



# Religious Moderation Through Friday Pulpit in Campus Environment

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**Abstract.** Pluralism is one of the pillars of Indonesian diversity. However, often these pluralities become a gap in the weakness of the nation. Various conflicts have emerged precisely starting from an attitude of lack of appreciation for the diversity of perspectives, one of which is in religious life. On the other hand, the government has promoted the importance of religious moderation, especially in the educational environment. Using a qualitative paradigm and a discourse analysis approach, the Friday sermon held at the Slamet Riyadi University campus mosque in Surakarta contains at least two values of religious moderation, namely tolerance and anti-violence. These two values are conveyed with a pattern of giving warnings to always be vigilant in the face of trials, taking a personal approach by always drawing closer to God, inviting worshippers to always pray for protection, strengthening their arguments with the example of the Prophet, and closing the statement that if following the Prophet will get a good end.

**Keywords:** religious moderation · Friday sermon · discourse analysis

## 1 Introduction

Indonesia has a cultural diversity that cannot be underestimated. With a high amount of diversity, Indonesia is known as a country rich in interfaith, ethnic, and racial (multicultural) cultures. One side of cultural wealth becomes the capital of the nation in national development. Diversity differences can be harmoniously knitted in the frame of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*. This harmony in diversity has lasted for decades, at least since the country became independent. It can even be said that cultural diversity has not only become the capital of national development, but has become a unifying tool for achieving independence.

But on the other hand, the diversity of tribes, races, religions, language differences, and life values that occur in Indonesia also has the potential for various conflicts to occur. Conflicts in society stemming from sporadic inter-group violence in various regions of Indonesia show how vulnerable the sense of community built into the Indonesian nation-state is, how thick the prejudice between groups is and how low mutual understanding between groups is. Violent conflicts in Indonesia often end up being humanitarian disasters that tend to develop and expand both from the type and the perpetrators. This is what makes the process of handling conflicts take a long time with tremendous social,

economic, and political losses. Based on these problems that come one after another, Indonesia can enter into a complex emergency situation [1].

Therefore, the concept of religious moderation needs to be introduced to the community to stem the various threats of social conflicts that are not least motivated by differences in perspectives on religion and beliefs. As we know, Indonesia is a country with a high harmony index. Religious moderation is important for maintaining the harmony of a plural life. In addition, religious moderation must be massively taught to counteract intolerance and radicalism [2]. Based on recent research, it is said that radicalism has penetrated in all walks of life. In fact, this understanding also spreads to students on several campuses, including Islamic campuses in Indonesia [3]. This is in line with other studies that examine students' perceptions of the scale of religious moderation in terms of national commitment, denial of violence, and accommodating culture. The results showed that students who have a high level of religiosity tend to have moderate understanding. The increase in religiosity can be applied through various pathways such as education in curriculum and learning, as well as outside of learning [4].

The analysis of the discourse on Friday sermons is interesting to study. Especially in Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim. The content of the sermon received important attention because it was used as a medium for proselytizing and various other purposes. Unfortunately, Friday sermons are considered to be merely routine parts of the Friday prayer series. The findings show that the material of Friday sermons is sometimes not adapted to the times. Sermon material is sometimes taken from books of sermon collections whose content is not in accordance with current conditions [5]. In fact, Friday sermons can be used as an effective medium for conveying various strategic policies. One is the mainstreaming of religious moderation.

Religious moderation is a strategic issue to regulate the diversity of life to remain harmonious. Understanding religious moderation is important to be applied to counteract radicalism. Efforts to strengthen religious moderation are intensively carried out, including in the campus environment. However, there has not been much research that examines Friday sermons in the context of mainstreaming religious moderation. Therefore, this article is about the analysis of discourse on Friday sermon material on religious moderation in the campus environment.

## 2 Discourse Analysis

Discourse is often equated with a collection of paragraphs and texts. However, discourse is not a fragment of a stand-alone text. Discourse takes place in a network of social, knowledge, and contextual power relations [6]. The study of discourse analysis is an interesting conversation because it can reveal the implicit intent of contexts that are not displayed. Discourse analysis can reveal the message of a linguistic approach in both oral and written form. Kim in his research revealed about the discourse on the use of particles from six languages in Asia. The results showed that variations were found in the specific functions and interactional tasks performed by each particle [7]. Linguistic means are also used in text-based studies. For example, the pragmatic study revealed by Alkhawaldeh on the use of *hiss* in the script of Friday sermons. Variations

of hiss are used as a means of language to convey persuasion and show the familiarity of the speaker with the worshipper [8]. In addition, the diverse conditions of pilgrims require sociolinguistic means to touch all layers of worshippers. The use of diglossic code switching in Arabic-language Friday sermons helps the sermons in giving material emphasis [9].

In addition, discourse analysis is associated with a wide variety of diverse themes, topics, and scientific fields. Discourse analysis is used as a means to uncover interests, social contexts, and ideologies [10]. In one study on the representation of the words Muslim and Islam on the Internet media in Sweden showed that the discourse found in the internet media supported the findings of equal representation in traditional media [11]. Ideological depictions of figures such as Donald Trump can be analyzed based on discourses conveyed through his twitter account. Trump presented his ideology to describe two groups, namely “we” and “others”. The “us” group is described as a party with a positive image. Instead, the group of “other people” is described as a negative party. The two groups are portrayed through argumentation/authority, comparison, repetition, capitalization, and metaphors are strategies [12].

### 3 Friday Sermon

In many countries, Friday sermons are of great concern to governments and religious leaders. For example, in Malaysia, Friday sermons are used to convey the ideas and interpretations of Islam from governments and religious authorities. Friday sermons were used to announce the commitment of Islamic authorities to maintain the integrity of Sunni Islam. The attention of the government and religious authorities including in the preparation of the text of the sermon has created an ideal opportunity for the government to influence the understanding and attitudes of the Muslim community towards various social, religious, and political issues in the multiethnic community [13]. The same is true for Turkish Muslims residing in other countries. Religious authorities also play a role in directing the themes of Friday sermons containing relevant issues such as love of the homeland, religious norms, as well as adaptation in other countries [14].

Therefore, the formulation of Friday sermons must be carefully observed. The organization of the text, the use of language means, and the consideration of social relations are important focuses in the text of the Friday sermon [15]. Friday sermon material should not only be about religious issues in a narrow context. Social, cultural, economic issues can also be raised by associating them with religious perspectives. For example, in Jordan, the content of Friday sermons was developed to invite people to pay attention to health, gender issues, and family planning programs. The speakers must also pay attention to social problems comprehensively. The speaker’s carefulness in conveying important information has an impact on a greater effect [16]. In Indonesia, similar efforts are also carried out, one of which is the socialization of the dangers of stunting which is conveyed through the pulpit of Friday sermons. In fact, Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country, many Indonesians tend to follow religious leaders rather than government officials. With the right dissemination of material to the speakers, the acceleration of stunting prevention through religious channels can be carried out optimally [17].

Reflecting on the previously mentioned research, Friday sermons have the potential to be used as a medium for disseminating religious moderation material. Research on the

analysis of the text naskah *Wawacan Babad Walangsungsang* as an example. The text features the spiritual journey of Prince Walangsungsang teaching the harmony of living interactions with adherents of other religions. The content of values in the manuscript is very relevant as a medium in teaching religious moderation [18]. Reflecting on these findings, Friday sermon material is ideally used as an effort to mainstream religious moderation programs in Indonesia.

## 4 The Development of Religious Moderation in Higher Education

In addition to mainstreaming discourse, the institutionalization of religious moderation in the Ministry of Religious Affairs was also carried out with the establishment of a Religious Moderation Working Group at the Directorate General of Islamic Education (Pendis). This Religious Moderation Working Group is tasked with overseeing the implementation of the vision of religious moderation in the programs and activities of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially those under the auspices of the Directorate of Pendis [19]. Another strategy in efforts to strengthen religious moderation is to seek the integration of religious moderation formulations in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024 [19].

The development of religious moderation in higher education itself, taken the establishment of the Indonesian International Islamic University (UIII). The establishment of the campus, the essence of which is the implementation of 3 (three) interrelated things, namely: Indonesian's, Islam, and humanity, so that it is hoped that UIII will be able to function as a "House of Moderation" in the Islamic context, namely a place to collect, study, and disseminate Islamic values rahmatan lil 'alamin. Moreover, UIII, whose development received the status of a National Strategic Project (PSN) through Presidential Regulation Number 57 of 2016, is expected to become a center for the study of moderate Islamic civilization in Indonesia, so that it can be an inspiration to the world [19].

College as an "academic home" should be an example in religious moderation. The academic community who come from various tribes and different ethnicities, religions and beliefs, is not a reason to divide in fulfilling the Tri Dharma of Higher Education. The campus world has become accustomed to understanding differences. Even accustomed to caring for differences, as well as being accustomed to appreciating differences in thinking in scientific treasures. As a form of institutionalization, college can form moderation house as a motor as well as a container in seeding religious life in college which is shrouded in harmony and tolerance.

There are many ways to form a moderation house on campus. First, if referring to the results of the study shows that universities can implement various strategic efforts implemented through learning activities. The use of learning models and strategies strengthens the psychomotor and affective aspects of students in the form of experiential, habituation, emotional, functional, and rational strategies. This strategy can be applied using various learning methods such as lectures, discussions, experiments, and assignments that prioritize moderate Islamic values [20, 21]. Other efforts could also be by integrating the madrasah diniyah learning system for students. Students in the first and second semesters are required to take part in the madrasah diniyah program. Activities are carried out in the morning and integrated with academic activities. This means that all

lecture schedules must pay attention to this program. In addition, the activities of the madrasah diniyah are also integrated with academic activities such as prerequisites for comprehensive examinations, requirements for bidikmisi students, and foreign students are required to live in dormitories [22].

## 5 Method

This paper is a case study of the implementation of the Friday sermon which was held at the mosque campus of Slamet Riyadi University, Surakarta on July 15, 2022. This qualitative paradigm research uses a discourse analysis approach in its analysis. Through this approach will be identified the extent to which the values of religious moderation were contained in the sermons delivered by the preacher at that time. The indicators of religious moderation used in this paper are four things that have been outlined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, including a commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodating to local culture [19].

## 6 Results and Discussion

### 6.1 Overview of Friday Sermons at Slamet Riyadi University Surakarta

As we have previously stated that the setting of this research was carried out at the campus mosque of Slamet Riyadi University Surakarta on July 15, 2022, precisely at the time of the implementation of Friday prayers. Explicitly, the speaker said that the topic discussed during the day was about the provision of the faithful in the face of the slander of the end times. He explained that there are basically four practices that can be a stronghold for a Muslim in the face of conditions described as full of trials, namely by always asking God for protection, being patient when he gets the test of life, carrying out obedience, and begging for a good death.

This sermon is delivered by the speaker for a duration of approximately twenty-seven minutes which, if categorized, consists of three main parts. The first part is the opening which is the pillar of the Friday sermon. In this section, at least the speaker conveys five things related to praise to God, reading prayers to the Prophet Muhammad, speaking about piety, reading the holy verses of the Quran, and praying for believers. All these things are conveyed in Arabic. The second part, the essence of the sermon delivered using Indonesian. Finally, the third part, the closing of the sermon (in the terminology of Muslims known as the second sermon) which in general is not much different from the opening part. Therefore, the focus of this study is specifically to examine the value of religious moderation contained in the core part of the sermon (Table 1).

Basically, this talk is about purifying the soul and self-improvement to become a better person, so that improvement is prioritized in the person of each pilgrim in relation to God. For this reason, then the messages conveyed by the speaker rarely contain how to build good interactions with fellow human beings. Khatib also seemed to always invite to carry out the recommendations he conveyed to the audience without presenting a patronizing impression by wearing “our” diction. Instead of using the pronouns “you”, “me”, or “you”, the speaker prefers the pronoun “we” as a sign that the information is needed by everyone, not just for the audience. The following are some example sentences:

**Table 1.** The top five words that appear most often in sermons

Frequently appearing words	Sum	Percentage (%)
we	47	2,94
Allah	39	2,44
fitna	33	2,06
prophet	11	0,69
test	11	0,69
<b>Word count</b>	<b>1601</b>	

“... On this happy occasion I also invite the audience and Friday worshippers rahimahumullah to always increase our piety to Allah...”

“... in our face of the slander of the end of the first era is to ask God for protection....”

“... this patience is an attribute which we must exercise by modeling from past prophets or apostles....”

In addition, the words “Allah”, “slander”, “prophet”, and “exam”, ranked further as vocabulary that is often spoken by speakers. Especially for the words “slander” and “test” are both synonymous forms. This is commonly understood, because the topic of discussion raised in the sermon that afternoon was about the provision of Muslims in the face of the slander of the end times. Interestingly, these forms of charitable obedience to “God” have always been returned to the exemplary figure of the “prophet” in giving the pilot. In other words, the speaker implicitly always invites the audience to do charity by modeling the messengers of God. The prophets he referred to as pilots were Muhammad, Ibrahim, Job, and Zacharias. The following are some examples:

“... He continued his explanation that he should feel the need to Allah Azza wa Jalla with these prayers, because the Prophet SAW also prayed to Allah that all the slander would not befall his people ...”

“... However, with the patience exercised by Ibrahim, it may cause excellent fruit...”

“... it was because of his patience that the Prophet Job finally recovered and was able to return to happiness....”

“... And remember the story of Zakaria when he prayed to his Lord....”

## **6.2 The Content of Religious Moderation in Friday Sermons at Slamet Riyadi University Surakarta**

As previously explained, the content of the Friday afternoon sermon was related to how a Muslim should build personal closeness to his God in the face of various trials. Therefore, throughout the findings we have obtained, there is not the slightest invitation from the speaker to build a good relationship with fellow human beings. Therefore, the apparent value of religious moderation is not so much conveyed. However, this does not mean that there is no content of religious moderation, because after studying it turns out

that there are two indicators that can be found in the whole sermon. Both indicators are tolerance and non-violence.

Although not conveyed directly, the values of tolerance and non-violence appear to appear quite frequently in the sermons. This is because, basically if it refers to the topics raised related to tips in dealing with the slander of the end times, of course, all are again related to social life as well. For example, how the Prophet Muhammad's actions in fortifying the people through his efforts and prayers to avoid such severe trials in the last days, how Ibrahim's patience was formed when he had to convey God's revelation to his son to sacrifice him, and how Job's patience in accepting his pain made him have to be shunned by those around him. Of course, all of these things are a form of tolerance and anti-violence that is not easy.

Departing from the exemplary examples of the prophets, the speaker indirectly invited the audience to take the wisdom of laughter in responding to trials with an attitude of tolerance and anti-violence through the way of drawing himself closer to God. Uniquely, there was a kind of message pattern that we could find from the lecture at noon that day. In almost every major point of his sermon, the speaker always reinforces it with five specific messages, including:

- Warns to always be vigilant in the face of trials
- Take a personal approach by always drawing closer to God
- Inviting worshippers to always pray for protection
- Reinforcing his argument with the example of the Prophet
- If you follow the Prophet, you will have a good end.

For more details, here we will describe the evidence of the message in Table 2.

Thus, although only two indicators of religious moderation are contained in the sermon, the power of the message can be conveyed well because it uses these five patterns. Although not all of the core lectures use such patterns, but broadly speaking, in every tip he offers, there is a content of some of these message patterns as reinforcement.

**Table 2.** The pattern of the message conveyed by the speaker

Message type	Examples of speech
Warns to always be vigilant in the face of trials	<p>"... Slander is forged to produce an honest Muslim. Therefore, a believer will not be allowed to enjoy his faith without first being given trials and trials or slander...."</p> <p>"... Because of the slander inflicted upon the people at the end of times, like us this is not the only slander but he is a sunnatullah, he is also carried out against the peoples of the past. Allah SWT said in the letter of Al-Ankabut which means: when the people think that they are left to say we have believed, while they are not tested..."</p>

*(continued)*

**Table 2.** *(continued)*

Message type	Examples of speech
Take a personal approach by always drawing closer to God	<p>“... Indeed, whenever a Muslim turns himself to Allah Azza wa Jalla in asking for help, pinning hopes, inflating wishes to Allah Almighty, God willing, Allah will always guard, protect, and uplift him on the path of Islam...”</p> <p>“... For example, if we receive a test of slander, we immediately at two o'clock at three o'clock in the evening immediately have a chance to relate to God...”</p>
Inviting worshippers to always pray for protection	<p>“... in the face of the slander of the end of the first era is to seek protection from Allah SWT...”</p>
Reinforcing his argument with the example of the Prophet	<p>“... He continued his explanation that he should feel the need to Allah Azza wa Jalla with these prayers, because the Prophet SAW also prayed to Allah that all the slander would not befall his people....”</p> <p>“... But with the patience exercised by Ibrahim, it can cause excellent fruit....”</p>
If you follow the Prophet, you will have a good ending	<p>“... But with the patience exercised by Ibrahim, it can cause excellent fruit....”</p> <p>“... It was because of his patience that the Prophet Job finally recovered successfully and was able to return to happiness and be able to gather with his family....”</p>

## 7 Conclusion

There are two values of religious moderation in a Friday sermon at the Slamet Riyadi University campus mosque in Surakarta, namely tolerance and anti-violence. Although not implicitly conveyed, the two indicators are quite strongly presented using five patterns of delivery, namely giving warnings to always be vigilant in the face of trials, taking a personal approach by always drawing closer to God, inviting worshippers to always pray for protection, strengthening their arguments with examples from the Prophet, and closing the statement that if we following the Prophet will get a good end. It is hoped that the next Friday sermon the speakers can explore the topic of the sermon so that the four indicators of religious moderation can be conveyed properly to realize the college's campaign as a house of moderation.



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