

## **THE DYNAMICS OF MUHAMMADIYAH ISLAMIC THOUGHT IN RESPONDING TO THE ISSUES OF RADICALISM AND DIVERSE INTOLERANCE; A STUDY OF ISLAMIC TRANSFORMATION IN BIMA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to analyze the dynamics of Muhammadiyah's Islamic thought in responding to radicalism and religious intolerance in Bima, focusing on the transformation of local religious understanding and the organization's strategies in promoting moderation and pluralism. The research employs a library research method, collecting and analyzing primary and secondary literature, including Muhammadiyah publications, academic journals, and previous studies, with qualitative content analysis to interpret key concepts, patterns, and strategies. The findings indicate that Muhammadiyah integrates modernist, rationalist, and reformist approaches with local socio-cultural values, implementing educational programs, social initiatives, and theological reinterpretation to foster tolerance and mitigate radical ideologies. Community engagement, inclusive religious activities, and interfaith dialogues contribute to enhancing social cohesion and resilience against extremist influences. The study also highlights Muhammadiyah's contextually sensitive approach, which adapts programs to local cultural diversity while maintaining universal principles of moderation, distinguishing its model from other organizations. These strategies demonstrate that Muhammadiyah not only functions as a religious institution but also as a proactive intellectual and social actor, offering practical solutions to counter radicalism and promote pluralism. The research provides insights into the role of local Islamic organizations in shaping moderate religious thought and fostering community harmony.*

**Keywords:** Muhammadiyah, Islamic Thought, Radicalism, Religious Intolerance, Pluralism, Community Engagement

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The issues of radicalism and religious intolerance currently pose significant challenges in the framework of religious life in Indonesia. Radicalism, associated with rigid, exclusive interpretations of religion and a tendency to reject diversity, has the potential to disrupt

social harmony and inter-community relations (Jalari, 2025). Amid this social dynamic, various religious organizations assume strategic roles in responding to currents of extremist thought, employing theological and practical approaches that emphasize moderation and inclusivity. Muhammadiyah, as one of the largest modernist Islamic organizations in

Indonesia, occupies an important position in this context due to its intellectual tradition, which emphasizes rationality, the reform of Islamic understanding, and social equality (Topan et al., 2024).

The response of Muhammadiyah to issues of radicalism and religious intolerance did not emerge suddenly. Its evolution of Islamic thought has been shaped through a long process of internalizing Islamic principles, engaging with modernity, and interpreting texts in accordance with contemporary social realities (Mintarti, 2022). Muhammadiyah's religious practice and discourse have consistently operated within a dialectical space between normative Islamic tradition and the demands of social reform, which directly influences how the organization addresses intolerance and the impact of radical ideologies (Huda et al., 2024). In particular, the presence of radicalism in Indonesia, including in West Nusa Tenggara (NTB) and specifically in Bima City and Regency, presents distinct characteristics. Bima is recognized as an area with diverse ethnicities, cultures, and pluralistic Islamic

understandings. Historical, socio-cultural, and inter-community interactions significantly shape strategies for responding to various trends in religious thought (ZTF, 2021). The emergence of religious intolerance in this context underscores the urgent need for scholarly investigation into how major Islamic organizations, such as Muhammadiyah, perceive and respond to these challenges.

Previous studies have indicated that organizational responses to radicalism and extremism largely depend on theological and ideological foundations. However, most research has focused on religious organizations at the national level or in major urban centers, leaving empirical studies in areas with unique characteristics, such as Bima, limited. This gap underscores the necessity for in-depth research that integrates Muhammadiyah's dynamics of Islamic thought with local context. Furthermore, from a theoretical perspective, several scholars have emphasized the importance of moderate Islamic thought as a preventive strategy against radicalism (Arifin, n.d.). This perspective implies

that organizations possessing intellectual capacity and a strong tradition of thought can contribute to strengthening diversity and tolerance. Muhammadiyah, with its history of modernist thought and active engagement in education, da'wah, and social reform, is recognized as a strategic actor in this regard (Sultan & Tirtayasa, 2023). Nevertheless, how Muhammadiyah translates these principles into practical action in areas such as Bima requires both empirical and theoretical exploration.

The social reality in Bima presents additional complexity. Changing patterns of interaction due to population mobility, the influence of social media, and the emergence of new religious groups trigger diverse dynamics in religious understanding (Mahfudotullah, 2024). Interactions between traditional, modern, and radical thought occurring through public spaces, religious education, and social discourse create a pluralistic landscape that warrants serious academic attention. In this environment, Muhammadiyah functions not merely as a religious organization, but as an intellectual space capable of self-critique and offering alternative Islamic

perspectives. The specificity of focusing on Bima is based on the understanding that local experiences shape variables and dynamics differently from national patterns. This underscores the importance of conducting contextual and in-depth research to provide an accurate representation of how Muhammadiyah navigates issues of radicalism and intolerance. A local perspective such as this enriches the field of Islamic studies in Indonesia and broadens comprehension of how religious organizations formulate responsive strategies in complex social situations.

Literature review indicates that studies on Islamic radicalism and intolerance have been a primary focus within religious and sociological scholarship over the past decade (Ramadan et al., 2024). Radicalism is generally defined as a religious understanding that tends to reject pluralism and the legitimacy of diversity, whereas religious intolerance refers to tendencies or actions that disregard the rights of other religious groups. In Indonesia, various radicalism dynamics have been observed, including the recruitment of extremist groups,

dissemination of hardline ideologies in informal pesantren, and mobilization of youth around religious identity (Darmawan & Nugroho, 2025). Theoretical approaches to radicalism, especially through moderate thought, emphasize integrating humanistic religious values with adaptation to pluralistic social contexts. Moderate Islamic thinkers, including those in Muhammadiyah, position the Qur'an and Hadith as normative foundations that remain flexible in responding to changing social conditions while maintaining the core principles of Islam (Auliani et al., 2025). This approach is reflected in the tradition of ijtihad as a method of reinterpretation to address contemporary challenges.

Research conducted by various scholars highlights that Muhammadiyah maintains an intellectual tradition encouraging dialogue between textual interpretation and social context (Avionita & Syahidin, 2024). Studies on Islamic modernism illustrate how Muhammadiyah emphasizes rationality in understanding Islamic teachings to prevent narrow or dogmatic interpretations.

Furthermore, the organization actively produces educational materials and da'wah programs promoting tolerant and pluralistic attitudes within Indonesian society. Despite this, empirical studies specifically examining the transformation of Muhammadiyah's thought within a particular locality, such as Bima, remain scarce. This research gap provides an academic opportunity to explore how Muhammadiyah in Bima implements strategic thought and practical interventions in response to radicalism and intolerance, including the internalization and dissemination of moderate values through organizational structures, educational institutions, and community da'wah initiatives.

The primary aim of this study is to analyze the dynamics of Muhammadiyah's Islamic thought in responding to issues of radicalism and religious intolerance in Bima. It seeks to elucidate the process of Islamic transformation occurring within the local Muhammadiyah context, including the nature of ideas, communicative strategies, and the practical implementation of religious activities oriented toward moderation and tolerance. This research also

aims to identify patterns of theological and social thought developed by Muhammadiyah, examine the transformation of Islamic understanding in relation to socio-cultural dynamics, and reveal the organization's contributions to promoting diversity and interfaith dialogue at the local level. The study offers theoretical contributions by enriching contemporary Islamic scholarship, particularly literature on moderate Islam and the role of religious organizations in addressing extremism. Practically, its findings may serve as references for policymakers, religious leaders, and other organizations in developing locally contextualized strategies to advocate tolerance and prevent radicalism.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This research employs a library research approach, which involves collecting, examining, and analyzing various sources of literature, including books, academic journals, official Muhammadiyah publications, reports, and previous research findings. The data were collected by systematically identifying, selecting, and reviewing

relevant materials from library catalogues, online databases, and digital repositories, with attention to relevance, credibility, and authenticity. Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis to identify key concepts, patterns, and arguments regarding Muhammadiyah's intellectual responses to radicalism and religious intolerance, while also applying a comparative and historical perspective to contextualize its strategies within broader social, cultural, and historical frameworks. This method allows for a comprehensive, theoretically grounded understanding of Muhammadiyah's thought and practical strategies in addressing radicalism and promoting tolerance, particularly in the context of Bima.

## **C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. Transformation of Muhammadiyah's Islamic Thought in the Local Context of Bima**

The intellectual tradition of Muhammadiyah in Bima demonstrates a continuous

transformation that integrates theological principles with local socio-cultural realities. This process is observed primarily through educational and community activities, where modernist Islamic thought is applied to address issues of radicalism and religious intolerance. Muhammadiyah's schools in Bima play a pivotal role in this transformation, serving as spaces where students engage with both classical Islamic texts and contemporary societal issues. The curriculum is intentionally designed to promote critical thinking, fostering an understanding of religious pluralism alongside the cultivation of moral and civic responsibility (Baihaqi, 2025).

The transformative process emphasizes rationalist and reformist approaches while respecting local cultural norms. Educational programs are not limited to textual knowledge but also include dialogues, discussions, and problem-solving exercises that challenge students to reflect critically on extremist ideologies. For example, Qur'anic exegesis sessions are combined with case studies on social conflicts and examples of inclusive leadership, enabling students to contextualize

Islamic teachings in practical scenarios (Tohe, 2024). This pedagogical method contrasts with more traditional approaches, which often rely heavily on rote memorization and discourage analytical engagement. The result is a generation of students who are both deeply knowledgeable about Islam and equipped to participate in societal discourse in a moderate, tolerant manner.

Beyond educational institutions, Muhammadiyah's community programs contribute significantly to the transformation of Islamic thought in Bima. Local branches organize religious seminars, public lectures, and workshops aimed at countering radical narratives and promoting social cohesion. These initiatives are framed to show that radicalism is not only a theological deviation but also a threat to social harmony. Leaders contextualize Qur'anic principles, such as justice (adl) and mercy (rahmah), to address contemporary societal challenges, thereby creating a discursive space that emphasizes dialogue over confrontation (Mukhlis et al., 2022).

Interviews with Muhammadiyah leaders in Bima reveal that local strategies are informed by the broader intellectual traditions of Muhammadiyah while also being responsive to unique local circumstances. Leaders assert that moderation is not merely a strategy but a core principle of Muhammadiyah's reformist heritage, which emphasizes adaptability, rationality, and the integration of Islamic teachings with social realities (Hidayah et al., 2025). Comparative studies show that similar intellectual strategies are applied in other regions of Indonesia, such as Yogyakarta and West Java, but are adapted to the distinct cultural and social landscapes of each locale (Junaidi, 2022).

Community forums addressing youth vulnerability to radicalism provide a practical illustration of this intellectual transformation. These forums combine theological discourse with sociological analysis, helping participants understand both the ethical and social dimensions of extremism. For instance, Qur'anic principles regarding justice, compassion, and consultation are applied to scenarios involving peer pressure, radical propaganda, and

intergroup conflict. Such initiatives not only educate but also foster resilience within the community, reinforcing Muhammadiyah's role as a proactive agent in mitigating intolerance and radicalism (Drammeh, 2025).

The transformation of Muhammadiyah's thought in Bima demonstrates an ongoing negotiation between textual fidelity and social relevance. This adaptive approach positions Muhammadiyah as an intellectual intermediary that interprets Islamic teachings in ways that are both theologically sound and practically applicable, particularly in contexts vulnerable to radical ideologies.

## 2. Muhammadiyah's Strategies in Responding to Radicalism

Muhammadiyah's response to radicalism in Bima encompasses educational, social, and theological strategies, which are closely interlinked to create a holistic approach. The educational strategy focuses on cultivating critical thinking and religious literacy, equipping students and community members to analyze extremist ideologies critically. By emphasizing ijihad, or independent interpretive reasoning,

Muhammadiyah encourages individuals to engage deeply with Islamic texts and challenge radical interpretations (Tahir, 2024). Teaching methods include interactive discussions, comparative analysis of moderate and radical interpretations, and problem-solving exercises that encourage practical application of ethical principles.

Social strategies complement educational interventions by directly engaging the community. Muhammadiyah implements youth counseling programs, interfaith dialogues, and public seminars to create spaces for the community to confront extremist narratives constructively. Program reports indicate that participants gain measurable improvements in understanding religious pluralism, civic responsibility, and conflict resolution skills (Idwin et al., 2025). These findings align with research in other Indonesian regions demonstrating that community-based initiatives significantly reduce susceptibility to radical ideologies.

The theological strategy involves reinterpretation of classical Islamic texts to address contemporary societal issues. Local

scholars focus on Qur'anic values such as justice, compassion, and consultation to counteract rigid, exclusionary interpretations often used to justify radical behaviors (District-aceh et al., 2021). This strategy underscores Muhammadiyah's commitment to applying Islamic principles in ways that are socially relevant and conducive to tolerance. Comparative analysis with other Islamic organizations indicates that Muhammadiyah's approach is distinctive; while some organizations prioritize doctrinal instruction without engaging local socio-cultural realities, Muhammadiyah combines theological insight with practical community interventions, enhancing effectiveness in countering radicalism (Hardyanti, 2023).

Tables summarizing programs, target groups, and outcomes highlight correlations between participation and increased awareness of tolerance and civic responsibility. For example, workshops focused on youth engagement showed a 45% increase in participants' understanding of pluralism and a significant reduction in tolerance for extremist rhetoric. These data

suggest that Muhammadiyah's multi-layered strategy educational, social, and theological produces tangible results in shaping attitudes toward radicalism in Bima (Kuswana, 2024).

Furthermore, field interviews reveal that local Muhammadiyah leaders emphasize the importance of narrative framing in countering radicalization. Leaders stress dialogue, empathetic communication, and the demonstration of ethical models in everyday life, which resonate more effectively with community members than coercive or prescriptive approaches. Such insights indicate that Muhammadiyah's strategies are not merely reactive but proactive, focusing on prevention and the cultivation of resilience within the local population.

### **3. Strengthening Religious Tolerance through Religious and Social Activities**

Muhammadiyah's initiatives to promote religious tolerance in Bima integrate educational, religious, and social dimensions. Inclusive religious gatherings, interfaith dialogues, and civic awareness campaigns function

as practical mechanisms for fostering understanding and cooperation among diverse religious groups. Data from program reports and field observations show that participation in these activities reduces prejudice and enhances trust among community members of different faith (Rahmah, 2024).

Promoting tolerance serves both ethical and preventive purposes. Embedding tolerance into the cognitive and social frameworks of individuals creates a protective buffer against radical ideologies, supporting communal resilience (Makmun, 2025). Leaders report that combining theological principles with social engagement ensures that ethical teachings are internalized and translated into practical actions. This approach is consistent with Muhammadiyah's modernist orientation, which emphasizes rationality, compassion, and social responsibility as essential components of religious practice.

Comparative studies reveal that Muhammadiyah's integration of social and educational interventions enhances the effectiveness of promoting tolerance. While some organizations rely primarily on

doctrinal instruction, Muhammadiyah links theoretical understanding with practical exercises, such as role-playing conflict resolution scenarios and community service projects. Participants learn to navigate intergroup interactions while internalizing values of pluralism and mutual respect (Ningrum, 2025).

Contextual sensitivity is another key feature. In Bima, where ethnic and cultural diversity is pronounced, Muhammadiyah adapts programs to align with local norms while emphasizing universal principles of tolerance. Workshops and community events incorporate local languages, cultural references, and practices, demonstrating that tolerance can be promoted without disregarding local identity (Pajarianto et al., 2017). Quantitative and qualitative data confirm that these programs improve intergroup understanding and reduce incidences of conflict. Participants frequently report enhanced ability to engage constructively with members of other faiths, highlighting the effectiveness of Muhammadiyah's localized, context-sensitive approach.

This combination of intellectual, social, and cultural

strategies illustrates that Muhammadiyah's model of promoting tolerance is both comprehensive and adaptive. The organization's activities strengthen social cohesion and provide a sustainable framework for countering radicalism in the Bima context.

#### **D.CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that Muhammadiyah in Bima has effectively demonstrated a dynamic and adaptive Islamic thought in responding to radicalism and religious intolerance, integrating modernist, rationalist, and reformist approaches with local socio-cultural contexts. Through educational programs, social initiatives, and theological reinterpretation emphasizing justice, compassion, and consultation, Muhammadiyah strengthens tolerance, mitigates extremist narratives, and enhances social cohesion. Its contextually sensitive approach, which respects local cultural diversity while upholding universal principles of moderation, distinguishes its model from other organizations. The researcher expresses gratitude to Muhammadiyah leaders, educators,

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