



## FOSTERING ATTITUDES OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN STUDENTS THROUGH MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to complement previous articles which previously discussed multicultural counseling. Where, previous research discussed cultivating inclusive religious attitudes through multicultural counseling and there was also discussion about multicultural counseling to prevent terrorist behavior. Referring to two previous studies, in this paper, the researcher tries to understand the views of Islamic guidance and counseling students regarding multicultural counseling in order to analyze the attitudes of religious moderation among students as prospective Muslim counselors. This research collected empirical data through open ended questions with the help of a g-form on 15 final semester students of the BKI UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu study program. Based on the informants' answers, it can be found that an attitude of religious moderation has grown in students. This can be seen from the answers of informants who accept differences and consider differences to be normal, unique, interesting and a challenge for a Muslim counselor and they will still accept clients who are different. religious, racial and cultural background even though they will have the status of Muslim counselors. The weakness of this study is that it has not yet found answers to what counseling strategies will be used when dealing with clients who have different backgrounds from the counselor. Through this research, it is hoped that it will contribute to the scientific development of Islamic Counseling Guidance, especially in developing multicultural counseling as a means of instilling an attitude of religious moderation among students.

**Key words:** Religious moderation, Multicultural Counseling, Guidance and Counseling

**Abstract:** Tujuan pada artikel ini tujuannya adalah melengkapi tulisan-tulisan sebelumnya yang lebih dahulu telah membahas tentang konseling multicultural. Dimana, pada penelitian sebelumnya membahas tentang menumbuhkan sikap

keberagamaan inklusif melalui konseling multicultural dan ada juga yang membahas tentang konseling multikultural untuk mencegah perilaku terorisme. Merujuk pada dua penelitian sebelumnya, maka pada tulisan ini, peneliti mencoba mengetahui pandangan mahasiswa bimbingan dan konseling Islam, tentang konseling multicultural dalam rangka untuk menganalisa sikap moderasi beragama pada mahasiswa sebagai calon konselor muslim. Penelitian ini mengumpulkan data empiris melalui *open ended question* dengan bantuan *g-form* pada 15 orang mahasiswa semester akhir prodi BKI UIN Fatmawati Sukarno Bengkulu. Berdasarkan jawaban informan dapat ditemukan bahwa sikap moderasi beragama telah tumbuh pada diri mahasiswa hal ini dilihat dari jawaban informan yang menerima perbedaan dan menganggap perbedaan adalah hal yang biasa, unik, menarik dan merupakan sebuah tantangan bagi seorang konselor muslim serta mereka tetap akan menerima klien yang berbeda latar belakang baik agama, ras maupun budaya walaupun mereka nantinya berstatus sebagai konselor muslim. Kelemahan dari study ini belum ditemukan jawaban strategi konseling seperti apa yang akan dilakukan dalam menghadapi klien yang memiliki perbedaan latar belakang dengan konselor. Melalui penelitian ini diharapkan akan memberikan kontribusi bagi pengembangan keilmuan Bimbingan Konseling Islam khususnya dalam mengembangkan konseling *multicultural* sebagai sarana untuk menanamkan sikap moderasi beragama di kalangan mahasiswa.

**Kata kunci:** Moderasi beragama, konseling multikultural, bimbingan dan konseling.

## A. Introduction

Religious moderation is part of Islamic teachings, as found in the Koran. Therefore, religious moderation is an attitude that stands in the middle, not taking sides with either left or right, but being in the middle of seeing and solving a problem. The aim of religious moderation is to create an atmosphere of tolerance, peace and harmony in religion and nation, as well as supporting multicultural life.<sup>1</sup> Theologically, the attitude of *tawasuth* or moderation is reflected in Allah's commands in Islam as stated in the QS. Al-Baqarah verse 143 states: "And thus We made you a just people, so that you may be witnesses to humanity, and the Messenger may be a witness to you."<sup>2</sup>

The *wasathiyah* concept can be a basis for thinking for Muslims in the modern era to build relationships with other civilizations, especially Western civilization. Strengthening discourse and action related to religious moderation is both a challenge and an opportunity to

<sup>1</sup> Dodego, S. H. A., & Witro, D. (2020). The Islamic moderation and the prevention of radicalism and religious extremism in Indonesia. *Dialog*, 43(2), 199–208.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Religion 2005



encourage a more moderate interpretation of religious texts. Junaedi<sup>3</sup> and reduce the potential for religious radicalism which could trigger conflict Ibrahim, I., Prasajo, ZH, & Sulaima.<sup>4</sup> It is very important to transform the destructive actions of antisocial groups into creative and cooperative energy to increase the productivity of society.<sup>5</sup> Moderate and tolerant religious principles are needed to strengthen tolerance as a deep inner dimension of religion. Humans can live side by side in harmony because of the call of faith.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of religious moderation, especially among Indonesian Muslims, is defined using the concept and policy of religious moderation by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. The Ministry of Religion describes the characteristics of individuals who implement religious moderation, namely if they demonstrate religious tolerance, national commitment, non-violence and accommodate local culture.

Community groups that can be given an understanding of religious moderation are student groups. Students who, from a developmental psychology perspective, are in the teenage age range, where at this age teenagers have not yet discovered their identity, are very vulnerable to accepting radical ideas. Friendship with a group model will have an influence on the behavior of its members, especially the younger generation, by means of dialogue, da'wah, and instilling radical teachings which are continuously guided so as to create a perception that current state life must be changed with a system in accordance with the teachings of radical Islam because they believe that changing the system will create a better life.<sup>7</sup>

Many studies on moderation have been carried out, including Ali<sup>8</sup> measured religious moderation among 356 students at two universities in Kalimantan. In this study it was found that although students had a low level of knowledge, participation and experience in religious moderation, they had a high level of attitudes and behavior towards the religious dimensions of moderation: religious tolerance (91.5%), national commitment (95.6% ), and accommodating to local culture (94.9%). However, in this study no factors were found that contributed to religious moderation.

Other research results Subchi, I., et al(2022)shows that religiosity has a positive effect on religious moderation, meaning that religious intellectuality, ideology, public practice, personal practice and religious experience support a person to become moderately religious and can prevent intolerance and radicalism. Socioeconomic factors (gender and parental income) also greatly influence religious moderation. People who have radical beliefs have a tendency to defend themselves and justify themselves after making mistakes. Usually the

<sup>3</sup> Junaedi, E. (2019). Inilah moderasi beragama perspektif Kemenag. *Harmoni*, 18(2), 182–186.

<sup>4</sup> Ibrahim, I., Prasajo, Z. H., & Sulaiman, S. (2019). Preventing radicalism: Islamic moderation and revitalization in the border. *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama Dan Sosial Budaya*, 4(1), 1–15.

<sup>5</sup> Latif, Y. (2011). *Negara Paripurna: Historisitas, Rasionalitas, dan Aktualitas Pancasila*. PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

<sup>6</sup> Mu'ti, A. & Islam, I. (2009). *Inkulturas Islam: Menyemai Persaudaraan, Keadilan, dan Emansipasi Kemanusiaan, Keadilan, Dan Emansipasi Kemanusiaan*,. Al-Washat Publishing House.

<sup>7</sup> Mayasari, R. (2016). Peran Pemikiran Heuristik pada Hubungan Persepsi Sosial dengan Munculnya Sikap terhadap Ide Penegakkan Khilafah Islamiyah di Indonesia. *Al-Ulum*, 16(2), 387–411.

<sup>8</sup> Ali, N. (2020). Measuring religious moderation among Muslim students at public colleges in Kalimantan facing disruption era. *INFERENSI: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, 14(1), 1–24.

person will justify wrong actions and decisions, especially those that are not in accordance with previous beliefs and norms, this kind of feeling in psychology is called cognitive dissonance (Nilsson, 2021)

Indonesia is known to have a variety of Meirawan tribes and cultures(2010), this diversity has an impact on habits, norms, and individual personality traits in each region(Syah, 2016). This is not a stereotype but an effort to overcome cultural differences, so to overcome this a counselor is advised to open up and make efforts to learn about cultures that are different from their own so that cultural encapsulation does not occur.(Masturi, 2015). Therefore, counseling techniques and models should adapt to the cultural characteristics of Indonesian society, so that there is no cultural bias in providing counseling services.

One of the studies on counseling models based on local wisdom is research conducted by Fatchurahman et al.,(2021)where in his research entitled "The Development Of Group Healing Storytelling Model In Multicultural Counseling Services In Indonesian Schools: Examination Of Disciplinary Cases" it was found that using counseling with local wisdom, namely a storytelling model using regional stories, could improve discipline in children. However, the weakness of counseling using local wisdom is that it cannot be applied in a culture that is different from the researcher's culture.

Counseling in Indonesia continues to develop to deal with ecological and social changes in society. A systematic study of the development of counseling in Indonesia shows a pattern of integration with local wisdom to be applied in counseling(Marhamah, U., Murtadlo, A., 2015; Zamroni, 2019). Cross-cultural counseling or multicultural counseling is an answer to the challenges of an era of disruption that increasingly disguises cultural characteristics. Therefore, a counselor must remain culturally sensitive, learn from many cultures while reducing cultural encapsulation which often occurs resulting in fanaticism in one particular culture.(Wibowo, 2018).

In terms of terminology, since the 1970s, the term multicultural or cross-cultural counseling has replaced the term minority counseling. Since then until now the counseling community has become familiar with the term multicultural or cross-cultural counseling and this change has also been supported by the proliferation of research since the 1980s that has focused on multicultural counseling. Methodologically, multicultural counseling has experienced quite rapid development since the 1980s. This is proven by the emergence of the Cross-Cultural Counseling Inventory (CCCI) method, followed by the birth of The Multicultural Counseling Inventory, followed by the birth of the Multicultural Awareness Knowledge Skills Survey and finally the Multicultural Competency Checklist. in Suwartini, S., & Wiranto(2021)

Through this research, researchers tried to determine Islamic Guidance and Counseling students' understanding of multicultural counseling, which then became a predictor in knowing students' religious moderation attitudes and determining further policies for the scientific development of Islamic guidance and counseling, especially multicultural counseling.

## B. Method

This research is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach is an approach in qualitative research that tries to describe the awareness or experience of a person or group about an event or situation that occurs to an individual. The phenomenon in question is also defined as a certain object or someone's empirical experience which is then given meaning by that person (Hanurawan, 2016). The phenomenological approach in psychological research seeks to discover the psychological meanings contained in phenomena through investigation and analysis of events or circumstances that have occurred. (Giorgi, 2016).

The informants in this research were 15 7th semester students. The people consisted of 4 men and 11 women. The researchers asked all informants open-ended questions with the help of the g-form application which consisted of 8 questions. Next, the researcher tried to analyze the results of the informants' written answers to find answers to the research questions. Based on the questions asked, the researcher tried to analyze the answers from the informants to find out how students' religious moderation attitudes are based on the multicultural counseling approach.

The interview instrument carried out consisted of seven questions intended to reveal students' religious moderation attitudes through an interview instrument that was guided by multicultural counseling and religious moderation. The question is asked because it obeys Suwartini & Wiranto, (2021). In principle, multicultural counseling is not only about motivating clients to optimize themselves according to their cultural characteristics, but also aims to reduce cultural prejudices that exist within the counselor. Reducing prejudice is one part of multicultural counseling insights.

The eight questions asked were:

1. Have you ever taken a Multicultural Counseling course?
2. What are your views on differences in a client's religion, ethnicity and cultural background?
3. Are you comfortable living in a homogenous environment? If yes, give a reason, if no, what is the reason?
4. Are you comfortable living in a heterogeneous environment? If yes, give a reason, if no, what is the reason?
5. When you become a counselor, how do you find out about a client's cultural background?
6. As a prospective Muslim counselor, what will you do when there are clients with different religious and cultural backgrounds?
7. If on the street you met someone who needed help, but was of a different ethnicity than you, what would you do? If you provide assistance, what is the reason? If not, what's the reason?
8. In your opinion, as a counselor, what is the best strategy for overcoming differences in clients' religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds?

The answers to the eight questions above were then analyzed using data analysis techniques by reducing the informants' answers into core themes which show the essence of students' attitudes regarding religious moderation based on a multicultural counseling



approach. During data analysis, researchers look for and trace answers or statements from significant informants with research objectives that can be found in words, sentences or several sentences.

The researcher also triangulated the research data by cross-checking the informants' answers with experts or in this study the researcher carried out triangulation with the head of the study program and Islamic Guidance and Counseling lecturers.

### C. Results and Discussion

Before presenting the research results, for information, the 15 informants were from the Malay tribe, 40% of whom were from the Javanese tribe, 1%, Serawai 2% and Rejang 3%. Apart from the Javanese, these three tribes are the majority of the people in Bengkulu, especially UIN FAS students. Furthermore, the resume results from interviews with 15 informants are as follows: For the first question, the answer was found to be that the Islamic Guidance and Counseling study program at UIN FAS Bengkulu has not offered multicultural counseling courses. This was also confirmed by the study program coordinator on the grounds that there were no teaching staff capable of teaching this course.

The coding results from questions two to seven after being summarized are as follows:

Question 2: "What is your view about the differences in a client's religion, ethnicity and cultural background?"

Summary of Answers: Four informants felt that differences were interesting and a challenge, one person answered that they were surprised by the differences, the remaining 10 people answered that they were normal.

Question 3: "Are you comfortable living in a homogeneous environment? If yes, give a reason, if no, what is the reason?"

Answer Summary: The majority of answers feel comfortable because it will be easy to adapt. Only three people answered that they were uncomfortable because they felt incomplete and lacked dynamics.

Question 4: "Are you comfortable living in a heterogeneous environment? If yes, give a reason, if no, what is the reason?"

Summary of Answers: Four people felt uncomfortable, because they had difficulty understanding the language and had difficulty adapting. The other 11 people felt comfortable and had no problems.

Question 5: "When you become a counselor, how do you know the client's cultural background?"

Summary of Answers: Three informants looked at the client's language style, 12 people said they would look for information about the client, including by asking the client's identity first and using a persuasive approach.

Question 6: "As a prospective Muslim counselor, what will you do when there are clients with different religious and cultural backgrounds?"

Answer Summary: There is one answer that will release the case if the background is different. The majority accept it and don't mind because differences are not a problem. Adhering to the principle of tolerance and respecting each other even though we are

different. Don't bring up differences during the counseling process, just focus on the core of the client's problems.

Question 6: "If on the street you met someone who needed help, but was of a different ethnicity from you, what would you do? If you provide assistance, what is the reason? If not, what's the reason?"

Summary of Answers: The majority of informants agreed to provide assistance

Question 7: "In your opinion, as a counselor, what is the best strategy for overcoming differences in clients' religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds?"

Summary of Answers: The majority answered, mutual understanding, respect, tolerance, differences are beautiful, remember the principle of unity in diversity, mutual discussion and sharing, respect each other, remain friendly and build a good report

Based on the results of the informant's answers above regarding students' understanding of multicultural counseling, it will then be analyzed to see their attitude of religious moderation.

Table 1. Students' Religious Moderation Attitudes

Indicators of Religious Moderation	Informant Attitude	Answer number
<b>National Commitment</b>	Upholding Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as the basis of the state.	It's in the answer to question number 7
<b>Tolerance</b>	Appreciate, respect and accept differences as a dynamic.	There are answers to questions number 6, 7 and 1
<b>Anti violence</b>	Provide assistance anytime, anywhere without looking at other people's backgrounds.	It's in answers number 6 and number 5.
<b>Accommodating to Local Culture</b>	Can accept a heterogeneous environment, willing to learn languages from other tribes, can live side by side with people from different cultures.	It's in answers number 4, 5 and 6.

Based on the results of the research above, the concept of religious moderation, especially among BKI students based on indicators of religious moderation from the Indonesian Ministry of Religion, namely showing national commitment, religious tolerance, non-violence and accommodating local culture, already exists among the majority of BKI students, although there are still three Students may seem confused by the differences, but if they are given an understanding, especially through a multicultural counseling approach, these students will understand. This is because the students concerned come from areas far from urban areas, so there may be errors in the meaning of the questions asked. Considering that questions were asked online using the help of G-form, it was difficult for informants to ask several questions that were difficult for them to understand.

Apart from that, the discovery of students who cannot accept differences shows that the existence of pluralism or differences for these students is something unusual. The student does not yet realize that plurality is a reality that exists in society and that he will definitely encounter it when he enters society. Based on this, it is necessary to build awareness about pluralism in every student as the nation's future young generation. Of course, intensive efforts are needed to build awareness about pluralism.

Efforts that can be made can take the form of mentoring or a counseling process (Sumadi, 2016). Therefore, multicultural counseling is an urgent matter to be given to students in building an understanding of pluralism. Apart from making multicultural counseling a course, using peer counseling or using peer groups can be an alternative. Students who are considered to have insight into pluralism and multiculturalism and have inclusive views about religion and other differences become companions and provide counseling to students whose understanding of pluralism and multiculturalism is still low.

Through understanding multicultural counseling, you can form an attitude of religious moderation. This is proven by the fulfillment of four indicators of religious moderation, as explained above, namely: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence and accommodating to local culture (Junaedi, 2019b). This further supports the urgency of students' knowledge and understanding of multicultural counseling. Apart from these findings, previous findings from Suwartini, S., & Wiranto, (2021) stated that multicultural counseling can be a means of preventing terrorism. Where multiculturalism counseling can fill the gap in the study of terrorism through the perpetrator's perspective. This research supports previous research by Lorantina et al. (2017) who said that multicultural counseling can foster students' attitudes that are civilized and not trapped by wrong ideas in responding to differences. Likewise, Horvat's (2010) research states that there is a need to revise the concept of multiculturalism in handling terrorism cases in Europe.

It is hoped that the importance of cross-cultural insight in all fields of science, especially social science, can reduce or even eliminate racism and tribalism in society. Cross-culturalism or what is better known as multiculturalism is defined by Abdullah (2006) as an understanding that places more emphasis on the differences and similarities of local cultures while still considering the rights and existence of other cultures. It can be said that multiculturalism emphasizes equal cultures.

More clearly about the importance of cross-cultural understanding as a result of changing times, namely: First, the development of democratic understanding among society so that public awareness of human rights increases. Second, the development of media and information is currently increasingly diverse and transparent, requiring everyone to think intelligently in receiving and processing all the information they obtain. Third, the advancement of time requires humans to become more effective and efficient in using time, planning, making decisions and being ready to take responsibility and accept all risks for all decisions taken Sumadi (2016).

The root of multiculturalism is self-exploration, which ultimately gives rise to self-awareness. However, we must realize that our understanding is very limited, partial and relative and is greatly influenced by cultural background. This does not mean that our views are wrong, but we must be ready to accept, acknowledge and understand other people's



points of view. A counselor, like a multicultural psychologist who works in a multicultural approach, must be aware that he will be ready to expand his network with other groups with different perspectives, religions, customs and ways of life. This is intended so that the counselor or psychologist can develop cultural competence in applying psychological knowledge (Shiraev, EB, & Levy, 2010) and of course in this case counseling science.

According to Arredondo et al (1996) there are three competencies that a multicultural counselor must possess, namely: multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge and multicultural skills (Multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills). The following is an explanation of these three competencies. First, multicultural awareness is the counselor's ability to understand himself, his existing values and awareness of cultural differences that will influence the counseling process. The counselor's behavior will influence the counselee's perception and also the direction of the counseling process. Second, multicultural knowledge, a multicultural counselor is required to be able to understand empathetically the different views of a client. The knowledge that must be possessed is about culture, race, ethnicity, ethics and emics, religious differences, minority and majority groups, as well as knowing about the principles of multiculturalism. Current competency is multicultural ability, what is meant by this section is that a counselor must be able to quickly develop appropriate and effective techniques and strategies for clients who have different religious, cultural and racial backgrounds from the counselor. This multicultural ability is very dependent on the counselor's knowledge and level of awareness of multicultural and multireligious issues (Holcomb-McCoy, C., Harris, P., Hines, E., & Johnston, 2008; Owens et al., 2010).

Based on the explanation above, it has been proven the importance of multiculturalism counseling, which can not only be used to build inclusive diversity and scientific studies on terrorism. Multicultural Counseling can also foster an attitude of religious moderation in students. So it is necessary to realize knowledge about multiculturalism, especially among guidance and counseling students, especially Islamic guidance and counseling who, apart from dealing with multiculturalism, will also deal with multireligiousness. Of course, guided by the three components of a multicultural counselor and general counseling principles.

#### D. Conclusion

The conclusion of this article is that with the widespread discussion about religious moderation in all fields of social sciences and also the lack of student understanding about pluralism, it is important to make multicultural counseling a part that can contribute to fostering an attitude of religious moderation, especially among guidance and counseling students. Islam as the nation's next generation.

Based on the research results, it turns out that there are still students who do not accept differences, whether religious, ethnic or cultural. Therefore, the main step that must be taken is to make multicultural counseling one of the study program subjects, especially within the Guidance and Counseling study program, and to start directing students to conduct research in the field of multicultural counseling. Apart from being useful for cultivating an attitude of religious moderation, this will also enable people to find various ways of providing assistance in their environment, thereby adding to the richness of the knowledge of Guidance and Counseling, especially in multicultural and multireligious communities.

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