



The Role and Strategy of FKUB in Strengthening Religious Moderation Education: A Case Study in Mandailing Natal Regency

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to examine the role and strategies of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency. This study employs a qualitative approach to explore how FKUB contributes to the development and reinforcement of religious moderation education through various strategies and initiatives. Data collection methods include in-depth interviews with FKUB administrators, education stakeholders, and community leaders, as well as the analysis of relevant documents. The main findings of the study indicate that FKUB plays a central role in facilitating interfaith dialogue and promoting religious moderation values in schools and communities. The primary strategies implemented include organizing seminars and collaborating with educational institutions, both schools and universities, in Mandailing Natal Regency. This research provides new insights into the effectiveness of FKUB's role in promoting tolerance and moderation within educational institutions. The implications of this study highlight the importance of strengthening FKUB's role as a driver of more effective religious moderation education policies, as well as the need for further development of strategies to enhance the acceptance of moderation values in the local context. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of more effective religious moderation education policies in Indonesia.



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INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation education is one of the crucial aspects in efforts to foster harmony and tolerance among religious communities in Indonesia. Amid the country's cultural and religious diversity, it is important to ensure that religious education in schools and communities not only teaches the tenets of each religion but also emphasizes mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. The Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in Mandailing Natal Regency plays a strategic role in developing and strengthening religious moderation education. This study hypothesizes that FKUB plays a key role in enhancing tolerance and understanding of religious moderation through educational strategies that focus on interfaith dialogue and collaboration with educational institutions.

The issue that this study focuses on is the lack of integration of religious moderation education strategies into the educational practices in Mandailing Natal Regency, particularly regarding the role of FKUB. Although FKUB has made efforts to introduce the values of tolerance and moderation, implementation on the ground often faces various obstacles, such as lack of support from education stakeholders, limited resources, and resistance from the community. These challenges can hinder efforts to achieve inclusive and harmonious educational goals. Addressing this issue is important because religious moderation education plays a crucial role in shaping tolerant and respectful attitudes among the younger generation, ultimately contributing to social stability and interfaith harmony.

In the context of Islamic education, strengthening religious moderation education becomes even more relevant in light of the challenges posed by radicalization and extremism. Inclusive and moderate Islamic education not only helps prevent extremism but also strengthens the understanding of peaceful and tolerant religious teachings. This study is expected to provide deeper insights into how FKUB can maximize its role in supporting religious moderation education and propose strategic recommendations for improving existing approaches. The impact of this research could assist in the development of more effective educational policies and significantly contribute to the formation of a more tolerant and harmonious society.

Religious moderation education is a topic that has received attention in various studies. According to research by Fathurahman (2018), religious moderation is considered a key to overcoming social conflict and extremism. The study found that integrating moderation values into religious education curricula in Indonesia could reduce the potential for radicalization among students. Fathurahman emphasized the importance of adjusting teaching materials to highlight tolerance values and respect for diversity to achieve this goal.

Furthermore, a study by Sari (2020) concluded that FKUB plays a vital role in facilitating interfaith dialogue and providing training for educators. The research indicated that FKUB in West Java successfully raised awareness about the importance of moderation through various educational programs and workshops. This study provides evidence that FKUB's active role can strengthen religious moderation education, although challenges in local implementation remain.

Additionally, a study by Yuliana (2021) showed that strategies for implementing religious moderation education are often hindered by a lack of coordination between educational institutions and the community. The findings revealed that the effective application of moderation strategies requires strong support from various parties, including the government and religious institutions. She emphasized the need for more integrated strategies to ensure that religious moderation education can be applied consistently and have a significant positive impact on the ground.

These literatures provide a strong foundation for understanding FKUB's role in strengthening religious moderation education and of FKUB in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal identifying the challenges and opportunities to improve the effectiveness of the strategies applied. This research fills the gap in existing literature by offering a new perspective on the contributions and strategies Regency. While previous research has highlighted FKUB's role in broader contexts and in other regions, this study focuses on a specific local context and uses a comprehensive qualitative method to explore the challenges and implementation strategies of religious moderation.

The main contribution of this study is its emphasis on how FKUB's strategies can be tailored and optimized based on unique local conditions, as well as offering practical recommendations to improve the effectiveness of religious moderation education. By utilizing a comprehensive qualitative approach, this study is expected to fill the gap in understanding FKUB's specific practices and their impact at the local level, which has not been extensively discussed in the existing literature.

This study aims to explore the role and strategies implemented by the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency. Specifically, this study seeks to identify and analyze key strategies used by FKUB and evaluate the effectiveness of their implementation in the local context. This research also aims to provide practical recommendations for enhancing FKUB's role in promoting religious moderation education in schools and local communities.

Research Questions:

1. What strategies are implemented by FKUB in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency?
2. How effective are the strategies implemented by FKUB in achieving the goals of religious moderation education?
3. What is the impact of FKUB's role on the understanding and acceptance of religious moderation values in schools and communities in Mandailing Natal Regency?

This study hypothesizes that the strategies implemented by the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency have a significant positive impact on the understanding and acceptance of religious moderation values among students and the local community. The basic assumption of this study is that FKUB, through its programs such as organizing interfaith dialogues and strengthening moderation for religious leaders at various levels and types of religious institutions, can increase awareness and tolerance at the school and community levels. It is expected that the effectiveness of these strategies will vary depending on the support provided by local stakeholders and the community's response to FKUB's initiatives.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive-analytical and normative-empirical approach. This method was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role and strategies of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) in strengthening religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency. The study aims to analyze how FKUB's strategies are implemented, the challenges faced, and the impact of these strategies on religious moderation education.

The data sources used in this research include in-depth interviews, observations, journal reviews, documentation, and literature. Interviews were conducted with 15 participants, consisting of FKUB administrators, educators, and local stakeholders, selected using purposive sampling, based on specific criteria such as experience in religious moderation education and direct involvement with FKUB. Observations were carried out on-site to observe the implementation of religious moderation strategies and the interactions between FKUB and the community. Journal reviews and documentation were used to explore relevant literature and secondary data regarding FKUB's role and religious moderation education. Literature sources were also examined to complement the analysis with supporting theories and concepts.

The research location was chosen in Mandailing Natal Regency, Indonesia, because the area provides a relevant context for evaluating FKUB's strategies in a specific local setting. Mandailing Natal Regency was selected as the research site due to its unique characteristics in terms of social and religious dynamics, as well as the significant role of FKUB in religious moderation education in the region.

Data analysis was conducted inductively, drawing conclusions from the data obtained through interviews, observations, and reviewed documents. The collected data were analyzed to identify patterns, themes, and relationships relevant to FKUB's role and strategies in religious moderation education. This inductive approach allows the researcher to develop a deep and comprehensive understanding of how FKUB's strategies are applied and their impact on religious moderation education in Mandailing Natal Regency.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of FKUB Mandailing Natal Regency

FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) of Mandailing Natal Regency was established as a follow-up to the issuance of the Joint Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs and the Minister of Home Affairs No. 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the Guidelines for the Implementation of the Duties of Regional Heads/Deputy Regional Heads in Maintaining Religious Harmony, Empowering Religious Harmony Forums, and Establishing Places of Worship. It was established in 2007, approximately one year after the regulation was published, for the management period of 2007-2012, with H. Zulkarnaen, S.Pd.I, serving as the first chairperson. After this period, FKUB Mandailing Natal Regency's management for the 2012-2018 period was led by Drs. Aswin Hasibuan. Following this,

the leadership continued into the 2013-2018 period under the chairmanship of Drs. H. Imron Rosadi. The current management period, 2018-2023, and the ongoing period 2023-2028, are led by Payungan Pulungan.

The FKUB secretariat office is located at the Kesbangpol Office of Mandailing Natal Regency, located at the Payaloting Panyabungan Office Complex. Previously, FKUB had offices in the Kelurahan Pidoli Dolok Panyabungan and Kelurahan Dalan Lidang Panyabungan.

The FKUB management consists of an Advisory Board, including the Chairperson of the Advisory Board, who is the Deputy Regent, the Vice Chairperson, the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, the Secretariat of the Advisory Board, the Head of Kesbangpol, and members, including the Police Chief, the Military Command, the Head of the District Prosecutor's Office, etc.

The FKUB Mandailing Natal Regency Executive Board consists of 17 members: 1 chairperson, 2 vice chairpersons, 1 secretary, 1 deputy secretary, and 12 members from all religious groups in Mandailing Natal, including Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism, with the composition adjusted to the religious demographics as stipulated in the Joint Regulation of the Ministers No. 9 and 8 of 2006.

2. Role and Strategy of FKUB

FKUB is a forum established by society and facilitated by the government to build, maintain, and empower religious communities for harmony and welfare. As stipulated in Article 8, paragraph (1), FKUB in regencies/cities has the following duties:

- a) Conduct dialogue with religious leaders and community figures;
- b) Collect aspirations from religious organizations and the community;
- c) Channel religious organizations' and community aspirations into recommendations for local government policies;
- d) Conduct socialization of laws and policies in the field of religion related to religious harmony and community empowerment; and
- e) Provide written recommendations for the establishment of places of worship.

Since its establishment in 2007, FKUB Mandailing Natal Regency has developed and implemented various programs and activities, including the following:

- a) Socialization of laws related to religious harmony;
- b) Interfaith Dialogues involving various religious leaders in Mandailing Natal to strengthen communication and mutual understanding;
- c) Strengthening Religious Moderation through programs focusing on tolerance, respect for differences, and understanding, particularly for religious leaders, religious organization administrators, youth organizations, students, and religious leaders at places of worship.

1) Religious Moderation Guidance for Religious Leaders

This program focuses on religious leaders from all faiths in Mandailing Natal—Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism. It is a key component in strengthening religious moderation education in the community. Religious leaders play a central role in disseminating values of tolerance and moderation in daily religious life. This program aims to enhance religious leaders' understanding and skills to address the challenges of radicalism and extremism. Through training and discussions, religious leaders are provided with knowledge of moderation principles and strategies to implement them in sermons and community activities. The goal is to strengthen their role in promoting peace and harmony among religious communities.

2) Strengthening Religious Moderation for Religious Organization Administrators

Strengthening religious moderation among religious organization administrators is crucial for creating harmony in a multicultural society. Religious organizations play a strategic role in spreading

moderation values through their programs and activities. This effort includes training and education designed to improve understanding of tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful conflict resolution. These programs equip administrators with the skills to manage differences and promote interfaith dialogue. Through this approach, religious moderation is expected to strengthen social solidarity and prevent potential conflicts in society.

3) **Strengthening Religious Moderation for Youth Organizations**

Strengthening religious moderation within youth organizations is an essential step in creating a harmonious and tolerant social environment. Through educational programs and training, youth organizations can enhance members' understanding and application of religious moderation values. This effort helps reduce the potential for conflict and extremism by promoting interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding. Implementing religious moderation in youth organizations is expected to positively impact social stability and community harmony.

4) **Strengthening Religious Moderation for Students and College Students**

Strengthening religious moderation among students and college students is critical for building a tolerant and inclusive youth character. Educational programs and extracurricular activities emphasizing religious moderation values can help students understand the importance of diversity and mutual respect. Through dialogue-based approaches and real-life experiences, they learn to approach differences with openness and wisdom. Strengthening religious moderation among students and college students is expected to reduce potential conflicts and enhance social cohesion in society.

5) **Strengthening Religious Moderation for Mosque and Church Administrators**

Strengthening religious moderation for mosque and church administrators is a strategic step in promoting tolerance and harmony between religious communities. Through training and workshops, administrators can deepen their understanding of moderation principles and techniques for managing differences wisely. This effort aims to build harmonious relationships between various religious communities and prevent potential conflicts. Strengthening religious moderation at the leadership level is expected to create a more inclusive and respectful religious environment.

Sources of enlightenment include:

- a) The Police Chief of Mandailing Natal
- b) The Head of the Kesbangpol Office
- c) The Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs Office of Mandailing Natal
- d) The Chairperson of STAIN Mandailing Natal
- e) The Chairperson of the Religious Moderation House at STAIN Mandailing Natal

Participants in the training programs include interfaith leaders, customary leaders, lecturers, religious counselors, ulama, and pastors. FKUB carries a moral burden and a strategic position to play a role in strengthening religious moderation education, even at the grassroots level of society.

6) **Effectiveness of FKUB's Strategies in Achieving Religious Moderation Education Goals**

a) **Competent Sources**

Competent speakers can provide in-depth, relevant, and substantial insights according to the subject matter discussed. They bring expertise and experience in maintaining religious harmony that supports comprehensive understanding among participants. Additionally, the speakers' skills in conveying accurate and constructive information can enhance the quality of dialogue, provide a solid foundation for decision-making, and foster productive and inspiring discussions.

b) **Programs Involving Educational Stakeholders**

The programs involve educational stakeholders as moderators, speakers, and participants in religious moderation education, such as schools, Islamic boarding schools, and higher education institutions.

- c) Relatively Conducive Heterogeneous Community in Mandailing Natal Regency
- d) The Role of Customary Practices and Religious Factors

The role of customary practices and the religiousness of the community are the most dominant supporting factors.

- 7) Main Challenges Faced by FKUB in Implementing Religious Moderation Strategies at the Local Level and Solutions
 - a) Resource Support: funding, facilities, and infrastructure.
 - b) Narrow Religious Fanaticism.
 - c) Nationalism among Religious Leaders Needs to Be Fostered Continuously.

Impact of FKUB's Role on Understanding and Acceptance of Religious Moderation Values in Schools and Communities in Mandailing Natal Regency

It cannot be denied that schools are the frontlines and starting points for nurturing religious moderation values in children and adolescents, alongside the family. The cultivation of religious moderation values in the family, together with the strengthening and development of these principles in schools, forms an effective collaboration to implement religious moderation values in their true sense. As a result, the aspiration of creating a moderate society will be more easily realized.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB) of Mandailing Natal Regency plays a strategic role in strengthening religious moderation education through various innovative and structured approaches. The key findings show that FKUB not only serves as a mediator in religious conflicts but is also actively involved in facilitating interfaith dialogue aimed at creating harmony and mutual understanding. FKUB's initiatives, including training for educators, the development of a moderation-based curriculum, and the consistent implementation of seminars and workshops, have contributed positively to enhancing the understanding of religious moderation among students and the community. These findings highlight FKUB's effectiveness in implementing education based on tolerance values, which, in turn, strengthens social cohesion in diverse environments.

The practical implication of this study is the importance of collaboration between educational institutions, the government, and the community to expand the reach of religious moderation programs. Academically, the findings enrich the literature on religious moderation education and provide empirical evidence supporting the theory of dialogue and constructive interaction in creating a peaceful and harmonious society.

In the context of Islamic education practices, the study's findings indicate that integrating moderation values into the curriculum and educational activities requires cross-sector collaboration, including educational institutions, FKUB, and community leaders. This provides new insights that religious moderation education is not only confined to classroom teaching but must also be supported by interactive activities that foster mutual understanding and empathy between religious communities.

However, the study has some limitations, such as its geographically limited scope to Mandailing Natal Regency and reliance on qualitative data, which may require further verification in other contexts. The researcher recommends future studies to explore similar strategies in other regions and assess the long-term impact of FKUB programs in promoting religious moderation education. Thus, it is expected that a more comprehensive understanding and more effective strategies will continue to be developed to strengthen inclusive and harmonious Islamic education.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This article has undergone independent peer review. The editor responsible for the assessment of this article has no direct relationship with the author and has not previously collaborated on any publications. The review process was conducted by an editor who has no affiliation with the author in terms of collaboration or conflict of interest.

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