

## Moderation of Religion in the Post Truth Era: Identity Search Against Hoaxes at the Al-Asror Islamic Boarding School, Gunungpati, Semarang

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**Abstract:** The development of social media has made it easy to spread news from various sources. This results in the entry of news from social media that is not necessarily clear in truth or hoax news. This research answers the question: What are the pesantren's efforts in combating hoaxes that are spreading on social media? The approach used in this research is a case study with qualitative research types. Data collection methods used are: observation, interviews, and documentation.

The results of this study indicate the spread of news in the al-Asror Islamic Boarding School because many students are allowed to bring mobile phones. The pesantren undertook religious moderation efforts to fortify the santri so as not to be carried away by the media and consumed by hoax news. Among the pesantren's efforts are through the kiai as follows: strengthening the morality of the santri, adhering to the faith, Ittiba 'and taqlid to the ulama', kiai, teachers and people who are more knowledgeable in drawing conclusions, accustoming tolerance, and applying preaching on social media.

**KeyWords:** *Moderation of Religion, Post-Truth Era, Pesantren*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has made it easy to spread news from various sources. This situation is used by certain groups to spread hoax news, resulting in a mixture of truth and lies. This phenomenon has been called the post truth era by anthropological figures.

The post-truth era is an era where there is no clarity between right and wrong. This era is one of the results of the rapid digital development. If there is no care in filtering the information received, someone will be consumed with hoax news.<sup>1</sup> The main problem that becomes the focus of the post-truth era is the banality of lies that permeates various aspects of human life. The dissemination of hoax news that aims to influence public perceptions of certain fields, such as politics<sup>2</sup> and religion, is a strategy so that its objectives in provocation can

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<sup>1</sup>The development of digital technology has actually enabled people to freely convey their ideas, feelings, and personal beliefs through social media. Hoax news spread in the world of social media has resulted in tension in society and religious radicality. Building a religious social life with the mission of rahmatanlilalamin in the middle of an era like this is very much needed. a solution to filter hoax news by fostering the traditions of religious communities that have the awareness that real public space cannot be replaced by virtual public space. (Ulya, "Post-Truth, Hoax, dan Religiusitas di Media Sosial", *Fikrah: Jurnal Ilmu Akidah dan Studi Keagamaan*, Vol 6 No II 2018, hlm. 283-302.

<sup>2</sup>The politics of post-truth in the case of the politicization of religion in Indonesia can be seen in the 2018-2019 political year. If not criticized and get Srius' attention, this will have a negative impact on the Indonesian people. The post-political reality is characterized by placing opinions to legitimize certain political interests. This phenomenon is contrary to the system in Indonesia which adheres to democracy. (Budi Kurniawan, "Politisasi Agama Di Tahun Politik: Politik Pasca Kebenaran Di Indonesia Dan Ancaman Bagi Demokrasi", *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2018, hlm. 133-154.

be achieved. The spread of hoaxes in the field of religion will have an impact on radicalism<sup>3</sup> and terrorism<sup>4</sup> movements. This idea is rooted in a fanatical understanding of religion and tends to justify its own understanding. To overcome this problem, religious moderation is needed.<sup>5</sup>

Nurul Faiqah, and Toni Pransiska in their journal entitled "Islamic Radicalism Vs Islamic Moderation: Efforts to Build a Peaceful Face of Indonesian Islam", explained that religious conflicts are usually not purely caused by religious factors. However, it is more non-religious such as social, economic, political gaps and so on. To anticipate conflict, dialogue is needed regarding religious moderation. The implementation of Islam wasatiyyah is the main concept of Islamic teachings. This concept is related to the concept of ummatanwasathan. The goal of the Islamic Wasatiyyah movement is to raise awareness of religious moderation in the extreme right and left.<sup>6</sup> So that there are no more extreme right or left groups. Online media controllers also need to do moderation of religion to filter hoax news.

Al-Asror Islamic boarding school is a boarding school located on Jalan Legoksari Raya No. 2 RT 3 RW 2 PatemonGunungpati Semarang City. Precisely at Latitude -7062233 and Longitude 110398. Namely close to the Semarang State University Campus (UNNES). The students in this boarding school consist of students and students who are allowed to carry cellphones and other electronic devices such as laptops. This is influenced by the location of the Islamic boarding school which is close to the campus, namely UNNES, making the al-Asror Islamic boarding school easy to accept outside influences. So that it also has an impact on the development of the post truth era among students.

PondokPesantren al-Asror is a boarding school based on ahlu sunnah waljama'ah an-nahdliyah. Where this understanding is the wing of the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) which is known for its ideology and values of tolerance and peace-loving. From there, this pesantren has an important task in filtering out hoaxes and instilling religious moderation in its students. Where later the Pesantren will continue to exist and maintain their tolerant traditions, leading to togetherness and diversity. So that it becomes the foundation for the creation of a safe and peaceful Indonesian State.

## II. DISCUSSION

### 1. Religious Moderation

Moderation in Arabic is called al-Wasathiyyah or al-I'tidaliyyah.<sup>7</sup> The word moderation is usually termed wasat or wasatiyah; the person is called the referee. The word referee itself has been absorbed into Indonesian which has three meanings, namely 1) intermediary, intermediary (for example in trade, business, and so on), 2) separator

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<sup>3</sup>Radicalism is an excessive attitude in religion, the incompatibility between creed and behavior, between what should be and reality, between religion and politics, between speech and action, between what is envisioned and what is implemented, as well as between laws required by Allah and the products of human law. alone. (Yusuf Qardhawi, *Islam Radikal: Analisis terhadap Radikalisme dalam Berislam dan Upaya Pemecahannya*, terj. Hamin Murtadho, (Solo: Era Intermedia, 2014), hlm. 127).

<sup>4</sup>Terrorism does not matter who the perpetrators, groups and networks are. However, more than that terrorism is an act that has roots in beliefs, doctrines and ideologies that can attack people's consciousness. The flourishing of terrorism depends on the land on which it grows and develops. If he lives in arid land, terrorism will find it difficult to find a place, on the other hand, if he lives in fertile land, it will rapidly develop.

<sup>5</sup>Religious moderation is a balanced religious attitude between the practice of one's own religion (exclusively) and respect for the religious practices of others of different beliefs (inclusive). This balance or middle ground in religious practice will undoubtedly prevent us from excessive extreme, physiological and revolutionary attitudes in religion. (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, (Jakarta: Kemenag RI, 2019), hlm. 18.

<sup>6</sup>Nurul Faiqah, Toni Pransiska, "Radikalisme Islam Vs Moderasi Islam: Upaya Membangun Wajah Islam Indonesia Yang Damai", *Al-Fikra: Jurnal Ilmiah Keislaman*, Vol. 17, No. 1, , 2018, hlm. 33-60.

<sup>7</sup>Kamus Bahasa Arab Online, diakses 20 Juni 2019: 13.00.

(separator, conciliator) between the disputants, and 3) the leader in the match.<sup>8</sup> Moderation is taken from the word "moderate". In various references, it is said that moderate is the attitude of the middle which is able to adapt itself to progress and does not forget its main foundation. If it is associated with Islam, then moderation does not tend to the extreme right or to the left and can adapt to progress but still cling to its strong foundations.<sup>9</sup>

In various cases, moderation will always be used as an alternative if there is conflict that peaks and it seems as if there is no solution to the problem anymore because each group stands firm in its opinion. So, if a moderate attitude is applied, thoughts will be carried out to maintain their opinion by not dropping the opinions of other groups. Thus, what is his opinion, can be defended, but the other party also does not feel defeated.<sup>10</sup>

As a plural and multicultural country, conflicts with a religious background have the potential to occur in Indonesia. That is why we need religious moderation as a solution, so that it can be an important key to creating a religious life that is harmonious, harmonious, peaceful, and emphasizes balance, both in personal life, family, society, and in the lives of fellow humans as a whole.

## **2. Post-Truth era**

The term post-truth is etymologically observed from the English vocabulary which consists of the word "post" and "truth". As explained in the post-modern vocabulary, which is defined as a review of an event it has happened (a summary of an event after it happened). Then truth means quality or state of being true (quality or in a state of being right or truth).<sup>11</sup> Truth is a noun from the adjective true. Post truth means after or post truth.

Post-truth has to be challenged and that means that there is a need for greater emphasis on fact checking when it comes to political reporting, critical statements, online news sites and social media. There is an urgent need to form more organizations dedicated to this task, who will continue to broadcast their findings. Even if it seems that the process of broadcasting the findings is slower, then the truth can also go viral as post-truth.<sup>12</sup>

Communication ethics cannot be separated from the shift in the role of users who no longer act as consumers of information, but can also become producers. The process of passing content carried out on the WhatsApp application is becoming increasingly massive and fast. The content has already gone viral quickly, beating hoax verifiers. Sooner or later, the scattered content can be seen as a complete picture that is happening outside the reality of WhatsApp.<sup>13</sup>

## **3. Religious Discourses at Pondok Pesantren al-Asror Gunungpati, Semarang**

Pondok Pesantren al-Asror is located on Jalan Kauman No. 2 RT / RW 03/02 Patemon, Gunungpati, Semarang City. This cottage is under the auspices of the al-Salafy al-Asror Foundation which oversees several educational institutions, including: Pondok Pesantren al-Salafy al-Asror, Madrasah Diniyah Salafiyah al-Asror, Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), Madrasah Aliyah (MA) al-Asror. The students of the al-Asror Islamic Boarding School consist of students and university students. Because the location of the Islamic Boarding School is close to the Semarang State University (UNNES) campus, most of the students consist of UNNES students from various faculties, departments, and study programs. Apart from UNNES students, there are also students from Wahid Hasyim University (UNWAHAS) Semarang, and Walisongo State Islamic University (UIN) Semarang.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup>Departemen Agama RI, *Moderasi Islam* (Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Al-Qur'an, 2012), hlm.

<sup>9</sup>Muhibbin, *Hakekat Moderasi Beragama*, dalam *Moderasi Beragama dari Indonesia untuk Dunia*, (Jakarta: LKis, 2019), hlm. 107.

<sup>10</sup>Muhibbin, *Hakekat Moderasi Beragama*, hlm. 107.

<sup>11</sup>Kamus Bahasa Inggris online, diakses 22 Juni 2019: 14.00.

<sup>12</sup>Sigit Surahman, *Post-Truth, Masyarakat Digital, dan Media Sosial*, dalam *Komunikasi dalam Media Digital*, (Yogyakarta: Buku Litera, 2019), hlm. 188.

<sup>13</sup>Kismiyati El Karimah, Uud Wahyudin, *Etika Berkomunikasi dalam Menggunakan WhatsApp*, dalam *Komunikasi dalam Media Digital*, (Yogyakarta: Buku Litera, 2019), hlm. 85.

<sup>14</sup>Observasi, 1 Desember 2019: 13.00 di Pondok Pesantren al-Asror, Gunungpati, Kota Semarang.

The background of students who are allowed to carry cellphones makes Al-Asror Islamic Boarding School easy to receive information from various sources, especially social media. From this there was a shift, as stated by Gus Dur that pesantren was a subcultural institution which was unique, autonomous, and tended to be separated from the outside world. The development of information on social media resulted in a lot of hoax news spreading in this Islamic boarding school, including the news "Allegations of Blasphemy by Gus Muwaffiq", the news "The Sukmawati Controversy" and other social media news.

Various perspectives and understandings emerge from the students when they only glimpse the news on social media. This is a big challenge for them so they don't lose their identity and get carried away by hoax news that has an impact on radicalism and terrorism. Pesantren must be able to defend themselves against negative influences from outside.

In this openness, people are free to write news, share as much information as possible and as widely as possible. Although there are positive effects, it can also be a risk. Where any news quickly spreads to various parties as desired. The advantage is that for people who want to think and adhere to ethics, they will not easily believe and be profiled on the news that is spread, so they cross-check it.

#### **4. Efforts to Fight Hoaxes at Pondok Pesantren al-Asror Gunungpati, Semarang**

The spread of hoax news at the al-Asror Islamic boarding school posed a big challenge for the pesantren to fortify themselves. As stated by Muhammad Adib in his journal, pesantren are currently experiencing a cultural gap due to the internet. This is proven by the complexity of the pesantren's response to the internet and the existence of the digitalization flow of pesantren that is difficult to contain. The world of pesantren is also trying to adapt while constructing forms of internet use in accordance with their values. This adaptation process, in turn, has a significant change in the way of thinking, behavior patterns and lifestyle of the pesantren.<sup>15</sup>

In their efforts to create religious moderation in the Islamic boarding schools, the kiai's role as carers and leaders is very large.<sup>16</sup> The kiai's charisma<sup>17</sup> makes the kiai's dawuhs easy to follow and implement by the students. The relationship between the kiai's charisma in shaping the character of the students can be linked to the theory of behavior formation put forward by Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>18</sup> Bourdieu understands social reality as a dialectical relation between individuals (agents, subjective elements) and the structure of the object itself. This dialectical reaction involves subjective elements such as individual mental, cognitive structures, and other abilities dialectic with objective structures. This dialectic produces practice (in this case character practice). Bourdieu gave rise to the concept to

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<sup>15</sup>Muhammad Adib, "Ketika Pesantren Berjumpa Dengan Internet: Sebuah Refleksi Dalam Perspektif *Cultural Lag*", *Jurnal Pusaka*, Vol 1 No 1, 2013, hlm. 1-10.

<sup>16</sup>Abdul Halim Soebahar, *Modernisasi Pesantren*, (Yogyakarta: LKiS, 2013), hlm. 65. See: Achmad Patoni "The Role of the Islamic Boarding School Kiai in Political Parties" explains that the role of the kiai is to provide solutions to problems that occur in society, including religious interpretations, ways of life, and other problems. (Achmad Patoni, *Peran Kiai Pesantren dalam Partai Politik*, (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2007), hlm. 24. Muhtarom added that the kiai also plays a role in shaping the character of the students, because he is a public figure for his students. (Muhtarom, "Urgensi Pesantren Dalam Pembentukan Kepribadian Muslim", *Artikel*, 2002, hlm. 45.

<sup>17</sup>The kiai's charisma rests on the belief of the santri or the community that the kiai is the leader of the pesantren who has power from God. The kiai's charisma can be identified with the kiai's power, so the kiai's charisma can also be explored with the concept of a source of authority. (Abudin Nata, *Sosiologi Pendidikan Islam*, (Jakarta: Raja Graafindo Persada, 2014), hlm 204).

<sup>18</sup>Pierre Bourdieu was born on August 1, 1930 in Denguin, a small village in the Béarn Region in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques of France, a region of rural southwestern France. His father was a farmer who later changed his profession to become an employee at the French Post Office. Little Bourdieu grew up speaking Gascon, a regional language in France which is now almost extinct. His father never left school, and encouraged Bourdieu to excel in academics. Her mother continued her studies until the age of sixteen, living with her aunt in Pau. ([https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre\\_Bourdieu](https://id.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pierre_Bourdieu), diakses pada Sabtu, 09 Desember 2017: 11.30.

explain the "subject structure" and the "object structure" as habitus<sup>19</sup> and arena (realm, field). Habitus is inside the actor, the environment (field, arena) is outside their minds. The dialectic between subjective and objective structures is called practice (behavior, in this case character). So, the character of the students can be formed through their interactions with the pesantren environment and the kiai habitus. In this case, the kiai's habitus is the kiai's charisma.

KiaiMamnuhin, the leader of the pesantren, always provides understanding and understanding to students regarding contextual materials such as maintaining the culture and ideology of the pesantren, moderation, ta'awun, tasamuh, tabayyun, and loving the environment. Harmony, togetherness and tolerance are Indonesia's noble values that must be maintained. Santri are also taught not to be easily provoked by hate speech on social media. Santri are taught to see in terms of what contribution has been made to the progress of the nation. By sorting out religious perspectives and social perspectives, students are expected to be wiser.

Under the NU-affiliated foundation, PondokPesantren al-Asror has become the pioneer of moderate Islamic boarding schools in Semarang City. Where this pesantren adheres to four principles, namely: tasamuh, ta'addul, tawazun, tawasuth. First, tasamuh (tolerance), which is an attitude of respecting differences and respecting people who have different principles. Second, ta'addul, namely an upright attitude that does not lean to the right and left and does not take sides unless the right one. Third, tawazun, has a balanced attitude and is not excessive in taking sides or relations in social, individual, or group terms. Fourth, tawasuth, namely the attitude of being in the middle and not taking sides with any individual or group. This principle is always conveyed to students by ustadz-ustadzah and kiai when reciting the Koran.<sup>20</sup>

The kiai explained that in this era of social media, students were recommended by ta'biq and taqlid to kiai, to the ulama. Students are not allowed to analyze the problem with only one view, but more broadly with various perspectives so that it is not easy to justify, filter news from social media before sharing it to various media.<sup>21</sup>

### III. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research on "Religious Moderation In The Post Truth Era: Efforts to Find Identity Against Hoaxes at the Al-Asror Islamic Boarding School, Gunungpati, Semarang City" it can be concluded that the spread of news at the Al-Asror Islamic Boarding School is because many students are allowed to bring cellphones. This results in the inclusion of news from social media that is not necessarily clear or hoax news in Islamic boarding schools.

From this phenomenon, Islamic boarding schools make efforts to fortify students so they are not carried away by the media flow and consumed by hoax news. Among the pesantren businesses are through the kiai as follows:

1. Strengthening the morals of students. Where the kiai gives understanding to all students, that morals are the most important provisions to face the all-digital era. How the students respond to the news and respond to environmental conditions depends on their morals.
2. Bertabayyun, before believing the news spread on social media and filtering the news before sharing it with others.
3. Ittiba 'and taqlid to scholars', kiai, teachers and people who know better in drawing conclusions, so they don't decide things according to their own personality.
4. Getting used to an attitude of tolerance through traditions in Islamic boarding schools.
5. Applying da'wah through social media to balance hoax news spread on social media.

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<sup>19</sup>Habitus is a mental or cognitive structure with which people relate to the social world. (Ritzer & Goodman, *TeoriSosiologiKlasik – Post Modern*, (Yogyakarta: KreasiWacana. 2012), hlm. 581).

<sup>20</sup>Observasi, 05 Desember 2019: 13.00 di PondokPesantren al-Asror, Gunungpati, Kota Semarang.

<sup>21</sup>Wawancara, Senin 2 Desember 2019: 14.00 di NdalemPondokPesantren al-Asror, Gunungpati, Kota Semarang.



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