in Indonesia, the study aims to comprehensively examine the role of religious moderation within the country's political dynamics. These secondary sources, accessed through various online platforms and other written documents, provide a rich reservoir of information and data for analysis in this investigation.

The qualitative methodology chosen for this research enables a nuanced exploration of the complex interplay between religious moderation and political behavior, public policies, and overall societal dynamics in Indonesia. By delving into the insights offered by scholarly works, research findings, and opinions from local media, the study seeks to uncover the underlying factors influencing the promotion or hindrance of religious moderation within the political landscape of Indonesia.

Through meticulous examination and analysis of the gathered data from diverse secondary sources, this research endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of the significance of religious moderation in fostering tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and societal harmony amidst Indonesia's diverse religious and cultural landscape. By shedding light on the various dimensions of this phenomenon, the study aims to offer insights that may inform policies and initiatives aimed at strengthening the values of moderation and promoting inclusivity within Indonesian society.

3. Result and Discussion

Role of Religious Moderation Towards Election

Knowledge of the teachings within each religion holds significant importance for its followers. It serves as a foundational element for individuals to navigate their faith and guides

them towards a path of understanding and tolerance. Embracing diversity within religious beliefs can act as a catalyst for individuals to adopt a moderate approach, avoiding the pitfalls of extremism that often stem from rigid adherence to singular interpretations.

In combating the rise of extremism, religious moderation emerges as a pivotal component within any nation. Particularly in countries characterized by vast multicultural diversity, such as Indonesia, the promotion of religious moderation becomes imperative to mitigate the risks of intergroup conflicts. By fostering an environment where different religious interpretations are acknowledged and respected, societies can work towards diffusing tensions and promoting harmonious coexistence among diverse religious communities.

Religious moderation serves as a spirit to seek a middle ground between the two extremes in religious practice (Somer, 2014). Followers of extreme religious ideologies often believe fervently in the absolute truth of a single interpretation of religious texts. Additionally, they may regard interpretations from other groups as misguided, leading to the characterization of these groups as ultra-conservative. On the other hand, there are extremist groups that idolize reason to the extent of disregarding the sanctity of religion or sacrificing fundamental beliefs for misplaced tolerance towards followers of other religions. These groups are known as extreme liberals.

One of the roles of religious moderation is to facilitate the effective functioning of direct elections (Pemilu). Religious moderation advocates for adherents to adopt an inclusive rather than exclusive mindset. This inclusivity encourages individuals to be open-minded and receptive to diverse perspectives, including in the realm of politics. By fostering an atmosphere of openness and acceptance, religious moderation serves as a mechanism to prevent individuals from adopting extreme and excessive attitudes towards political differences (Brocker & Kunkler, 2013). Instead, it promotes respect for the political choices of others, even if they differ from one's own, without resorting to intimidation or coercion based on ideological disagreements.

In a democracy like Indonesia, where religious and cultural diversity is a defining characteristic, the promotion of religious moderation in political discourse is crucial. It helps to mitigate the risks of polarization and sectarianism, which can undermine the integrity of the electoral process. By encouraging individuals to approach politics with a moderate and tolerant mindset, religious moderation contributes to the creation of a more harmonious and inclusive political environment.

Moreover, religious moderation fosters a sense of mutual respect and understanding among citizens, regardless of their political affiliations or religious beliefs. It encourages dialogue and cooperation across ideological divides, promoting the exchange of ideas and constructive engagement in the political process. This facilitates the development of a healthy democratic culture where individuals can express their views freely without fear of reprisal or marginalization based on their religious or political identity (Kamal, 2022).

Overall, the promotion of religious moderation in political discourse not only enhances the effectiveness of direct elections but also strengthens the democratic fabric of society. By cultivating an atmosphere of tolerance, respect, and open-mindedness, religious moderation contributes to the creation of a more inclusive and democratic society where diverse voices are heard and respected.

Role of Religious Moderation Towards Political Dynamics

The role of religious moderation in political dynamics also includes efforts to address conflicts and mediate tensions among religious groups. By emphasizing the importance of tolerance, mutual understanding, and interfaith dialogue, religious moderation helps reduce political tensions often triggered by religious differences or beliefs. In this context, religious

moderation serves as a bridge that facilitates constructive dialogue and peaceful resolution of political differences, thus fostering social harmony and improved political stability.

One key aspect of the role of religious moderation in addressing political conflicts is creating space for open and inclusive dialogue. By promoting openness and respecting diverse perspectives, religious moderation encourages all parties to come together, listen to different viewpoints, and seek solutions that are acceptable to all. Through dialogue based on respect and trust, religious moderation helps transform the political dynamics from confrontational to collaborative, thus creating a more stable foundation for effective political cooperation (Gofur, et.al, 2023).

Furthermore, the role of religious moderation also involves promoting values of peace and harmony in interfaith interactions. By strengthening awareness of common interests and building mutual respect among religious groups, religious moderation helps prevent the escalation of conflicts that can damage social cohesion and political stability. In this regard, religious moderation serves not only as a tool for mediating ongoing conflicts but also as a proactive form of prevention in building a strong foundation for peace and interfaith harmony.

Lastly, the role of religious moderation in political dynamics includes efforts to build an inclusive and responsive political system that meets the needs and aspirations of all citizens. By advocating values such as justice, equality, and social responsibility, religious moderation helps shape a political culture oriented towards public service and common interests. Through moderate and collaborative approaches, religious moderation can help create a more stable, harmonious, and effective political environment in promoting the welfare and progress of all citizens.

Role of Religious Moderation Towards Political Party

Political parties are a component of political infrastructure, as their structure lies beneath the surface, within society. Essentially, political parties are organized groups with the common goal of attaining political power. According to Carl J. Friederich, political parties are defined as organized groups of individuals with a stable structure aimed at acquiring or maintaining power to provide benefits, both ideological and material, to their members. In slightly different terms, R.H Soltau defines political parties as groups of citizens, more or less organized, acting as a political unit with the aim of governing and implementing public policies (Abqa, 2020).

Political parties can effectively influence the population, and the quality of democracy is also influenced by how political parties function. Therefore, political parties play a central role in driving religious moderation as a pillar of democracy. It is time for political parties to play an active role not only in carrying out their regular functions (such as political communication, political socialization, political recruitment, and conflict regulation). Therefore, the author argues that in addressing identity politics prevalent today, political parties should

The author contends that political parties play a pivotal role as agents of religious moderation in addressing the prevalent identity politics of today. As identity politics increasingly polarizes societies, political parties hold significant sway in shaping public discourse and societal attitudes. Given their prominent position within the political landscape, political parties possess the capacity to steer the narrative towards moderation, fostering a climate of inclusivity and understanding across religious lines.

In confronting the challenges posed by identity politics, political parties serve as crucial intermediaries between diverse religious communities and the broader populace. Through their outreach efforts and engagement with various segments of society, political parties have the opportunity to promote dialogue, tolerance, and cooperation among different religious groups.

By fostering an environment conducive to mutual respect and understanding, political parties can mitigate the divisive impacts of identity politics and promote a more cohesive society.

Moreover, political parties can leverage their organizational structures and resources to champion initiatives aimed at promoting religious moderation. By incorporating principles of moderation into their platforms and policies, political parties can actively work towards fostering interfaith harmony and cooperation. Through strategic alliances and partnerships with religious leaders and community organizations, political parties can amplify the message of moderation and counter extremist narratives that seek to exploit religious differences for political gain (Kawangung, 2019).

Furthermore, the active involvement of political parties in advancing religious moderation can contribute to the strengthening of democratic principles and institutions. By embracing moderation as a core value, political parties demonstrate their commitment to upholding democratic norms, including pluralism, tolerance, and respect for individual rights. In doing so, they not only address the immediate challenges posed by identity politics but also reinforce the foundations of a robust and inclusive democracy that embraces diversity and fosters social cohesion. emerge as a driving force for religious moderation.

Conclusion

In the research on the role of religious moderation in the political dynamics of Indonesia, it was found that religious moderation has significant implications in various political aspects. Firstly, in the context of general elections, religious moderation plays a crucial role in shaping a more inclusive and democratic electoral process. By promoting values of tolerance and interfaith dialogue, religious moderation creates space for voters to be more open to candidates from diverse religious backgrounds. This not only reduces political polarization often triggered by religious differences but also provides an opportunity for the electorate to choose leaders who represent broader common interests.

Secondly, in the overall political dynamics, religious moderation plays a vital role in managing tensions among religious groups. By emphasizing the importance of dialogue, cooperation, and appreciation of diversity, religious moderation helps create a more stable and responsive political environment that caters to the needs of diverse communities. Through the promotion of values of peace and harmony, religious moderation acts as a catalyst for reducing political conflicts arising from religious differences or beliefs. Thus, religious moderation not only strengthens the essence of inclusive democracy but also supports the establishment of a more balanced and sustainable political system for the Indonesian society.

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