Religious Moderation Within the Framework of Wahdatul 'Ulum: A Critical Analysis of the Presence of Extremism, Challenges in Achieving Religious Harmony in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In the contemporary era, religious extremism has become a global challenge that threatens peace and stability. Religious moderation emerges as a solution to address extremism and achieve a harmonious life. The Paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum, which emphasizes the integration of religious knowledge and general knowledge, offers a comprehensive approach to realizing religious moderation. This research aims to understand the concept of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm and its relevance to religious moderation, identify strategies and steps for its implementation, and analyze the challenges and obstacles in its execution. The research results indicate that the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm shares similarities with religious moderation, as it emphasizes balance, rejects extremism, and encourages a comprehensive understanding of religion. The application of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm in religious moderation can be carried out through integrative religious education, the development of scholars and religious leaders, the utilization of mass media, the role of civil society, and the role of the government. The challenges and obstacles faced include a lack of public understanding, the presence of extremist groups, and weak law enforcement. In conclusion, the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum offers an appropriate solution to address extremism and realize religious moderation. The implementation of this paradigm requires cooperation and commitment from various parties to realize a peaceful and tolerant life.

Keywords: Extremism, Religious Moderation, Wahdatul 'Ulum Paradigm, Integration of Knowledge

1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic thinkers share a common view on the importance of religious moderation, especially in multicultural Indonesia. Nurcholis Madjid mentioned that religion should not be compartmentalized and must be able to adapt to the times (Akmal Hawi, 2019). Therefore, the fundamental path to building harmony among diverse religious communities, Wahdatul 'Ulum, can be one of the solutions, as stated by Ahmad Syafii Maarif in several writings. In one of his writings, Amin Abdullah mentioned Buya Syafii's ability to harmonize the framework of Islam, Indonesian identity, and humanity in one

breath(Alimatul Qibtiyah, 2023). Not differentiating between each field of knowledge and incorporating religious values into every aspect will certainly produce educated individuals who view the importance of religious values in every aspect of life, and a moderate understanding of religion is the most appropriate choice to prevent the growth of radical ideologies. In a theory of Frustration and Aggression, it is mentioned that if an individual feels frustrated or marginalized, the tendency to commit acts of violence will be greater. When linked to religion, this action will eventually give rise to extreme individuals. (ekstrimisme)(I Nyoman Surna, 2014).

Religious extremism, often associated with radicalism, fanaticism, and fundamentalism, is a phenomenon that is increasingly concerning in the contemporary era. This phenomenon manifests itself in various forms, ranging from intolerance, discrimination, interfaith violence, to acts of terrorism carried out in the name of religion.

The impact of religious extremism not only takes lives and destroys property, but also wounds the values of humanity and the principles of religion itself. Religious teachings that should bring peace, love, and tolerance are instead distorted to legitimize violence and hatred. There are many factors that drive the emergence of religious extremism, among them are narrow and textual interpretations of religion. Extremists often interpret sacred texts in a textual and literal manner, without considering the context and meanings contained within them. This can trigger misinterpretations that are misguided and extreme. Another factor is the weak understanding of diversity, where the lack of knowledge and comprehension about religious and cultural diversity also triggers prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. This condition can become an opportunity for extremism to thrive. It becomes even more dangerous in the contemporary era where everything is digital and fast; false and provocative information can easily spread through social media and other online platforms. The lack of education and media literacy can make society vulnerable to propaganda and information manipulation by extremist groups.

Religious moderation is an important solution and an antidote to extremism, leading to the realization of peace. Religious moderation is defined as an attitude and action that always seeks to find a middle ground in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Religious moderation does not mean mixing or uniting all religions, but rather understanding the essence and noble values contained in each religion. Because in religious moderation there are fundamental principles, namely mutual understanding and tolerance, justice, opening dialogue among religious communities, and a commitment to peace. The presence of religious moderation is to realize a harmonious life. And

this is a shared responsibility. If the bridge built by religious moderation to connect humanity towards a brighter future can come to fruition.(Naurah Luthfiah, 2024)

To realize religious moderation as mentioned above, an approach is needed in its application. Thus, the author assesses the Paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum, which means the unity of knowledge, as offering a comprehensive approach. This is based on the principle where, in its concept, Wahdatul 'Ulum views that all knowledge is interconnected and united in one source, which is Allah SWT. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of integrating religious knowledge and general knowledge in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Not only limited to the academic realm, the application of the Wahadatul Ulum paradigm is also implemented in education and everyday life. If this can be practiced in life, it would certainly become one of the solutions and ways out of the presence of extremist attitudes and understandings, thus enabling the realization of peace and harmony in the midst of a heterogeneous society.

Research related to moderation is not a new thing. Even now, it has become a very popular topic in Indonesia, considering its multicultural society (religion, ethnicity, and culture); this is certainly very relevant and provides a space to realize a harmonious community. Previous studies have highlighted various aspects, ranging from the understanding of religious moderation, the factors influencing religious moderation, to efforts to promote religious moderation.

Among the studies that have been conducted is M. Abror (2020), which examines religious moderation from the perspective of tolerance, in order to gain a clear understanding of the relationship between religious moderation and tolerance, as well as its boundaries. M. Muaz, U Ruswandi (2022) on religious moderation in Islamic education explains how Islam also teaches the concepts of religious moderation and the importance of actualizing religious moderation in life, one of the efforts being through Islamic education. Then there is a writing by Theguh Saumantri about the construction of values of religious moderation from the perspective of the philosophy of religion, explaining how the philosophy of religion serves as one of the solutions in fostering moderate behavior, which aligns with the values contained in religious moderation. There is also a writing by E. Christiana (2021) on the implementation of religious moderation in countering radicalism. This piece discusses how religious moderation is used as a way to live a religious life and how the implications of this moderation can prevent the spread of radicalism in society.

Although there are similarities in the subjects of study, this research paper discusses in greater depth the concept of religious moderation within the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum as a bridge to address extremism in the contemporary era, ultimately leading to interfaith harmony. The focus of the research is encapsulated in the question of how the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm can serve as a strong foundation for realizing religious moderation. So, what are the challenges in implementing the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum to achieve interfaith harmony?

This research offers a significant contribution to the discourse on religious moderation by presenting an innovative framework. The main novelty of this research lies in the deep integration effort between the paradigm of wahdatul ulum and the concept of religious moderation. Thus, this research goes beyond previous studies that only discussed one concept separately. The uniqueness of this research lies in the revelation of the potential of the wahdatul ulum paradigm as a solid philosophical foundation for realizing religious moderation. Thus, the unity of knowledge and the integration of religious knowledge with general knowledge. Another novelty is the exploration of the challenges faced in implementing the paradigm of wahdatul ulum in the context of religious moderation. So in this research, it is hoped that through this study and discussion, a more robust solution can be found to maintain diversity and social security, as well as to produce a society that is tolerant and respects one another in communal life.

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative study with a descriptive-analytical approach. The data collection technique used comes from literature studies, which involves gathering data from various library sources, such as books, scientific journals, articles, and reliable websites. As supporters, in-depth interview techniques were also used with religious experts, community leaders, and academics who have an understanding of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm and religious moderation. Additionally, observations were conducted to examine phenomena related to extremism, religious moderation, and the application of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm in the field.

After the data is collected, data analysis is conducted using a grounded theory approach. The grounded theory approach aims to build new theories based on data obtained from the field. Data was analyzed and categorized into codes that align with the research theme, and then analyzed to build a new theory on the concept of religious moderation within the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Understanding Extremism

Extremism is a term used to describe ideologies or actions that are extreme, radical, and fanatical. Extremism in religion is often associated with violence, intolerance, and discrimination against other groups, even leading to acts of terrorism that are justified in the name of religion.

In the digital era, false and provocative information can easily spread through social media and other online platforms. The lack of education and media literacy can make society vulnerable to propaganda and information manipulation by extremist groups. Experts have various definitions of extremism, with different focuses and emphases. Here are some examples of definitions of extremism from various experts:

1. **Bruce Hoffman:** Extremism is "the use of political violence by individuals or groups attempting to achieve their goals."(Bruce Hoffman, 1997)

2. **Tore Bjørgo:** Extremism is "an ideology that rejects the status quo and the values of liberal democracy, and supports the use of violence to achieve political objectives."(Tore Bjørgo, 2014)

3. **Sageman:** Extremism is "a commitment to an ideology that endorses the use of violence to achieve political goals, and a rejection of the norms and values of mainstream society."(Marc Sageman, 2004)

In reality, religious extremism not only takes lives and destroys property, but also wounds the values of humanity and the principles of religion itself. Religious teachings that should bring peace, love, and tolerance are instead distorted to legitimize violence and hatred. However, it should be noted that not everyone with extreme views is an extremist.

The emergence of extremist attitudes certainly does not happen out of nowhere; rather, various complex factors contribute to their rise, including:

1. A narrow and textual understanding of religion. Understanding religious messages in sacred texts solely in a textual and literal manner will certainly lead to incorrect and misguided interpretations. The consideration of context and the meanings contained within sacred texts is also an important aspect that deserves attention. If misunderstandings in interpretation can be avoided. So that it does not lead to extreme attitudes afterwards.

2. The influence of political ideology. Exploiting in the name of religion is not something new or strange anymore. This includes political actors, who, in order to achieve their political goals, will not hesitate to use religion as a guise or mask. In fact, many use propaganda and hate rhetoric spread in order to achieve their goals. And this can certainly lead to radicalism and liberalism.

3. The weakness of understanding about diversity. The lack of knowledge and understanding about religious and cultural diversity can trigger prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination. This can be a gap for extremism to develop.

4. Injustice and social marginalization. Groups that experience injustice and social marginalization are sometimes more vulnerable to the influences of extremism. They may be seeking identity and a sense of belonging in extremist groups that offer "easy" solutions to their problems.

5. The lack of education and media literacy. In the digital era, false and provocative information can easily spread through social media and other online platforms. A lack of education and media literacy can make society vulnerable to propaganda and information manipulation by extremist groups

3.2. The meaning of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an attitude and action that always seeks to find a middle ground in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Religious moderation does not mean mixing or uniting all religions, but rather understanding the essence and noble values contained in each religion(Sirajuddin, 2020). Lukman Hakim Saifuddin also explained that many misunderstand the term moderation when it is presented, believing that it is a way for the West to weaken Islam. In fact, moderation in religion does not mean that the religion itself is moderated, but rather the way we practice our faith. The reason for religious teachings is certainly moderate. However, when religion becomes grounded, it will essentially be something understood by humans who are limited and relative. This will certainly give rise to a diversity of interpretations and understandings that vary. Therefore, religious moderation is a necessity to avoid excessive interpretations and extremist beliefs. The emergence of conflicts among religious communities will also be avoided.

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), moderation means a departure from extremism or a reduction of violence. (Nisa et al., 2021). Moderation in Arabic is called al-washathiyah. From a linguistic perspective, the term al-wasathiyah comes from the word wasath, which means the middle ground between two extremes. Al-Asfahaniy defines wasath as sawa'un, which refers to justice; being in the middle can also mean being standard or just average. In addition, Wasathan also means to guard oneself from behaving uncompromisingly and even straying from the line of truth in religious teachings. Ibn Ashur defines the word wasath with two meanings. First, etymologically, the word "wasath" means that which is in the

middle, or something that has two ends that are equal and proportional. Secondly, in terms of terminology, the meaning of wasath refers to the Islamic values that are built on a foundation of straight and moderate thinking, and not being excessive in certain matters.(Shihab, 2019)

In the Merriam Webster Dictionary (digital dictionary), moderation is defined as avoiding extreme behaviors, ideas, and expressions. In this case, certainly a moderate person is someone who can avoid extreme behaviors and expressions. It can be concluded that moderation or wasathiyah is a commendable condition that keeps and guides a person away from two extreme attitudes: the attitude of excess (ifrath) and the attitude of deficiency (muqashshir) regarding something that has already been determined and limited by Allah SWT. The attitude and teachings of wasathiyah are a gift for Muslims given by Allah SWT specifically; when humans can consistently practice the teachings of Allah SWT, that is when they become the best and chosen community. This trait has made Muslims a moderate community, not only in religious matters but also in social affairs in the world. The term "wasath" refers to a country in the Arabian Peninsula, specifically the term "syarqi awsath." (Timur bagian tengah). Wasath means a just community, one that is impartial in both worldly matters and in matters of the hereafter, yet is capable of balancing the affairs of both. The Muslim community is referred to as ummatan wasathan because they will serve as witnesses and will also be witnessed by all of humanity. Therefore, Muslims must position themselves in the middle and act justly so that their testimony can be accepted(Murtadlo, 2021)

The reflection of a fair attitude can serve as a benchmark for how moderate a person is perceived to be. The more moderate and balanced a person is, the more open they will be and the higher their commitment to the values of justice. Conversely, the more extreme someone is, the greater the likelihood that they will act unjustly and be closed off.

3.3. The meaning of Wahdatul 'Ulum

Wahdatul 'Ulum, which comes from Arabic, consists of two words: "*wahdah*" meaning "unity" and "*al-'ulum*" meaning "*knowledge*". Linguistically, Wahdatul 'Ulum can be interpreted as "the unity of knowledge".(Ritonga, 2022) Several Islamic figures have also contributed to defining wahadatul ulum. Some of them are:

- Imam Al-Ghazali: Wahdatul 'Ulum is the knowledge that bridges religious knowledge and general knowledge, showing the unity of both in one source, which is Allah SWT.

- Al-Attas: Wahdatul 'Ulum is a paradigm that views all knowledge as an interconnected and inseparable unity.
- Sheikh Muhammad Al-Azhar: Wahdatul 'Ulum is a methodology for understanding and integrating religious knowledge and general knowledge in order to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the universe and humanity.

The Paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum, which means the unity of knowledge, views that all branches of knowledge are interconnected and united in one source, namely Allah SWT. This paradigm emphasizes the importance of integrating religious knowledge and general knowledge in understanding and practicing religious teachings.

Wahdatul 'Ulum rejects the dichotomy between religious knowledge and general knowledge, which often triggers exclusivism and intolerance. This paradigm highlights the significance of integrating these two types of knowledge in comprehensively and contextually understanding religious teachings. Thus, the ultimate goal that all knowledge aims to achieve is to understand God and attain happiness in this world and the hereafter.

As an effort to address the issues of dichotomy and the challenges of the digital disruption era, scholars and managers of Islamic Higher Education institutions are currently striving to break down the walls of dichotomy by establishing a new paradigm of knowledge. That for the realization of the development of integrative science and the emergence of graduates with excellent and good profiles and character, it is necessary to establish a Paradigm of Scientific Development at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, which is formulated in the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulûm and the character of graduates formulated in the concept of 'Ulul 'Ilmi (Harahap et al., 2019).

That integrated knowledge is not only between science and religious knowledge, but encompasses all forms of knowledge, ranging from spiritual knowledge, religion, ethics, social sciences, culture, humanities, science, philosophy, to applied knowledge.Realizing a holistic knowledge system is the goal of Wahdatul 'Ulum. Parluhutan's explanation that pertains to knowledge. Biology has an ethical element, in the natural physical sciences there is an element of spiritual knowledge, and so on. Even if there is a distinction in knowledge, it is not in the sense of separation, but rather a categorization. Classification arises due to special attention given to a particular segment or object. To acquire holistic knowledge, a distinct philosophy is needed that does not submit to Western scientific philosophy. If in the philosophy of science a

reductionist approach is heavily emphasized, then the philosophy of Wahdatul 'Ulum places greater emphasis on integration.

Based on the various definitions above, it can be concluded that Wahdatul 'Ulum is a knowledge that truly originates from Allah SWT, where humans are given the opportunity to seek His love, and this is indeed in the context of piety towards Allah SWT. So, how to apply real science to real science such as Islamic banking, Islamic fashion, and Islamic economics has already taken root among the Muslim community. One of the formulas for the application of Wahdatul 'Ulum is at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, which was initially still operated by the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN).

The selection of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm as the ontology of knowledge at UIN Sumatera Utara has several implications, as stated by the initiator of Wahdatul 'Ulum, namely:

1. The universe and all the species within it are manifestations of God's actions.
2. Everything in the universe is alive. As living beings, each has cognition and consciousness, interacts and communicates with one another, possesses the ability of autopoiesis, and can change dynamically in a non-linear manner.
3. Nature is a complex system made up of interconnected layers, where each layer consists of parts that are often interconnected as well. The implication is that every object being studied must be viewed as a system in which its parts are interconnected with one another(Fridiyanto., 2020).

Thus, Wahdatul 'Ulum is an effort to address the issues of dichotomy and the challenges of the digital disruption era by building a new paradigm of knowledge. This is in line with the principle of systemic thinking that does not separate one aspect from another.

3.4. The Relevance of the Wahdatul 'Ulum Paradigm to Religious Moderation

The paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum and religious moderation share several similarities, namely:

1. Both emphasize the importance of balance and unity in understanding and practicing religious teachings.
2. Both reject extremism and radicalism in religion.
3. Both encourage a comprehensive and integrative understanding of religion

The firmness of divine values within a scientist will give rise to knowledge that clashes with morals and the teachings of Islam, as well as humanity. Therefore, with this integration, it will educate and produce scientists who are not only preoccupied with their scientific discoveries but also

care about the welfare of the community and understand moderation. The paradigm of wahdatul 'ulum develops a divine ideology, an ideology based on the awareness that knowledge is a light bestowed upon every human being. In line with that ideology, thinking, learning, research, scholarly writing, and community service are oriented towards enhancing faith and commitment to Islam so that they can become moderate individuals who remain rooted in their beliefs. Then from this paradigm emerged individuals who possess knowledge, meaning those who are dedicated, take responsibility, and are accountable for the development of science, characterized by 9 traits:

1. Possessing deep knowledge and high intelligence
2. Having the ability to conduct integral-transdisciplinary approaches
3. Exhibiting a dynamic ethos and a character of service
4. Having a prophetic character
5. Displaying a moderate attitude
6. Possessing noble morals
7. Having a national perspective
8. Development of civilization

From the explanation above, it can be understood that the paradigm of wahdatul 'ulum will directly shape a firm wasathiyah attitude in striving to become the best mediator and acting as a social researcher. Moderation is a product that arises from a moderate paradigm, moderate lecturers, moderate learning, moderate research, and moderate references, thus producing a character with a moderate spirit as well. Moderation is also a teaching that has been implicitly reflected in the attitudes and behaviors of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), as the messenger of Allah and the leader of humanity, which includes not only Muslims, and is explicitly stated in the Quran. A paradigm that returns the study of knowledge to its source, namely the Quran, will certainly give rise to souls that are also Qur'anic, who understand that moderation is not only about religion but also about the experience of practicing faith.Religious moderation should be provided to every person of faith. (Anwar & Muhayati, 2021). Termasuk pada mahasiswa sebagai generasi muda dan penerus bangsa (Christanti and Anwar, 2019). Including students as the younger generation and the successors of the nation. (Christanti and Anwar, 2019). The essence of religious moderation is to believe in the absolute doctrines of one's own religion while allowing space for the beliefs of others.(Ali, N., 2020). The moderate or wasathiyah values are important to maintain as a collective awareness of the Muslim community in Indonesia (Hiqmatunnisa, H., 2020). The Ministry of Religious Affairs promotes a model of religious moderation today to encourage inclusive

thinking and restore the spirit of cooperation as members of society (Asrori, S, 2020). Religious moderation is important to prevent radicalism and extremism in the teachings of Islam (Sadiah, D., 2018).

Indonesia, as a pluralistic country, is very appropriate to position religious moderation as an effort to prevent radical ideologies, as moderate Islam is the most suitable for Indonesia, which has diversity. Religious moderation is also important for students as the next generation to advance the nation in the future; instilling moderate Islamic values needs to be pursued as an effort to prevent exposure to radical ideologies. A concrete step that can be taken to instill values of religious moderation in the younger generation is through religious education. (Purwanto et al., 2019). Although fundamentally not only Islam has a moderate tradition, but also other religions, as a faith that is recognized and protected by the Indonesian government. In Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, a moderate attitude is also taught, as explained in the sacred texts of each of these religions. As taught in Buddhism, the spirit of the religion is metta. Metta in Pali means a friendly and non-violent attitude. With metta, Buddhists avoid all forms of evil, hatred, and hostility.

Therefore, the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum can serve as a solution within Islam, particularly to address religious extremism and to realize religious moderation in the contemporary era, thus fostering harmony among communities.

3.5. Ulum Analysis of the Concept of Religious Moderation from the Perspective of Wahdatul 'Ulum

In Islam, there are two aspects that must be balanced: the matters of this world and the hereafter. This is very important to instill in the soul of a person. In the midst of a society that continues to evolve as a result of the revolution in science and technology, people are confronted with the problems of civilization, as well as the endless challenges and needs of humanity. Science and technology will continue to evolve according to human needs, and this certainly poses a challenge for many religions, especially Islam itself. Although knowledge and technology are not things that contradict religion, because fundamentally both originate from the same values. In Islam, the Quran is a source of ideas and knowledge, but lately, what has happened is that knowledge has strayed from its source. This is caused by several factors, including the pressure of secularization and the dichotomous, pragmatic, and materialistic perspectives of some Muslim scholars, further exacerbated by the imitation of knowledge that is far removed from the science of Tawhid. Now, the Muslim community is

in a world that is experiencing rapid advancements in the fields of science and modern technology, advancements that are occurring in material aspects. To understand science and technology, an open and developing mind is required, while to face the temptations of significant material progress, a strong personality adorned with noble morals and high virtues is also necessary. Thus, a balance between the development of intellect and the heart is essential, which aligns with the concept of Wahdatul 'Ulum. Wahdatul 'Ulum is used to shape scholars, figures, students, and even learners who remain aware of their spirituality. In every development of knowledge, it is imperative to remain grounded in beliefs and norms, with thoughts and applications serving as a form of devotion to God. Only then can it be dedicated to the advancement of civilization and the welfare of humanity as an application and manifestation of self-dedication to God.

Humans who consistently maintain their spiritual state and devotion to God will always be vigilant, both in the development of knowledge and in every behavior and decision amidst a pluralistic society. In addition, there will emerge figures that the community needs, who understand what moderation is all about, because certainly, religious moderation is not a reckless act; rather, being moderate requires understanding and comprehending its boundaries.

Religious moderation is a perspective on the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings so that their application is always in a state of balance. Religion itself is something that is indeed perfect because it comes from God, the Most Perfect. However, the perspectives or ways in which each person practices the teachings of religion are what differ. This can be caused by several factors, one of which is human limitations in interpreting religious teachings, leading to diversity. In this diversity of beliefs, we will see understandings of religion that are either excessive or even diminished. Both poles of this understanding threaten religious life, as an overly extreme interpretation of religion can lead to violence and coercion within religious teachings, resulting in the collapse of peace and the well-being of the community. On the other hand, if religious teachings are overly diluted, it can lead to liberalization in religious practice, where individuals no longer adhere to the principles of their faith but instead follow their own desires. (Muhammad Raisul Huda, 2017).

Both of these conditions will lead to a chaotic civilization with a loss of moral values and human well-being. Therefore, education that teaches the attitude of balance or religious moderation is very much needed in the midst of a diverse society with various ethnicities, languages, cultures, and beliefs, so that it consistently ensures that regardless of the diversity of understanding and beliefs about religion, the welfare of the community remains a priority and is maintained

within the proper boundaries, thus preventing the emergence of extreme religious practices. Islam places great emphasis on the development of education in both religious and general knowledge. In Islamic teachings, religious education is divided into three categories: theology, law, and ethics.   The creed refers to matters related to faith, specifically monotheism, while the Sharia pertains to worship and everything related to the application of worship and Islamic teachings, as well as social aspects such as transactions, economics, politics, culture, and others, where religion serves as a guide. Then, ethics refers to the rules on how humans establish good relationships with one another. In teaching these aspects, it is essential to base them on clear references that align with the characteristics of Islam's teachings as a mercy to the universe, which embodies the moderation of Islam. Knowledge that is not integrated with religious values will lead to incorrect thinking and understanding, a misguided perspective, and a distorted attitude. Meanwhile, humanity and the world, which are currently filled with differences, need individuals who are not judged by their field of study, their scientific background, or their inventions, but rather by their ability to utilize their expertise for the benefit of society and to provide balanced perspectives on every issue faced by the community, whether it be related to religion or other social matters.

Religious moderation does not form spontaneously in a person's mind; it requires understanding and learning that are instilled through education, whether at home, in schools or universities, or within the community. If the education system and paradigm do not introduce religious understanding to students, in the sense of dichotomizing religious knowledge from general knowledge, this will lead to the emergence of a generation that does not understand moderation and how to make their knowledge beneficial for many people, but instead causes harm or only seeks personal gain. Thus, the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum is needed here to improve ethics, morals, and the education system so that they align with the character of Islam itself, which is to bring mercy to all of creation, and this is also what is desired to be realized in Islamic moderation.

3.6. Implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in Preventing Extremism

In the understanding of Wahdatul 'Ulum, knowledge and religion have the same goal, which is to seek the truth, understand the meaning of life, and develop an understanding of the universe and God's creations. Therefore, there is no separation between knowledge and religion; rather, both are different paths that converge towards a deeper truth and understanding of God and His universe. Essentially, wahdatul 'ulum is a term derived from the concept of the unity of

knowledge that is widely used among Muslim scholars. (Asyikin, 2023). Those terms are like the integration of knowledge, the Islamization of science, and so on. The concept of wahdatul 'ulum is a fusion of knowledge (reason) and religious teachings (revelation) as part of a holistic approach to understanding truth and the reality of life. The concept of wahdatul 'ulum is an extension of the idea proposed by Ibn Rushd.

Ibn Rushd's concept states that reason and revelation are both true and support each other, with no contradictions between them. This emphasizes that Islam does not recognize "dual truths" like the Western perspective that may not acknowledge revelation as truth. UINSU adopts an approach that unites science and religious teachings as a complementary whole, forming a more holistic understanding grounded in Islamic values (Padang et al., 2024).

As part of the doctrine in Islamic tradition that emphasizes the importance of unifying various branches of knowledge and religious understanding, Wahdatul 'Ulum presents a more holistic and comprehensive approach. So that it can present religious moderation which in the end will prevent the emergence of radicalism and liberalism as part of extremism (Maslan, 2024).

The unity of knowledge in preventing the emergence of radicalism and liberalism can be carried out in several forms, including:

1. The development of an integrated curriculum in the world of education

In an era of globalization filled with complexity and challenges, designing a holistic and balanced education curriculum has become an increasingly urgent necessity. An integrated education curriculum, which combines religious knowledge and general knowledge, emerges as a solution to equip students with a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the world. The integrated education curriculum is not merely about merging two different subjects, but rather about building connections and reciprocal relationships between religious knowledge and general knowledge. The main objectives of this curriculum are:

a. To develop a comprehensive understanding of religion: By integrating general knowledge, students are encouraged to understand religious teachings in a contextual manner that is relevant to the realities of life.

b. To cultivate critical and analytical thinking: The integration of these two types of knowledge encourages students to think critically and analytically in understanding various phenomena and issues.

c. Building a balanced character: An integrated curriculum fosters a balanced character, which is religious and faithful, as well as broad-minded and equipped with 21st-century skills.

d. Preparing students for the future: In the era of globalization, students need a comprehensive understanding of the world, both in terms of religion and general knowledge, to be able to contribute positively to society.

Dr. Adian Husaini, an expert in Islamic education from UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, stated that an integrated curriculum can help students understand Islam comprehensively and contextually, as well as protect them from radicalism and liberalism. (Adian Husaini, 2007). Despite having many benefits, the implementation of an integrated education curriculum also faces several challenges, such as the still limited availability of teachers who have a deep understanding of both religious knowledge and general knowledge, as well as the ability to integrate these two types of knowledge in learning. Then, with this integration, a change in mindset is needed from various parties, including teachers, parents, and the wider community, to accept and support the implementation of the integrated curriculum, and this requires time and a longer process. However, despite this, the integrated education curriculum remains a promising solution to equip students with a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the world. Although there are several challenges, with cooperation and commitment from various parties, the implementation of the integrated curriculum can pave the way for a future generation that is intelligent, character-driven, and tolerant..

2. Interfaith dialogue

Interfaith dialogue is one of the important pillars in realizing tolerance, mutual understanding, and cooperation in a diverse society. Through dialogue, people of different faiths can learn from each other, understand differences, and find joint solutions to various issues they face.

Another step is to promote multicultural education to enhance public understanding of cultural and religious diversity, as well as to encourage tolerance and mutual respect for differences. Through this promotional effort, it will also foster cooperation among religious communities in various fields, such as social, cultural, and educational, to strengthen the sense of unity and togetherness of the nation. This is one way to minimize the emergence of extremist attitudes among religious groups.

3. Instilling a critical and open attitude while integrating religious knowledge with general knowledge.

Integrating religious knowledge and general knowledge into daily life, so that the practice of religion is not only based on textual understanding but also takes into account contextual and scientific aspects. And this will also open oneself up to be more accepting of differences and avoid radical and liberal thinking(Azyumardi Azra, 2017).

4. Strengthening the foundation of religious knowledge.

Strengthening the scientific basis of religion amidst the complexities of life will undoubtedly become an essential need. This action will certainly lead to a more open and broad understanding of religion. This is as expressed by Prof. Dr. Syafii Maarif, a Professor at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, who stated that strengthening the foundation of religious knowledge is key to realizing Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin, which is Islam that brings mercy to the entire universe(Syafii Maarif, 2016).

Thus, strengthening oneself through education, interfaith dialogue, integrating religious knowledge into daily life, and reinforcing the foundation of religious knowledge are strategic efforts to build a comprehensive, contextual, and moderate understanding of religion. With these steps through Wahdatul 'Ulum, a moderate attitude towards religion will emerge, helping to avoid extremism, whether it be liberalism or radicalism.

3.7. Challenges and Opportunities

The Paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum, which emphasizes the unity of knowledge and the integration of religious and general sciences, offers a potential solution to combat extremism and foster religious moderation. However, the implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum in practice faces various challenges while also presenting opportunities that need to be considered.

The challenges of implementing Wahdatul 'Ulum can be summarized in several points, including:

1. Lack of understanding: Many people still do not have a deep understanding of the concept of Wahdatul 'Ulum, which hinders its application in education and daily life.

2. Resistance from certain groups: Groups that adhere to exclusivism and intolerance may oppose the implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum as it is seen as a threat to their ideology.

3. Resource limitations: The implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum requires adequate resources, such as trained educators and integrated learning materials.

4. Mindset change: The application of Wahdatul 'Ulum necessitates a shift in mindset from individuals and society to embrace diversity and openness to various perspectives

Similarly, regarding the opportunities in the Implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum, it can be explained in several aspects as follows:

1. The increasing awareness of the importance of religious moderation: As more people recognize the significance of religious moderation, the opportunities to implement Wahdatul 'Ulum as a solution are growing.

2. Support from the government and educational institutions: Support from the government and educational institutions is crucial for developing curricula and educational programs based on Wahdatul 'Ulum.

3. Technological advancements: Information and communication technology can be utilized to disseminate information about Wahdatul 'Ulum and to build platforms for interfaith dialogue.

4. The growth of the Wahdatul 'Ulum community: The Wahdatul 'Ulum community can serve as a space for enthusiasts and practitioners of Wahdatul 'Ulum to learn from each other and share experiences.

3.8 Strategies to Overcome Challenges and Leverage Opportunities

By overcoming various challenges and seizing existing opportunities, we can realize the effective implementation of Wahdatul 'Ulum and contribute to the creation of a harmonious and tolerant society. Here are some strategies for overcoming challenges and leveraging opportunities:

1. Enhancing education and outreach: Conducting education and outreach about Wahdatul 'Ulum to the wider community, including through mass media, seminars, and workshops.

2. Developing a Wahdatul 'Ulum-based education curriculum: Integrating the concept of Wahdatul 'Ulum into formal and non-formal education curricula.

3. Strengthening interfaith dialogue: Encouraging interfaith dialogue to build mutual understanding and tolerance.

4. Utilizing social media: Using social media to disseminate information about Wahdatul 'Ulum and build an online community.

5. Supporting research and development: Supporting research and development on Wahdatul 'Ulum to enrich understanding and its implementation.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussions above, it can be concluded that the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm can be an appropriate solution to address extremism in religion and to realize religious moderation in the contemporary era. This paradigm offers a comprehensive and integrative approach to understanding and practicing religious teachings, which can help prevent extremism and radicalism in religion.

The strategies and steps proposed in this research can also serve as a guide for religious leaders, educators, and other stakeholders in implementing the paradigm of Wahdatul 'Ulum in the field. Like designing a curriculum in the world of education, interfaith dialogue, integrating religious values into daily life, and strengthening the foundation of religious knowledge. Although various challenges have been encountered in its implementation, Wahdatul 'Ulum continues to provide opportunities for the creation of religious moderation, becoming a bridge for solutions to extremism in the contemporary era.

Suggestion

a. Based on the conclusions above, here are some suggestions for further research:

b. Conduct further research with a larger and more diverse sample to strengthen the results of this research.

c. Conducting research on the application of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm in various cultural and religious contexts.

d. Developing models of religious education based on the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm.

e. It is hoped that the suggestions above will help to increase understanding of the Wahdatul 'Ulum paradigm and encourage its application in realizing religious moderation in the contemporary era.

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