



Islamic Theater: a Medium of Art to Enhance Religious Moderation and Social Harmony

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Abstract:

Islamic theater has proven to be an effective medium for increasing public awareness of religious moderation. This study aims to understand the impact of Islamic theater in conveying values of tolerance, diversity, and balance in religious practices. The research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including observation, interviews, and documentation. The findings indicate that people find it easier to understand religious moderation concepts through performing arts compared to conventional lectures. Additionally, this program encourages active participation among children and teenagers in creatively expressing Islamic values while also fostering an inclusive space for public discussions. Support from educational institutions, religious leaders, and communities is essential to ensuring the sustainability of this program. This study also recommends the development of digital da'wah through art as an alternative to reaching a wider audience. Thus, Islamic theater can serve as an effective instrument in promoting moderate, tolerant, and inclusive Islamic values.

Keywords: *Islamic Theater, Religious Moderation, Religious Education.*

Abstrak:

Teater Islami telah terbukti sebagai sarana yang efektif dalam meningkatkan kesadaran masyarakat terhadap moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dampak teater Islami dalam menyampaikan nilai-nilai toleransi, keberagaman, dan keseimbangan dalam praktik keagamaan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat lebih mudah memahami konsep moderasi beragama melalui pendekatan seni pertunjukan dibandingkan dengan metode ceramah konvensional. Selain itu, program ini juga mendorong partisipasi aktif anak-anak dan remaja dalam mengekspresikan nilai-nilai Islam secara kreatif, serta membangun ruang diskusi yang inklusif bagi masyarakat. Dukungan dari lembaga pendidikan, tokoh agama, dan komunitas sangat diperlukan untuk memastikan keberlanjutan program ini. Penelitian ini juga merekomendasikan pengembangan dakwah digital berbasis seni sebagai alternatif untuk menjangkau audiens yang lebih luas. Dengan demikian, teater Islami dapat menjadi instrumen yang efektif dalam menyebarkan nilai-nilai Islam yang moderat, toleran, dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Teater Islami, Moderasi Beragama, Edukasi Keagamaan.

INTRODUCTION

The Community Service Program (KKN) conducted in Kedung Sumur Village aims to enhance the community's understanding of religious moderation through an artistic and cultural approach, specifically Islamic theater. Kedung Sumur Village, where the majority of residents work as farmers and laborers, has relatively unorganized religious activities. The community's busy schedules often become an obstacle to actively participating in religious events. Therefore, an innovative method

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is needed to attract people's interest in understanding the values of religious moderation in a more interactive and enjoyable way.

As a solution, KKN students from Zainul Hasan Genggong Islamic University initiated an art-based educational program through Islamic theater performances. This program involves MI and MTs students as actors in the performances. Additionally, religious leaders and village officials support this initiative by providing broader religious insights to the community.

Religious moderation is a perspective and attitude in practicing religion with balance, avoiding extremes on both ends. A moderate approach to religion creates a harmonious environment, respects differences, and encourages interfaith tolerance. In a social context, religious moderation plays a role in maintaining unity amid diversity and preventing conflicts that may arise due to differences in religious interpretations.

In Indonesia, a multicultural society, religious moderation is key to fostering peaceful social life. Without moderation, differences in religious practices could trigger social tensions. Therefore, education on the importance of religious moderation must be widely conducted through methods that are easily accepted by the community, such as through art and culture.

Art and culture play a strategic role in conveying religious messages creatively and engagingly. One of the most effective art forms for delivering Islamic values is Islamic theater. Through theater, the principles of religious moderation can be presented in a way that is easier for the public to understand.

Islamic theater functions not only as entertainment but also as an educational medium that can touch emotions and raise public awareness. Performances can address various religious and social issues inclusively and reflectively. By presenting characters and stories relevant to daily life, the community can better understand the importance of religious moderation.

The KKN program in Kedung Sumur Village, which promotes Islamic theater as an educational method, has shown positive impacts. Community participation has increased, particularly among children and teenagers, who have become more enthusiastic about expressing Islamic values creatively. Moreover, this program has successfully created a more inclusive discussion space, strengthened social interactions, and encouraged tolerance in community life.

With continued support from various parties, including educational institutions and the village government, this program can be further developed to expand its benefits. Art and culture, such as Islamic theater, have proven to be effective tools in promoting religious moderation and fostering a more harmonious and tolerant society.

Research on Islamic theater as a means of religious moderation has been widely conducted across various disciplines, such as performing arts, Islamic education, and religious moderation studies. One relevant study is by Ashar (2022), titled "The Role of Religious Counselors in Shaping Community Religious Moderation Attitudes in Awang Tangka Subdistrict." This research highlights how religious counselors use various preaching methods, including art and culture, to instill Islamic wasathiyah (moderate) values. Ashar found that performing arts,

especially Islamic theater, can serve as an effective medium for conveying religious messages in a more inclusive and widely accepted manner.

Another study supporting the use of theater as a tool for religious moderation is by Ikhwan (2022) in his article "Women and Religious Moderation: Building Bridges of Harmony in the Archipelago." His research highlights the role of art communities, such as Teater Satu in Lampung, in promoting religious moderation. This community uses performing arts as an educational and preaching tool to communicate Islamic messages in a way that is easily understood by various groups, especially women. This demonstrates that theater serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for social transformation in fostering harmony within diversity.

Additionally, Nurjanah and Handayana (2019) in their book "Methodology of Islamic Studies: The Gateway to Religious Moderation" discuss how an Islamic approach to religious moderation can be realized through various media, including performing arts like theater. This book emphasizes the importance of integrating art and Islamic values to create a more moderate and tolerant society. Their research reinforces the idea that art can be a strategic preaching tool for communicating the teachings of Islam as a mercy to all creation.

Furthermore, Syifa (2023), in her study "Religious Tolerance in Art Practices at Balai Budaya Rejosari (BBR) Kudus," examines how theater performances can be an instrument for teaching and promoting religious moderation. Her study found that theater performances addressing themes of tolerance and interfaith coexistence effectively educate the community on the importance of living harmoniously within diversity.

Another study highlighting a similar concept is research by Hasyim (2022) in his article "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in PTKIN." Hasyim explains how the concept of religious moderation can be understood through the analogy of a theater stage, where each individual plays a different role but must interact harmoniously. This approach provides an understanding that in social life, diversity is an inevitability that must be well managed.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact of Islamic theater on public awareness, particularly in the context of religious moderation. Through this approach, the study will explore the experiences, perceptions, and understanding of the community regarding the values of moderation conveyed through Islamic theater performances.

The data collection techniques in this study consist of observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation is conducted by directly observing public participation in Islamic theater events as well as their interactions in post-performance discussions. Interviews are carried out to gather opinions from various parties, such as religious leaders, village officials, and event participants, to gain a deeper understanding of how Islamic theater can serve as a medium for instilling the values of religious moderation. In addition, documentation is used to record the performances and discussions, which will then be used as material for analysis in this study.

The collected data will be analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing techniques. Data reduction is performed by filtering relevant information from observations, interviews, and documentation so that only data related to the research objectives are retained. The reduced data is then presented in the form of a narrative description to provide a clearer picture of the research findings. Finally, this study will draw conclusions regarding the effectiveness of Islamic theater as a means of increasing public awareness of religious moderation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious moderation has become an important issue in social life, especially in addressing various social challenges related to religious diversity. By incorporating values of tolerance, inclusivity, and balance into performing arts, it is hoped that society can more easily receive and understand the messages being conveyed. Additionally, the involvement of various societal elements, including students, religious leaders, and village officials, further strengthens the objectives of this activity in fostering a more moderate religious attitude within the social environment.

The preparation process for this event involves several crucial stages to ensure smooth and effective implementation. The first step is the scriptwriting for the theater performance, which highlights the theme of religious moderation. This script is designed with moral messages aligned with the principles of Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin, making it acceptable to various groups. Next, training sessions are provided for students from Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) and Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) who will perform as actors in the play. This training aims not only to enhance their acting skills but also to deepen their understanding of the moderation values they will convey to the audience. Coordination with religious leaders and village officials is also carried out to ensure full support from influential community members. Finally, the event is promoted through various media, both directly via announcements in mosques and schools and through social media, to attract public attention and encourage participation.

The event takes place at Yayasan Hidayatul Islam, a center for religious and educational activities in the area. The Islamic theater performance, which highlights themes of tolerance and moderate religious attitudes, successfully captures the community's attention. The play not only presents an emotionally engaging story but also incorporates educational values relevant to everyday life. After the performance, the event continues with a religious discussion led by local religious figures. This discussion provides an opportunity for the community to further explore the messages conveyed in the performance and ask questions about religious moderation in daily life.



Gambar 1. Islamic Theater of Kedung Sumur Village

The public response to this event has been very positive. Many participants expressed that the theater performance provided an easier and more engaging understanding compared to conventional religious lectures. Some residents also stated that they have begun to realize the importance of adopting a moderate attitude in responding to differences in beliefs and religious practices in their community. Additionally, the involvement of students in the performance has increased enthusiasm and a sense of pride within the community toward the younger generation, who are actively contributing to spreading the values of moderation. This event has also sparked broader discussions among the public about the importance of maintaining harmony in social and religious life.

THE IMPACT OF ISLAMIC THEATER ON SOCIETY

One of the positive impacts of Islamic theater activities is the increased public understanding of religious moderation values. Through engaging performances, people can more easily grasp the concepts of tolerance, diversity, and balance in practicing their faith. The messages conveyed through stories and dialogues help them connect these values to their daily lives. With this growing awareness, society becomes more open to differences and can accept diversity as an integral part of social life. Moreover, the potential for conflicts arising from differences in religious understanding is reduced as a tangible outcome of this activity. Post-performance discussions provide a space for the community to exchange views, helping to prevent misunderstandings that often trigger tensions in religious life.

This activity also has a positive impact on empowering children and teenagers to express Islamic values through art. The involvement of students from Islamic elementary and junior high schools (MI and MTs) in Islamic theater performances increases their enthusiasm for developing creativity based on Islamic values. They not only learn about acting and performing arts but also understand how to convey moral messages in an engaging and communicative manner. Islamic cultural arts presented in the form of theater serve as an educational medium that is more easily accepted by the younger generation compared to conventional learning methods. Thus, this activity not only benefits the broader community but also provides opportunities for young people to actively spread positive values through the arts.

An important aspect of this activity is the creation of an inclusive discussion space for the community to explore Islamic values. After the performances, discussions guided by religious figures provide participants with opportunities to

share their perspectives and ask questions about various issues related to religious moderation. With such a platform, people feel more comfortable engaging in dialogue without fear or intimidation. Furthermore, open and tolerant discussions help build a broader understanding of the importance of living harmoniously together. The continuity of these discussion spaces is expected to become a habitual practice in the community for resolving differences wisely and peacefully, allowing the values of religious moderation to continue thriving in their social lives.

CONCLUSION

Theater has proven to be an effective educational method in instilling the values of religious moderation. Delivering messages through performing arts makes it easier for society to understand the concepts of tolerance, diversity, and balance in practicing religion. With an engaging and interactive approach, Islamic theater is not only a form of entertainment but also a learning medium that fosters awareness of the importance of adopting a moderate stance in socio-religious life.

To ensure the continuity and broader impact of this program, support from various stakeholders is essential, including educational institutions, religious leaders, and the community. Educational institutions can integrate theater arts as part of value-based Islamic learning methods, allowing students to gain firsthand experience in conveying messages of religious moderation. Religious leaders also play a crucial role in legitimizing this program and guiding the community in understanding the values conveyed through performances. Meanwhile, community involvement is the key to sustaining this initiative by actively participating and disseminating the messages learned from these activities.

Additionally, Islamic theater has great potential for further development with other Islamic themes. One alternative to explore is digital da'wah through the arts, such as recorded theater performances distributed via social media platforms. With technological advancements, digital da'wah based on performing arts can reach a wider audience, especially younger generations who are more active in the digital world. Presenting Islamic messages in the form of visually appealing art can enhance the effectiveness of spreading moderate and inclusive Islamic values.

With continuous development and support, Islamic theater can become a vital strategy in fostering a more tolerant and harmonious religious society. Art is not just a form of entertainment but also a powerful tool in shaping religious perspectives and attitudes. Therefore, it is crucial for various stakeholders to continue supporting and developing art-based programs as part of educational and da'wah efforts in the modern era.

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