

## RELIGIOUS MODERATION: Building Tolerance and Harmony in Diversity

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### ARTICLE INFO

**Article history:**

Received, 03/08/24  
Revised, 21/08/24  
Accepted, 01/09/24  
Available online, 02/09/24

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Published by Universitas Islam  
Jember

**Keywords.**

Moderasi, agama, toleransi,  
keberagaman

### ABSTRACT

Religious moderation in diversity in Indonesia is very important to maintain social harmony. Indonesia is a country that has various religious beliefs, races, languages, tribes, traditions and so on. In such a multicultural society, tensions and conflicts often occur between cultural groups and have an impact on the harmony of life. The purpose of this paper is to discuss religious moderation in diversity, the role of the government in realizing religious moderation in Indonesia and the Challenges in Implementing Religious Moderation. The method used is library research. The conclusion of this study is that religious moderation plays a very important role in maintaining harmony and tolerance in a pluralistic Indonesian society. Integration of moderation values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is the key to creating a generation that is able to appreciate differences, reject extremism, and promote peace



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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a pluralistic country that has various ethnicities, religions, races and cultures (Halid 2021d). This diversity is a strength that Indonesia has, but in its implementation, the dynamics of religious expression in the era of democracy sometimes have the potential to cause tension and conflict between communities, between religious communities or even within religious communities. Therefore, moderation is needed, one of which is religious moderation to maintain national harmony, (Halid 2024).

For the Indonesian people, diversity is believed to be destiny. Not requested, but a gift from God the Creator, to be accepted and not to be bargained for (taken for granted). Indonesia is a country with diversity, tribes, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and religions that are almost unmatched in the world. In addition to the six religions that are most widely embraced by the community, there are hundreds or even thousands of tribes, regional languages and scripts, and local beliefs in Indonesia (Halid 2015). Referring to data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) in 2010, the total number of tribes and sub-tribes in Indonesia was 1331, although in 2013 this number was successfully grouped by the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) itself and in

collaboration with the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS), so that it was collected into 633 large ethnic groups. (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019)

Religious tolerance is tolerance that includes issues of belief in humans related to the faith or divinity they believe in. Everyone should be given the freedom to believe in and embrace a religion (have a faith) of their own choice and receive respect in implementing the teachings they adhere to or believe in (J. Casanova, 2008)

Religious life in a country often reflects rich diversity but can also be a source of tension if not managed wisely. Indonesia, with its diverse beliefs and religions, faces major challenges in maintaining social stability and promoting harmony between religious communities. Amidst this complexity, the concept of religious moderation has become the foundation for building a solid foundation in this multicultural society.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research study is a literature review or library research. Library research is a study that uses journals, books and magazines related to the research study that is raised as primary data to be used as a reference source (Sustrisno Hadi, 1990) This research is presented in a descriptive form that has a research focus on books and literature studies that do not require field research (Mestika Zed, 2004). Then the type of research used in this study is a type of qualitative research so that it can produce information and also notes and descriptive data from the text being studied. In qualitative research, descriptive analysis is needed so that it can provide an explanation and also a clear, systematic, objective and also critical picture of Religious Moderation: building tolerance and harmony in diversity. Then the data sources used in this study are divided into two, namely primary data sources in the form of books that specifically discuss religious moderation such as the book on religious moderation compiled by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and secondary sources in the form of supporting books and journals related to this research (Halid and Wahyono 2023).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Understanding Religious Moderation**

Basically, moderation has actually been taught by Islam, which is reflected in the Koran (Halid 2020). In the Qur'an the term moderation is called Al-Wasathiyah, but there is also debate about the understanding of moderation in the current context. The word 'al-wasathiyah' comes from the word al-washth (with the letter sin which is

sukûn-kan) and al-wasath (with the letter sin which is fathah-kan) both of which are isim mashdâr from the verb wasatha. Simply put, the terminological understanding of Wasathiyyah comes from etymological meanings which mean a commendable characteristic that keeps someone from the tendency to behave in an extreme manner (Halid 2019).

From the basic understanding of wasathiyyah in these Arabic dictionaries, it can be concluded that the concept of wasathiyyah etymologically has two major meanings, namely: first, as a noun (ism) with a more concrete zharf pattern (hissî), namely as an intermediary or connector (interface/al-bainiyyah) between two things or two conditions or between two opposing sides. Second, it is more abstract (theoretical) which means fair, choice, main and best (superiority/al-khiyâr). Sheikh Raghîb al-Ashfahani (d.502 H) gave the meaning as a middle point, not too far to the right (ifrâth) and not too far to the left (tafrîth), which contains the meaning of nobility, equality and justice (al-„adl), (Raghîb al-Ashfahani, 1992)

The great scholar Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qardhawi (1982) explained, wasathiyyah which is also called at-tawâzun, is an effort to maintain a balance between two opposing or contradictory sides/ends/edges, so that one does not dominate and emphasize the other. For example, two opposing sides; spiritualism and materialism, individualism and socialism, realistic and idealistic understandings, and so on. Being balanced in responding to it is by giving a fair and proportional portion to each side/party without being excessive, either because it is too much or too little. People who have a just nature will always maintain balance and always be in the middle in handling or facing two problems or situations. The word wasath in Arabic indicates the middle of the two ends of something. This word has a good meaning, as the Prophet Muhammad SAW said in a hadith, "The best of affairs is awsathuhâ (the middle)"<sup>9</sup>, because those in the middle position will always be protected from defects or disgrace that usually affect the ends or edges. Basically, good qualities are accommodation and also the middle of two bad qualities, for example, the nature of liking to share which mediates between wastefulness and stinginess, then the nature of being brave which mediates between recklessness and fear (Halid and Ilyas 2017).

Thus, religious moderation is not merely suppressing or limiting a person's religious life, but rather more about managing social and religious dynamics so as not to cause conflict between religious communities. This concept emphasizes the importance of tolerance, respect for differences, and harmony between religious communities as part of national and state life..

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## **The Role of Government in Religious Moderation**

Religious moderation as one of the agendas of the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN), is an issue that is always faced in maintaining Indonesia as a pluralistic country with many religions in it. Religion must be able to be the unifier of the nation. Religious moderation as a religious character in Indonesia was also emphasized by the Main Expert Staff of Deputy V of the Presidential Staff Office (KSP) Rumadi Ahmad. Rumadi assessed that religious moderation is a way of being religious that is not excessive, not too far to the right or too far to the left. Thus, this is an important character that is developing in Indonesia as a country with a Muslim majority, religious moderation is not only shown for Muslims. "All religions, both large and local religions that are not found elsewhere, need protection as citizens. For that, at least four things need to be strengthened in religious moderation. Among them are through strengthening national commitment, strengthening tolerance, eroding radical religious understandings, and forming a way of being religious that is friendly to tradition. These strengthening, said Rumadi, are being fought for through the 2020-2024 RPJMN. (<https://www.ksp.go.id>).

The government has a crucial role in supporting religious moderation through policies and practices that are oriented towards tolerance and justice. In Indonesia, the government has taken steps to:

1. Religious Education: Incorporate religious education curricula that teach the values of tolerance and respect for religious diversity.
2. Policy Setting: Implement policies that protect religious freedom and encourage interfaith dialogue.
3. Law Enforcement: Enforce laws to protect religious minorities from discrimination and religious violence.
4. Promotion of Interfaith Dialogue: Support forums and activities that facilitate dialogue and cooperation between religious communities, (Halid 2023).

## **Challenges in Implementing Religious Moderation**

Strengthening religious moderation is one of the main indicators as an effort to build the nation's culture and character. Religious moderation is also one of the priorities in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the context of Indonesia, religious moderation can be used as a cultural strategy to maintain a peaceful, tolerant and diversity-respecting Indonesia., (Halid and Hidayah, Rofi 2022). The urgency of religious moderation in religious and national life includes: strengthening the essence of religious teachings in community life, managing the diversity of religious interpretations by enlightening

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religious life, maintaining Indonesianness within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Joni Tapingku, 2021). However, there are also challenges in the implementation of religious moderation, including: the development of excessive (extreme) religious views, attitudes and practices, which set aside human dignity; the development of subjective truth claims and the imposition of will on religious interpretations and the influence of economic and political interests have the potential to trigger conflict; the development of a religious spirit that is not in line with the love of the nation within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (Halid 2021c).

The challenges in implementing religious moderation are closely related to Freedom of Religion and Belief (KBB) in Indonesia. Freedom of Religion and Belief (KBB) as part of Human Rights (HAM) is a fundamental right inherent in every human being. Every individual has the freedom to choose and practice their religion or belief according to their conscience without having to be haunted by the fear of receiving threats, pressure, coercion from outside themselves, and also free from discriminatory treatment – whether carried out by religious majority groups in society or even by the state. In Indonesia, freedom of religion and belief is fully guaranteed by the constitution and a number of conventions that have been ratified and ratified by the Indonesian government into law. (Halid 2021a)

In the 1945 Constitution after the amendment, Article 28E paragraph (1) states that "Everyone is free to embrace religion and worship according to their religion". Article 28E paragraph (2) also states "Everyone has the right to freedom to believe in beliefs, express thoughts and attitudes according to their conscience". Meanwhile, Article 28I paragraph (1) of the constitution states "The right to life, the right not to be tortured, the right to freedom of thought and conscience, the right to religion, the right not to be enslaved, the right to be recognized as a person before the law and the right not to be prosecuted on the basis of retroactive law are human rights that cannot be reduced under any circumstances". In the same article in paragraph (2) it also emphasizes a similar spirit "Everyone has the right to be free from discriminatory treatment on any basis and has the right to receive protection against such discriminatory treatment". If we look at the explanation above, then in Islam there will be no such thing as extremism and radicalism, because in fact Islam teaches justice and balance. In its relationship and views on other religions, Islam applies a firm and polite principle that your religion is for you, my religion is for me in accordance with the word of Allah SWT which means: "For you is your religion and for me is my religion (al-Kafirun: 6). (Halid 2021b)

Considering Freedom of Religion and Belief (KBB), it is seen as being able to encourage the creation of social harmony because it elevates and respects human dignity. In addition, also remembering that harmony and harmony of religious and belief communities is not a stagnant condition, but is dynamic and is greatly influenced and depends on various factors. In addition to internal and relational factors from religious adherents to always maintain harmony and harmony in their relationships with adherents of other religions, it is also greatly influenced by external factors such as changes in social, political and economic conditions.

## CONCLUSION

Religious moderation plays a very important role in maintaining harmony and tolerance in Indonesia's diverse society. Integrating the values of moderation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is key to creating a generation that is able to appreciate differences, reject extremism, and promote peace. The government has a crucial role in supporting religious moderation through policies that support tolerance and justice. This includes updating the religious education curriculum, teacher training, and promoting interfaith dialogue. In addition, the role of media and technology cannot be ignored in spreading messages of moderation.

However, these efforts are not free from various challenges such as differences in religious interpretation and resistance to change. However, with support from various parties and the right approach, these challenges can be overcome.

Thus, religious moderation is not only a necessity, but also a foundation for building a more harmonious and tolerant future amidst the diversity of Indonesian society. This will ensure that the values of togetherness and unity are maintained, and form a more just and peaceful society.

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