SOCIOMETRY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Strengthening religious moderatism through the traditional authority of kiai in Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to strengthen religious moderatism through the traditional authority of kiai. The state’s structural strengthening of religious moderatism only reached Muslim communities in urban areas, while the majority of Indonesian Muslims live in rural areas. A qualitative method was utilized for data collection, through observation, interviews, and documentation techniques in order to provide a descriptive-critical analysis. Consequently, the success of promoting religious moderatism in rural areas was achieved by combining the state’s efforts, which have hitherto highlighted the structural approach with that of culture, as

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Indonesia’s ethnic and religious plurality necessitates religious moderatism as a means of creating harmony and unity. Religious moderatism generally deals with respecting different interpretations and not being trapped in extremism, intolerance, and acts of violence. It was discovered from this study that long before the state made religious moderation a priority agenda and part of the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional-RPJMN), traditional kiai had promoted and strengthened the religious moderation through education and teaching, da’wah, and example. The results are useful as a model for empowering the state’s charismatic figures in society to promote and strengthen religious moderatism effectively and sustainably.
exemplified by traditional kiai. It was discovered that the traditional authority of kiai was a determining factor in promoting religious moderatism.

**Subjects:** Anthropology - Soc Sci; Sociology & Social Policy; Religion; Islam - Religion; Religion and Philosophy

**Keywords:** strengthening; religious moderatism; traditional authority; KIAI

1. Introduction

The continued efforts of traditional religious scholars, called kiai, to bolster religious moderatism indicates that the state need not worry about the spread of radicalism (Faiqah & Pransiska, 2018). This is because kiai have high levels of cultural, social, political, and economic legitimacy (Pabbejah et al., 2020). Also, they have significant support in rural areas, as their religious views are commonly cited by their followers (Lombard, 1984). Similarly, the general assumption that terrorists are students of particular kiai has raised widespread suspicion about these personalities and the boarding schools or pesantren they lead (Liputan 6 News, 9 December 2005). According to Wahab (2020), these suspicions have led to high levels of anxiety and hostility between the state and the Muslim community. It is therefore important to highlight the role of kiai in promoting religious moderatism.

Studies on religious moderatism vis-à-vis kiai and pesantren have focused on two points. First are studies that considered pesantren as models of tolerance and moderatism (Arifinsyah et al., 2019; Ma’arif, 2019; Nurrohman, 2014), while the second is regarding pesantren and their ability to teach a multicultural curriculum to their students, called santri (Minhaji et al., 2020). It is evident from this review that the traditional authority of kiai has not been explored in the current literature. Even though Katarina Multasita discovered that traditional authority influences both social behaviors and state stability. In other words, kiai play an important role in creating religious moderatism within society.

This current study complemented existing studies by highlighting the key role played by kiai in creating and promoting religious moderatism. The goal was achieved through 1) examining kiai’s role in reaffirming religious moderatism by creating a commitment to nationalism, local culture acceptance, and non-violence attitude, and 2) exploring how the traditional authority of kiai is used to maintain moderatism in the long term. Furthermore, it is necessary to formulate policies for educating and training charismatic kiai in order to promote moderatism and morality systematically and sustainably.

This article departs from the argument that the success of kiai in reaffirming religious moderatism heavily depends on their authority to maintain traditional authority over the long term. It has been observed that these traditional authorities remain independent in their attitudes and political activities, even though the pesantren’s modernization and economic expansion have transformed kiai-santri relationships. These political activities mostly threaten kiai’s traditional authority, by shifting their attention away from the central roles as spiritual leaders to more marginal ones as politicians. Therefore, kiai’s involvement in practical politics tends to exacerbate the conflict between kiai and santri, based on different political views.

2. Literature review

2.1. Religious moderatism

Religious moderatism provides a middle-of-the-road religious understanding in a multicultural society. Ahmad Syafii Maarif therefore suggested that religious moderatism reinterprets religious teachings to make adherents understand its essence and substance (Saputra et al., 2021; Sutrisno, 2019), thereby promoting tolerance and respect for individuals of different faiths (Jura, 2021). Today, religious moderatism helps to minimize and overcome potential extremist, radical, and fundamentalist organization threats (Chadidjah et al., 2021; Ishaq, 2021; Sutrisno, 2019), which
jeopardize modern society’s stability through their fervent advancement of literalist interpretations and values contrary to those espoused by moderatism (Corbett, 2017; Rismawati et al., 2021).

In dealing with religious moderatism threats, Arif (2021) explained that it is necessary to ensure justice and proportionality, without failing to the extremes of conservativism or liberalism. According to Corbett (2017) & Feriyananto (2020), moderatism provided social protections, created harmony, and maintained peace, even amongst people with different religious backgrounds. Furthermore, moderatism is used to create and maintain interfaith dialogue (Sihombing et al., 2020), thereby enabling people from different backgrounds to openly share their views on certain topics, including conflicts between the Muslim and Western worlds (Ahmed, 2018; Mendes-Flohr, 2013; Nkuna, 2021). This interfaith dialogue helps to ensure peaceful coexistence and promotes collaboration through theological explorations of a harmonious future. Therefore, religious communities need to strive toward bridging these gaps and recognizing their similarities, which is only possible when moderatism exists (Ahmed, 2018).

2.2. Charisma of kiai
Kiai served as traditional authorities leading religious rituals and Islamic boarding schools (Bashori, 2019; Hikmawan et al., 2020). In addition, they are of paramount importance because of their role as the key to their institution’s success. They have in-depth knowledge of social and religious problems and are able to provide potent solutions (Alam, 2020; Masur, 2018). According to Muttaqin (2020), kiai are renowned for their charismatic, democratic, and transformative leadership, which heavily relies on their capacity and ability to uphold local principles while interacting with global values. This is consistent with Alam (2020) and Samsudin and Azizah (2021) that charismatic leaders are able to influence their follower’s values and articulate particular ideologies in the advancement of certain visions and missions.

Safi’i (2020) found that kiai influence their followers using a refined approach, including rituals such as sholawatan and routine recitations of rothibul hadid in the mosque. Based on Wekke et al. (2019), kiai’s charisma is evident both in the values embraced by their followers and in genealogical factors. These individuals are known for being larger-than-life, with keen eyes and loud voices, which provide the ability to attract their followers (Arifin, 2015). For example, Kyai Farid Wadjidi, the leader of Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso possesses all the elements of charismatic leadership, which include being a role model to followers, serving as a parent, guardian, motivator, and leader. In return, this leader is trusted and obeyed by the students/followers.

2.3. Local knowledge
Local knowledge is shaped by the experiences and daily activities of local people in a given area (Lam et al., 2020; Li et al., 2016). Utina (2012) explained that the experiences and daily activities produced specific traditions, attitudes, and ideals, guiding local communities and shaping their perspectives. Furthermore, local knowledge informs people’s beliefs and understandings, thereby providing them with a unique socio-cultural and ecological worldview (Guerrero-Gatica et al., 2020). According to (Loh and Riechers (2021), local knowledge needs to be maintained because it provides a fertile ecosystem for solving challenges and difficult situations. This is consistent with the discovery of CMS and Gumilar (2020) that the knowledge passed from one generation to another is of great value as it helps to maintain competitiveness and overcome crises.

It has been observed that local knowledge systems are currently under threat as it is giving way to “western”, “scientific”, and “global” knowledge. A study titled “Connectionism: Alternatives for Understanding the Dynamics of Local Knowledge in the Era of Globalization”, highlighted how local knowledge has been threatened by efforts to juxtapose it with that of global (Choesin, 2014). Moreover, this globalization threat is inevitable, hence communities only need to minimize its negative effects while maximizing the positive ones (Irawan, 2020). An example is seen in pesantren, having historical places in which Islamic traditions are taught by kiai (Harun, 2018; Massowewang, 2020). In the globalization aspect, pesantren have recognized that their continued
survival is likely to be threatened by relying solely on conventional means, hence these people adopted the positive elements of the global knowledge ecosystem in order to develop their own uniquely modern curricula, systems, and teaching methods (In'amurrohman, 2019).

3. Method
This article aims to strengthen religious moderatism performed by charismatic kiai in South Sulawesi and Gorontalo, Indonesia. Conceptually, charismatic kiai are few people who have received Anre Gurutta title in South Sulawesi and Qadhi in Gorontalo. The study on strengthening religious moderatism regarding kiai's traditional authority is interesting, especially in the context of state's spirit, which structurally promotes religious moderatism and even makes it one of the priorities in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN 2020–2024).

A descriptive study was utilized as a methodology for obtaining primary data from participants. Observations and direct interviews were conducted with 22 informants, consisting of 10 charismatic kiai, 2 santri, 3 pesantren teachers, and 2 Christian religious leaders, while the remaining are 1 each for Hindu religious leader, religious court judge, head of religious affairs office, majlis taklim member, and youth figure. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were performed during fieldwork to understand kiai's perspective and experiences in strengthening religious moderation. The interview focused on understanding the details of kiai's gait and interaction in people's lives, both related to their position as an educator, preachers for the community, and socio-religious leaders in an organization. It is important to note that interviews were also conducted with other religious leaders to determine the informants' evaluations of the charismatic kiai's authority. Table 1 shows the information of these informants.

In addition to interviews, data were collected through a review of the literature and other documents on strengthening religious moderation through kiai. These related documents/reports/journals/reviews/articles were further identified, reviewed, and analyzed.

The data were presented in several means, for example, interviews were transcribed, with pertinent data presented contextually and interpretatively through citations, which are used to create critical narratives. The interpretation was not solely limited to descriptions as information collected from different informants was compared to detect similarities. The analysis relied heavily on description, explanation, comparison, and interpretation, which helps to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon being studied.

Data analysis was performed based on the three stages provided by Huberman and Miles (Miles, 2014), namely 1) data reduction, 2) display, and 3) verification. Data reduction was conducted by categorizing the data based on the study questions. Tables and figures were used for the display, while verification was conducted by comparing data from different sources, before interpretively analyzing the data to ascertain their significance.

4. Results

4.1. Strengthening religious moderatism in the aspect of national commitment
Indonesia is a plural country regarding ethnicity, culture, language, and religion (Abdulla et. al, 2019). As a very heterogeneous nation, the founding fathers inherited from the very beginning a form of agreement between the nation and state, namely Pancasila and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. In many kiai's assessments, Pancasila has succeeded in uniting all religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups, which were the reason kiai consciously recommended accepting it as the basis for living as a state.

Pancasila's acceptance is demonstrated, for example, by honoring the Indonesian flag during ceremonies to commemorate national holidays, such as Youth Pledge Day, Independence Day, Pancasila Heritage Day, and Santri Day. Based on Table 1, R19, an alumnus of Pondok Pesantren DDI Mangkoso described that all santri are required to attend flag ceremonies every Monday during their studies.
Table 1. Study informant's names

| No | Informant | Nama                     | Status                                      |
|----|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1  | R1        | KH. Sanusi Baco          | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 2  | R2        | KH.Farid Wadjidi         | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 3  | R3        | KH. Rafi Yunus           | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 4  | R4        | KH. Tahir Syarkawi       | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 5  | R5        | KH. Lukmanul Hakim       | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 6  | R6        | KH. Jafar Sanusi         | Anre Gurutta/charismatic kiai, South Sulawesi |
| 7  | R7        | KH. Gafir Nawawi         | Qadhi/charismatic kiai, Gorontalo           |
| 8  | R8        | KH. Gofur Nawawi         | Qadhi/charismatic kiai, Gorontalo           |
| 9  | R9        | KH. Rosyid Kamaru        | Qadhi/charismatic kiai, Gorontalo           |
| 10 | R10       | KH. Sarmada              | Qadhi/charismatic kiai, Gorontalo           |
| 11 | R11       | Djeek Detmor Gandey      | Church administrator                        |
| 12 | R12       | Jeser Singon             | Pentecostal Church Pastor                  |
| 13 | R13       | I Wayan Adha             | Hindu religious leader                      |
| 14 | R14       | Hamka                    | religious court judge                       |
| 15 | R15       | Ali Mukmin               | pesantren teacher                          |
| 16 | R16       | Muhlis Duaini            | pesantren teacher                          |
| 17 | R17       | Muhammad Yunus           | pesantren teacher                          |
| 18 | R18       | Jufri                    | santri                                      |
| 19 | R19       | Khairuddin               | santri                                      |
| 20 | R20       | Mashuri                  | head of religious affairs office            |
| 21 | R21       | Fatma Dunggio            | Majelis taklim member                      |

(interview, Barru, South Sulawesi, 2018). Similarly, R18, an alumnus of Pondok Pesantren As'adlyah Sengkang, passionately explained the impression santri had regarding KH. Rafi Yunus as follows,

“Every time Anre Gurutta Rafi Yunus leads the flag ceremony, the santri are always reminded that state symbols, such as the red-and-white Flag and the sacrifices of Indonesian national heroes need to be respected. KH. Rafi Yunus also emphasized the importance of being good citizens, loving Indonesia wholeheartedly, and always being grateful.” (interview, Sengkang Wajo, South Sulawesi, 2018).

Figure 1 shows how kiai consciously educate the students to show adequate respect for the state’s symbol, namely the red-and-white flag. In an exclusive view of respecting the state flag, which is considered to destroy monotheism and even shirk, R5, a charismatic kiai, emphasized that respect for the state symbol has nothing to do with the issue of faith. In addition, the charismatic kiai, who are the builder of the Pesantren DDI Lerang-Lerang, Pinrang Regency, highlighted that citizens who are reluctant to respect the flag and other state symbols reflect a lack of gratitude for the independence blessings that have been fought for with tears and blood by many parties, including scholars. Anre Gurutta Lukmanul Hakim also explained students’ willingness to respect the flag
that was fought for by the ulama as a manner of showing appreciation directly, an attitude always taught by the kiai (Interview, Pinrang, South Sulawesi, 2018).

Table 2 shows the strengthening of religious moderation by kiai regarding national commitment, which is evident in three aspects, namely thinking, movement, and actions:

When explaining religion and state concepts, R1, a charismatic kiai in South Sulawesi, described that Indonesia is not a religious state, meanwhile, it does not separate religion in the citizens’ daily lives. In other words, religious values are maintained, together with that of local wisdom and customs. Therefore, R1, who is also the central figure of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in South Sulawesi, stated that there is no reason for citizens to question Pancasila or seek new foundations of the multi-interpreted and untested state (Interview, Makassar, South Sulawesi, 2018).

According to Novita Eleanor (2019) the tug-of-war to accept Pancasila as the basis of the state is part of the long Muslim-state relationship history in Indonesia, which started before independence. After decades of debate about Pancasila vis-a-vis the state, the clerics no longer considered the discourse as worthy of being argued. For kiai, Pancasila is final and it is meant to be protected and preserved by Indonesians. A charismatic kiai in South Sulawesi, R2 even identified that Pancasila and Islam have a symbiotic relationship. For example, Pancasila serves as the foundation of life for the nation and state, while Islam is the basis of citizens’ faith, thereby providing spiritual motivation for their activities. Evidently, it is impossible for Islam to exist in Indonesia without Pancasila and vice versa. This symbiotic relationship makes Pancasila a way of life for the nation, not just a formal state ideology (Interview, Barru, South Sulawesi, 2018).

4.2. Reinforcement of religious moderation by kiai in terms of tolerance
In the context of diversity, Kiai Ghafir Nawawi offered an important model. As a kiai in Banuroja, a plural village whose name is an acronym for Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Gorontalo, and Java, with diverse cultures and religious practices, Kiai Ghafir regularly wished other religious communities happy holidays (Faisal, 2019). From the beginning, Kiai Ghafir highlighted the importance of recognizing and preserving local society’s religious and ethnic diversity. Also, other staff were briefed about the importance of adhering to the curriculum when teaching and avoiding discussions on controversial topics that often result in conflict. Kiai Ghafir argued that intolerance is caused by perpetrators’ incomplete understanding of religious doctrine. This simply means that “an individual’s knowledge of Islam needs to be kaffah or perfect, not partial. Moreover, such problems often arise when learning is undertaken only in bits and pieces” (interview, Randangan, Gorontalo, 2018).
Table 2. Kiai’s performance in strengthening religious moderation on the aspect of national commitment

| No | Thoughts | Movement | Act |
|----|----------|----------|-----|
| 1  | Pancasila is final | It is taught through planned education that the Pancasila’s values are inherent in religious values | Familiarizing students to respect the flag and other state symbols |
| 2  | The Khilafah does not correspond to the Indonesian | Reject groups fighting for the caliphate as the basis of the state | Intensely preaching the challenges and obstacles in establishing the caliphate in Indonesia |
| 3  | Bhinneka Tunggal Ika needs to be upheld | Actively disseminating, educating, and advocating for diversity as a gift from God through the Religious Harmony Forum (Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama-FKUB) that needs to be addressed wisely. | Participating in religious activities, involving interfaith leaders, such as praying together for the nation |
| 4  | Obedience to the government (ulul amri) is a form of religious awareness | Active in counseling to campaign for state programs in the fields of education, health, and other social activities. | Getting involved in state agenda, such as voting during the General (Pernilu) & Local Elections (Pilkada). |
| 5  | Religion and state do not need to be contradicted | Active in government forums, such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia-MUI), comprising government-recognized socio-religious organizations, namely Nahdatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah | Teaching, preaching, and exemplifying patterns of harmonious relationships with the government. |

Source: Compiled by researcher, 2018

For example, Kiai Ghafir mentioned the Wali Songo, also known as the Nine Saints, who had contributed extraordinarily to preserving the diversity of the Indonesian Archipelago. In their efforts to disseminate Islam and its teachings, the Wali Songo did not preach hostility towards other religions or communities; instead, they promoted diversity, harmony, and unity, hence “this legacy needs to be preserved”. Kiai Ghafir was also actively involved in maintaining interfaith harmony in Banuroja, a village that has created and preserved the tradition of exchanging greetings during religious holidays. Specifically, when Muslim villagers celebrated Eid al-Fitr, Hindus and Christian communities gathered to wish them a blessed Eid. It was observed that Hindus often distribute fresh fruits to their Muslim neighbors, while Christians share cakes and other baked foods. According to a church administrator represented by R11, the cakes distributed on Eid al-Fitr were ordered by Muslims in order to avoid suspicions (interview, Banuroja, Gorontalo, 2018) but when the Hindu community celebrates Galungan or the Christian community commemorates Christmas, Muslims usually participate by greeting everyone and also involving in interfaith interactions. This is consistent with the explanation of R12, a charismatic kiai in Gorontalo, that Kiai Ghafir and the santri often distribute crops such as corn and citrus during their celebrations (interview, Banuroja, Gorontalo, 2018). This makes the pesantren teacher of Salafiyah Syafiyyah Randangan, R16, conclude that “the MUI’s fatwa forbidding the expression of Merry Christmas was invalid” (interview, Randangan, Gorontalo, 2018).

Another model of tolerance was described in the context of education. According to R15, a pesantren teacher, Kiai Ghafir’s understanding and spirit of tolerance were very strong to an extent that recruiting
non-Muslim teachers when deemed necessary was not considered taboo. This is evident from the two non-Muslim teachers who are still teaching at the Pesantren Salafiyah Syafi’iyah Randangan.

It is important to note that the atmosphere of harmony is not only limited to these practices as the pluralistic Banuroja communities were consciously willing to help each other construct houses of worship. Even though the Christians in Banuroja were only a few heads of families, there are 2 churches in the place. As acknowledged by a Pentecostal Church Pastor denoted as R12, the establishment of churches was recommended by Kiai Ghafir. Similarly, when Salafiyah Syafi’iyah Islamic boarding school was constructed, non-Muslims also rendered assistance, including some Hindus who donated their land to the pesantren.

The harmony amongst different religious communities was also found in the village’s political system as it was not dominated by any one religion or race. For example, Christians were serving as village leaders despite being the minority. Banuroja’s first village chief was a Christian of Minahasa descent and the Head of the village Consultative Body (Badan Permusyawaratan Desa—BPD) at the time was a Hindu of Balinese ancestry. In addition, the village government also accepted religious and cultural diversity, an example is Abdul Wahid, a Muslim from the Sasak tribe (NTB), serving as the village head, while the secretary was Febri Yahya, a native Muslim from Gorontalo. There are three Heads of Affairs (Kaur), of which two are Hindus from Bali and one is Muslim from Java. Even though the BPD has just three families, the leader is a Javanese Catholic, while the other four members differ in race and religion, of which two are Muslim from the Sasak and Javanese ethnic groups, one is Christian from Minahasa, and one is Balinese Hindu (Faisal, 2019).

These behaviors revealed that tolerance has become a way of life being passed down from one generation to another. It was observed that potential religious conflicts are always taken to Kiai Ghofer promptly. During Christmas, Muslim citizens often help in conserving the environment, and other people do the same during Eid or Eid al-Adha prayers. For example, when there is an event at the church and the congregation does not have enough parking space, the pesantren complex is free to use. This is a result of the instruction given by Kiai Ghafir that Muslims, Christians, and Hindus clergy need to avoid preaching religious sermons capable of inciting animosity between their respective faiths. The Banuroja community practice, reflecting religious moderation rooted in the society as led by Kiai Ghofer, is a social institution called local wisdom. The moderation model shown is applicable in other places since it is a social modality that promotes harmony.

The practice of tolerance is also evident in Kiai Tahir Syarkawi activities, who regularly exchange cross-cultural and interreligious greetings during heterogenous rituals. According to R4, a charismatic kiai in South Sulawesi, greetings are essentially prayers used to bless recipients (interview, Pinrang, South Sulawesi, 2018). This kiai, who headed the Ministry of Religion Office, previously known as the Department of Religion for Southeast Sulawesi and South Sulawesi in the 1990s, stated that there are many opportunities associated with greetings. In fact, R17, a teacher at Pesantren DDI Kaballangan, testified that Kiai Tahir is found of starting dialogues with interfaith greetings common amongst Indonesian Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Buddhists, namely “Assalamu’alaikum Warahmatullahi Wabararakatuh, Salam Sejahtera untuk kita semua, Shalom, Om Swastia itu, Namo Budhaya, Salam Kebajikan” (interview, Pinrang, 2018). These educational activities, sermons, and exemplary leadership are all rooted in a deep commitment to the Indonesian nation and the diversity of its society.

4.3. Reinforcement of religious moderation by kiai regarding local culture preservation

The kiai’s involvement in local culture preservation also promoted religious moderation. Even though both South Sulawesi and Gorontalo are commonly regarded as Serambi Madinah or “verandas of Madinah”, their traditional culture remains strong, since it is evident in all elements of everyday life (Figure 2). For example, each stage of a wedding process has customary elements, as shown in Table 3.
Among these seven stages, the third, fourth, and fifth involve the kiai. According to R20, a head of Religious Affairs Office, Muslims society believed that marriage has not been fully blessed when kyai/anre gurutta is not involved in the marriage contract/ijab kabal (“de’ na sukuu nasedding appabottingenne masarakae, narekko tennia anre gurutta pabottingngi”) (Interview, Sidrap, South Sulawesi, 2018) Figure 3.

Table 3. Stages of marriage in South Sulawesi and Gorontalo

| Stage | South Sulawesi   | Gorontalo   | Purpose                                                                 |
|-------|------------------|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     | Mammanu-manu     | Mongialo    | Introduction of bride and groom                                         |
| 2     | Mappaettuada     | Tolobalanga | Engagement                                                             |
| 3     | Mappenre temma   | Mo hatam Qur'an | Celebration of the conclusion of Qur'anic reading                      |
| 4     | Mappabotting     | Akaji       | The signing of the ijab kabal (marriage contract)                      |
| 5     | Mappasikarawa    | Malomelo    | The first meeting of bride and groom after formalization of marriage   |
| 6     | Mapparola        | Modelo      | Escort of bride and groom                                              |
| 7     | Massita beseng   | Mohama      | Meeting of in-laws                                                     |

Source: Compiled by researcher, 2018

Figure 2. The marriage contract or ijab kabal performed by a kiai.

Figure 3. Prayer before the distribution of walima cakes by the kiai.
Kiāi are also heavily involved in religious ceremonies, including those used to commemorate Maulid Nabi and Isra Miraj. It is important to note that four forms of maulid are commemorated in South Sulawesi, namely Mauđu Lompoa in Gowa, Mauđu Lompoa in Takallar, Maulid Nabi in Pattene, and Maulid Nabi in Manippasa Maros. In Gorontalo, these maulid rituals are known as waliima, which involved the distribution of traditional cakes to the local community. Before this is performed, kiai need to pray over everything.

In addition to the functional position of kiai, they are also structurally recognized by the South Sulawesi government (Pabbajah et. al, 2019). According to Ridha (2020), there were only four customary structures in South Sulawesi before the arrival of Islam, namely ade' (rules), bicara (decision), rapang (guidance), and wari (pranata). Afterward, sara' (sharia) was added (Jubba et al., 2019), and the official was appointed using the term parewa sara “ or Sharia stakeholder, recognized by the Daeng ta Kaliya at the center of the kingdom, under which are the positions of imam (priest), katte, (khatib), bilala (bilal) and doja”, the holder of the law.

The position of kiai in Gorontalo is also very important because it is famous for the concept of “adat basandi sara’, sara’ basandi Kitabullah”, interpreted as “customs based on Sharia, and Sharia derived from the Book of Allah”. Kiai’s work has been recognized for a long time, and their services are always in demand, which makes it easy to explain their accessibility level and popularity in the community. Therefore, it is unusual for kiai to later doubt or oppose custom and religion, as stated by R9, a charismatic kiai in Gorontalo/Qadhi of Gorontalo City (Interview, Gorontalo, 2018).

Kiai are known for using vernaculars when communicating, in order to ease their audiences’ understanding of the materials presented. This is evident from the statement of R21, a majelis taklim member, who expressed that, “religious language is very easy to understand when conveyed in the local language” (Interview, Gorontalo, 2018).

4.4. Strengthening religious moderation by kiai in the aspect of creating a non-violent life/being a mediator of conflicts in society

Crimes, civil wars, and family disputes are almost unavoidable in human life. Among these, family conflicts, such as divorce and inheritance disputes are the most common in Muslim societies. As stated by Ainiyah and Musilih (2020), the Religious Court data showed that divorces have become more common over time. For example, the court recorded thousands of divorces in 2020.

According to Indonesian divorce law, both parties have to be mediated before a judge decides. Salamoh (2013) statistically explained that success is unlikely when a judge mediates the couple. Meanwhile, R14, a religious court judge, cited the experiences obtained in Pinrang, South Sulawesi that mediation was much more likely to succeed when conducted by a kiai, such as Kiai Jafar Sanusi.

Kiai’s success as mediators was also observed in Barru, in which Kiai Farid Wadjidi was often consulted to resolve inheritance disputes. Similarly, Kiai Sanusi Baco was noted for successfully pacifying the youths near his home on Kelapa Tiga Street, Makassar. A youth figure, R22, cited that when conflict broke out between these gangs in 2017, Kiai Sanusi immediately worked to settle the disagreement (Interview, Makassar, 2018).

Also worth mentioning in this context is Kiai Ghafir and his successful efforts to prevent religious conflict in Pohuwato. For example, when a Hindu stabbed a Christian youth in 2010, religious leaders requested Kiai Ghafir to mediate in order to prevent the conflict from escalating. R15 passionately described how Kiai Ghafir worked tirelessly to prevent further conflict. Subsequently, whenever the specter of interreligious conflict arose, Kiai Ghafir was always demanded to mediate (Interview, Banuraja, Gorontalo, 2018).
5. Discussion
It has been observed that the charismatic kiai of South Sulawesi and Gorontalo have succeeded in promoting religious moderatism through education, socialization, and example. In the aspect of education, kiai taught students in the pesantren the moderatism principles using modern curricula and systems. This implies that Pesantren is very important in disseminating moderate Islam and ensuring the continued solidarity of Indonesian society (Hamidah & Chasannudin, 2021). Also, kiai acted as mediators, thereby minimizing the threat of horizontal conflicts in society. As ideological heirs to those who first spread Islam in the Archipelago, these personalities use their traditional authority to impart the importance of moderatism to their santri and communities (Nurdin & Syahrotn Naaqiyah, 2019). It is safe to conclude that kiai are positive forces for moderatism as they are respected figures in communities.

It is important to note that the traditional authority of kiai was not achieved overnight rather, it has deep roots in the ideological struggles of Muslims throughout history. This denotes that the conveyance of values such as tolerance was not incidental but undertaken continuously and sustainably (Nurdin & Syahrotn Naaqiyah, 2019). Based on the above discussion, kiai has a vital role in habituating tolerance, resolving conflicts, and creating peace in the face of disruption. The cases highlighted above therefore showed that unity in diversity is further strengthened by conserving and legitimizing local culture continually.

For example, the continued effort to teach santri the importance of honoring the flag has a deep significance in nationalism, unity, and national security. In addition, kiai’s commitment to the Indonesian nation showed that independence was only achieved through the struggles and sacrifices of all societal elements, including religious leaders such as kiai. This signifies that maintaining the Indonesian nation is synonymous to preserving the historical contributions of the forefathers. It was observed historically that pesantren have long practiced tolerance and accepted diversity, and also reflected many values of a democratic society (Ma’arif, 2019). Similarly, kiai have played an important role in cultivating as well as spreading nationalism and moderatism amongst their santri and communities (Apud et al., 2020).

Religious moderatism has been promoted by kiai through cultural mechanisms, which fruitfully combined with the government structural approaches. This has two important implications, namely 1) the state needs to reformulate its strategies for promoting religious moderatism. 2) The state has to engage local leaders in its efforts to advance national development, including the programs to mainstream religious moderatism. Muttaqin (2020) identified that kiai’s traditional authority has helped to educate future generations, maintain local customs, and balance local principles with global values.

This current study affirms previous findings that religious and institutional leaders, who are involved in Indonesia’s Ulamas Council, have been ousted (Pabbajah et al., 2020). This is due to inevitable transformations taking place in today’s rapidly changing society, thereby causing a shift from institutional to personal authority. However, this deauthorization does not exist in the case of charismatic leaders, such as kiai, because they have retained their traditional authority, despite being fewer in number (Machmudi, 2015; Pribadi, 2011; Utomo et al., 2020), and proven to be capable of transforming as well as revitalizing pesantren’s religious knowledge systematically (Pabbajah & Pabbajah et al., 2020). These leaders are therefore needed to promote religious moderatism in modern society.

The competition between formal religious institutions and that of individual leaders acting independently was also examined as reinforced by Islam’s lengthy history in Indonesia. Throughout history, religious leaders regarded as kiai, ajengan, tuan guri, tengku, ane gurutta, buya, and qadhi in Java, Banten, West Nusa Tenggara, Aceh, South Sulawesi, West Sumatra, and Gorontalo, respectively, have played a significant role in everyday lives of Muslim society (Bunza, 2014; Jalil & Nor, 2020; Sahlan et al., 2019). These people have been honored as the sole material resources of Islam and its teachings for centuries (Gumiantari & Nafi’a, 2020; Muid, 2017). With the advent of democracy, modern educational institutions and other organizations have emerged without a dedicated space for dominant authorities.
However, this study showed that there are still spaces for kiai to act with authority, and even challenge modern institutions. An example is Kiai Ghafir's rejection of the MUI fatwa regarding the exchange of Christmas greetings.

This study supported the argument that traditional authority plays an important role in shaping public behavior (King, 1981), and also provided a contextual understanding for the people. In addition, it observed the positive and constructive context of Karl D. Jackson, who positioned traditional authority as a valuable tool for challenging other authorities.

It is important to note that the traditional knowledge and authority borne by kiai are sorely needed for solving modern societal problems. This is because kiai have a proven track record of cultivating moderatism within their communities and ensuring that principles, such as tolerance are adopted. Therefore, kiai's influence need to be extended by increasing their participation and also enhancing the public understanding of these personalities in order to ensure that the title is not claimed by anyone. It is safe to conclude that the involvement of traditional charismatic kiai in mainstreaming religious moderatism increases the likelihood of succeeding.

6. Conclusion
The charismatic kiai has been discovered to be active and consistent when practicing the religious moderatism that the state has advocated for over the past decade. Kiai's integration, tolerance, inclusion, and accommodating perspectives on Islam and the state have a continuous impact on the future of Indonesian Islam. Based on the extent of their charisma in society, kiai's points of view have become the consensus among the general population. Therefore, the concern that more extreme and restrictive viewpoints are likely to be prevalent does not have a solid foundation. This means that it is much more important and productive to maximize charismatic kiai's function and include them on a wider scale.

This study provided new insight regarding traditional authority's influence in the aspect of religious moderatism. The state's efforts to promote moderatism, which have long relied solely on structural approaches, provided a better result when implemented with the cultural approaches of traditional leaders, such as kiai. This simply implies that the perspective utilized has helped in obtaining a deeper understanding of the issue being explored and providing solutions to the challenges faced by Indonesian society.

Due to the small sample size of only ten charismatic kiai in two provinces, these results are not generalizable. There is a need to conduct a further study with a larger sample in order to achieve a more comprehensive and detailed understanding, useful as a basis for policy development. Also, further investigation is needed to understand traditional kiai's public acceptance in the country, as this is able to ensure a deeper understanding of these religious leaders' role in their respective communities.

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