



Religious Moderation in Virtual Public Sphere (Study of Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat)

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Abstract — *Pengajian* is a common activity in Indonesia. *Pengajian* means public event that is not only reciting quran for moslems but also learning the values of Islam and religion in common openly for public. Through this type of *pengajian* the values of religious moderation are spread to jamaah. This research used qualitative method and netnography approach while data is found from some digital platforms of jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat. Jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat at least has one website and two social media: facebook and youtube. Those digital platforms are mostly used to broadcast any *pengajian* of jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat in many regions. This research has a goal to learn how the values of religious moderation is disseminated widely for people both moslems and non moslems in a format of *pengajian*. There are three findings in this research that relate to concept of public sphere: first, egalitarianism mostly shown physical such as type of stage that closes among public, clothes that wore by jamaah is common clothes not too Islamic. Second is deliberative action that is shown in interactive dialogue between kyai kangjeng and jamaah, and also related to the theme of *pengajian* that often based on the aspiration of jamaah. Third, cultural basis in every *pengajian* that is held. Jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat always use cultural approach to spread the values of religious moderation.

Keywords — jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat, religious moderation, public sphere, *pengajian*

I. INTRODUCTION

Pengajian is a common activity in Indonesia. *Pengajian* means public event that is not only reciting quran for moslems but also learning the values of Islam and religion in common openly for public. Through this type of *pengajian* the values of religious moderation is spread to jamaah. This research has a goal to learn how the values of religious moderation is disseminated widely for people both moslems and non moslems in a format of *pengajian*.

Pengajian is such a good example of public sphere that is held commonly by many groups of *pengajian* in Indonesia. Mostly *pengajian* is held live publicly. But some of *pengajian* are also live in social media so everyone who can not attend to the event of *pengajian* can watch lively or recorded through their social media. *Pengajian* in social media is a virtual public sphere. It's an interesting thing that how we see differently virtual public sphere through our social media. Although this virtual public sphere mediated by media we can assure and confirm the characteristics of public sphere.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital devices with it's social media platforms based on internet have emerged new public sphere in virtual space. Jati (2016) [3] argues that virtual public sphere has a strong magnet because communication and interaction both is practiced inside is timeless and spaceless. And also Nasrullah (2012) [6] said that internet is virtual space that can be used to respond the actual reality. This virtual public sphere can not just connect a person but also people globally borderless. While Piliang (2012) states that cyber space could transform any human activities to become forms of artificial substitution. Those virtual activities are virtual bodies that become the extension of physical body [9].

This article studied Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat as a virtual public sphere from both social media (Youtube and Facebook) account and website of Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat. Through social media and website Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat religious moderation is echoed. Each content in those social media accounts and website fill religious moderation issues from photos and videos. And also from those images we understand that Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat as a public sphere.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of public sphere refers to public discourse and debate, where people can discuss about public issues [11]. In it's progression the concept of public sphere becomes shifting and fluctuating. Habermas and Sennet (1974) argue that public sphere develop in eighteenth century in Europe and since that time occurred separation between public and private life [1]. Social media as a public sphere is forbid to give priority to political and economy interest otherwise must prioritize the public interest [5][7].

Religion for some social theorist is a private thing that can cause privatization and privatism of religion. Religion is realized as a personal activity and private and also away of worship in public sphere [1]. Public sphere is a sphere for public life that many issues are making progress and debated. Mass media and now social media has significant role to take care of public sphere. Social media such as Facebook, Youtube, and internet provide everything that is used by people to discuss any problems that related to public interest in their daily life [1].

IV. METHODS

This research used qualitative method and netnography approach while data is found from some digital platforms of jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat. Jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat at least has one website and two social media: facebook and youtube. Those digital platforms are mostly used to broadcast any pengajian of jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat in many regions.

According to Latzko-Toth et al (2017) [4] that data collection in social media research consist of three ways: a) trace interview, b) manual data collection, c) agile long-term observation. Data for this article are collected through those three stages above.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

There are three findings in this research that relate to concept of public sphere: **first**, egalitarianism mostly shown physical such as type of stage that closes among public, clothes that wore by jamaah is common clothes not too islamic. **Second** is deliberative action that is shown in interactive dialogue between kyai kangjeng and jamaah, and also related to the theme of pengajian that often based on the aspiration of jamaah. **Third**, cultural basis in every pengajian that is held. Jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat always use cultural approach to spread the values of religious moderation.

First, Stage is designed to arrange such sound system and music tools. There are no specific chairs or tables, just space for performers and members of Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat. Every jamaah could do dialog or ask something to performers directly because there is not any *hijab* (curtain) to separate jamaah between men or women. And the performer could reach the jamaah closely and join with them and also could freely access the stage where main performer (*kyai*) is.



Source: facebook komunitas gambang syafaat, 2023

Figure 1. Performers and members of Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat

Beside that characteristic of egalitarianism emerges in how the values of Islam are told. Kyai usually shows context of the topic of pengajian first but religious texts in Islam are told in the end. According to that strategy, jamaah would feel that they have the same positions and opportunity with others to learn religious texts unpleasantly as a newbie. If religious doctrines are told first so it is believed that psychologically load burdens to jamaah to understand religious values.

Access to the public sphere is surely open to people. People as a public in public sphere could happen when people do not receive violence from others [2]. Pengajian Gambang Syafaat never tolerates any violence and so that will welcome people from any different background to come to pengajian.

A jamaah named SI argues strong reason that make him come to Pengajian Gambang Syafaat.

“...Kalo saya merasa cocok dengan metode diskusi dan konsep kesetaraannya, yang menghargai perbedaan pandangan, dan tidak memisahkan jamaah laki-laki dengan perempuan” (Wawancara SI, 2020).

(I agree with the discussion method and egalitarianism concept of Jamaah Maiyah Gambang Syafaat, that give appreciation of differences, and not separate male jamaah and female jamaah).

Based on what SI said Pengajian Gambang Syafaat has egalitarianism principles. There is not any superior – inferior relationship among jamaah, and between jamaah and the performers. The way communication happens in pengajian is smooth with no border. The position of jamaah in Pengajian Gambang Syafaat as a partner to discuss and communicate equally. While kyai never acts as a authoritative source in front of jamaah. Each Islamic values that speech from the kyai are noble messages that would be benefit for all jamaah.

Second. Islamic values in Pengajian Gambang Syafaat are told by dialog. Every jamaah could ask directly to kyai. Each question would be answer immediately and after that jamaah would be given a chance to ask question more. If there are no jamaah would ask question yet, the member of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat driven to ask question. Questions from member as though the question from jamaah. So that the answer from Kyai actually for all jamaah.

Another jamaah, YN, gave an opinion that Pengajian Gambang Syafaat make us practicing our religion logically. Pengajian Gambang Syafaat is surely different that any other pengajian because Pengajian Gambang Syafaat never dogmatize jamaah literally, but mostly the aspect of logic to understand religious values contextually. And the religious messages are easier to be received and understandable for Islamic values. In this case logic is prioritized to learn and understand about religion. Habermas believed that the power of logic can give advantage to emerge the freedom of speak (2016).



Source: facebook komunitas gambang syafaat, 2023

Figure 2. Pengajian Gambang Syafaat

Most topics of the Pengajian Gambang Syafaat are from discussion forum among the member. Sometime the main idea of the theme derived from jamaah. Each topic and theme of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat often discussed dialectically between member and jamaah. This is also the big difference between Pengajian Gambang Syafaat with other kind of pengajian. For example, in January 2020, the theme of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat is “Sakau Kuasa”. This theme is a response of any news about corruption in media. While in

August 2020, the theme of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat is “dijajah egoisme”. This theme is such a critical in Indonesia independent day ceremony. Indonesia absolutely already proclaimed as a freedom nation but what exactly the meaning of freedom is. And so on (website gambangsyafaat.com, 2020; youtube gambang syafaat, 2020).

According to Habermas, public sphere has 2 forms: political public sphere and literature public sphere [10]. Pengajian Gambang Syafaat has those 2 forms. Political characteristic of public sphere in Pengajian Gambang Syafaat can be found in many themes of pengajian above. Beside that Kyai or sometime member of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat give critics to government relate to social political issues in Indonesia. Those social political issues are discussed in Pengajian Gambang Syafaat with all the jamaah. While literature public sphere is thick from lyric of the songs that sing in pengajian. Emha Ainun Nadjib as a main Kyai of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat is writer, novelist, artist, becomes the representatives of literature public sphere in Pengajian Gambang Syafaat.

Third. Pengajian Gambang Syafaat convey about Islamic values use cultural approach. There is music performance from Wakijo Lan Sedulur (WLS) group in every moment Pengajian Gambang Syafaat. Furthermore, Kyai Kanjeng music group often give performance to amuse jamaah. Kidung Syafaat music group usually perform specific *salawatan* – praise to beloved Rosul Muhammad – songs combine with modern music.



Source: facebook komunitas gambang syafaat, 2023

Figure 3. Kyai Kanjeng Music Group Performance

Through music, Islamic values are delivered combine with very emotional lyrics. As a jamaah, WT, admit that the atmosphere of the Pengajian surely deeply solemn when every song is played by Kyai Kanjeng group. For him, music that played while pengajian make him happier and more focus to the pengajian.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research found that Jamaah maiyah gambang syafaat spread the values of religious moderation thru spirit egalitarianism, deliberative, and cultural idioms. The spirit of egalitarianism is found in togetherness that happen between Jamaah and Kyai and member of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat. The spirit of deliberative is seen from the way they do and arrange dialog in pengajian. Every jamaah has right to ask anything without feeling guilty or fear to be bullied throughout the pengajian. While music that is played throughout the pengajian become the cultural idioms of Pengajian Gambang Syafaat. This music is combined with Islamic songs and accompanied with modern music.

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