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Abstract

Research on Religious Moderation: Challenges and the Role of Da'wah aims to examine the understanding of religious moderation in the context of a pluralistic society and to explore the role of da'wah in instilling a balanced, tolerant, and inclusive attitude towards religion. This research also seeks to identify the various challenges faced by da'wah in responding to the phenomena of extremism, radicalism, and religiously motivated social conflicts. The method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive-analytical approach. Data collection was carried out through literature studies, document analysis, and studies of socio-religious phenomena developing in society. The results of the study show that religious moderation plays an important role in maintaining social harmony and stability. Da'wah serves as a strategic means of religious education, value transformation, and community development. However, da'wah faces various challenges, such as the rampant spread of intolerant ideas through digital media, low religious literacy, and the politicization of religion. The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on moderate preaching as a preventive measure against extremism in the digital age. As a result, this study provides recommendations for preachers, preaching institutions, and policymakers to develop adaptive, dialogical preaching strategies that are oriented toward strengthening religious moderation.

Keywords: Challenges, Religious Moderation, Role of Da'wah

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INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is an approach to understanding and practicing religious teachings in a balanced, inclusive, and tolerant manner, which aims to avoid extremism and promote social harmony amid diversity (Negeri, 2024). This concept is not intended to limit religious freedom, but rather emphasizes a proportional interpretation of religious teachings, respect for differences, and rejection of violence in the name of belief (Dan et al., 2024). In the current era of globalization, religious moderation is crucial, especially in multicultural countries such as Indonesia, where six official religions coexist with thousands of local customs.

Religious moderation is a concept and strategy for maintaining a balance between practicing religious teachings and respecting differences (Millah & Nasution, 2024). This concept is not an attempt to change religious teachings, but rather to moderate religious practices so that they do not fall into extremism, whether too strict (radical) or too loose (liberal) (R. P. Nasution, 2022). The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia defines religious moderation as a religious perspective, attitude, and behavior that takes a middle position (*tawasuth*), is fair (*i'tidal*), and is not excessive (*ghuluw*) in practicing religious teachings (Chasanah et al., 2023). This principle of moderation has been implied in the Qur'an through the term *ummatan wasathan* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 143), which requires Muslims to be balanced and set an example in upholding justice.

In Indonesia, religious moderation is becoming increasingly important with the emergence of various phenomena of intolerance, radicalism, and social polarization that have the potential to threaten national unity (Gule, 2025). Cases such as the attack on a non-Muslim house used as a place of worship in Padang Sarai, West Sumatra, and the case of compulsory headscarves for non-Muslim schoolgirls in Padang show that there are still strong indications of groups seeking to destroy the spirit of diversity (Meilani & Fatmawati, 2022). Data from the Social and Cultural Directorate of the Indonesian National Police's Intelligence and Security Agency also records a high number of cases of intolerance in Indonesia. The urgency of religious moderation is increasingly pressing amid the rise of online radicalism, intolerance, and political polarization that exploits religion (Perdamaian, 2024). With 87% of the population being Muslim and six official religions, this concept is a pillar of Pancasila, especially the first principle, which guarantees freedom of religion while maintaining unity.

Based on the above description, this study aims to comprehensively examine religious moderation with a focus on the following topics what is the understanding of religious moderation, and what is the history of religious moderation in Indonesia, and what is the comprehensive basis for religious moderation, and what are the characteristics of religious moderation, and what is the urgency and nature of religious moderation, and what are the challenges, roles, and strategies of da'wah in strengthening the values of religious moderation.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a library study sourced from literature materials. The concrete steps taken were an in-depth exploration of primary data (books and articles related to religious moderation) and secondary data (journals and other relevant scientific sources) (Agustiniingsih et al., 2024). The data collection method was carried out by collecting and sorting various literature discussing religious moderation (Royyan & Fathul, 2022). Furthermore, the data was

analyzed using descriptive-analytical methods through deductive and inductive approaches to process the data obtained so that a conclusion could be drawn (Didik & Membentuk, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is a central concept in contemporary religious studies, especially in multicultural countries such as Indonesia (Ismail, 2025). According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), religious moderation has two main meanings, namely the reduction of violence and the avoidance of extremism (Asrori, 2024). This concept is in line with the principle of wasathiyah in Islam, which is mentioned in the Qur'an QS. Al-Baqarah: 143, where Muslims are described as a moderate people who are just and balanced (Ferdino et al., 2024).

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَّءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ١٤٣

Meaning: And thus We have made you (Muslims) a just and chosen people so that you may be witnesses over mankind and so that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness over you. And We did not establish the Qiblah which you now face except to distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who turn away. And indeed, the change of the qiblah was very difficult, except for those whom Allah had guided; and Allah will not waste your faith. Verily, Allah is Most Merciful and Most Compassionate to mankind (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143).

In terms of terminology, religious moderation is a way of viewing, behaving, and practicing religion in communal life by positioning oneself in the middle, always being fair, and not being extreme in religion (Putri & Fadlullah, 2022). This is in line with the opinion that Islam is wasathiyah, which is the middle ground between two extremes that are neither excessive nor neglectful (Zakiah & Nursikin, 2023). In the Qur'an, it is referred to as ummatan wasathan, which is a just and balanced community.

According to Rahmat Hidayat, religious moderation can be interpreted as being fair and balanced, fair and balanced in attitude, fair and balanced in decision-making, and fair and balanced in all matters (Ritonga, 2025). A fair individual is able to position things correctly, while a fair and balanced moderate individual will not act carelessly and respond to everything (U. Islam et al., 2023). This shows that religious moderation is an attitude that is not excessive in all matters (U. Islam et al., 2022). Wahyudi explains that religious moderation is a proportional way of practicing Islam; it is neither extreme textualism that closes the mind, nor liberalism that rejects revelation. This is the middle path as exemplified by the Prophet and passed down by the classical scholars.

Religious moderation (wasathiyah Islam) is a fair and proportional attitude that balances the world and the hereafter, the physical and the spiritual, as well as reason and the heart (Makassar, 2023). Religious moderation also means being moderate in religion, namely making Islam a blessing for the universe, rejecting violence and promoting tolerance as a manifestation of true Islamic teachings (Alamin et al., 2024). A moderate attitude not only reflects a person's spiritual maturity, but also becomes a prerequisite for the creation of harmony and integrity in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), so that a proper understanding of religious moderation becomes crucial.

Thus, it can be concluded that religious moderation is an attitude or behavior that is steadfast in one's own religion but respects the beliefs and opinions of others, being balanced in religion like a referee in a match (Kajian et al., 2024). Religious moderation is not just a theoretical concept, but a way of life that supports the vision of a harmonious Indonesia.

History of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

Religious moderation began to take root since the introduction of Islam to the archipelago. The early historical phase (13th to 17th centuries AD) saw Islam spread through peaceful means, trade, and cultural acculturation, rather than military conquest (Amiruddin et al., 2024). For example, the model of cultural acculturation in a multicultural society, where Islamic missionaries, especially the Wali Songo, practiced a very moderate and adaptive model of *da'wah* (Walisongo & Historis, 2025). They did not destroy existing local traditions (such as *wayang*, *gamelan*, and architecture), but rather purified and integrated them with Islamic values (Maulidin & Nawawi, 2024). This approach demonstrates a form of cultural moderation that rejects extremism (*ghuluw*) and rigid formalization.

Kh. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) summarized this principle by stating that Islam did not come to eliminate local culture, but to purify it (Mukhlis & Syaifuddin, 2024). During the early Islamic kingdoms in the archipelago, such as Samudera Pasai, Demak, and Mataram, a tolerant system was generally applied to communities that still embraced Hinduism, Buddhism, or local beliefs, laying the foundation for a diverse and pluralistic society (Mayang et al., 2024). The Muslim founding fathers of the nation chose to establish the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila, rather than an Islamic theocracy, demonstrating their commitment to nationalism (*Mītsāq al-Wathan*): This decision, which removed seven words from the Jakarta Charter in order to maintain national unity, was the highest political commitment to moderation and inclusivity.

As contemporary times evolve, modernist thinkers such as Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) and Syafii Maarif reinforce the idea of moderation by encouraging Muslims to develop an open understanding of modernity and local culture (Harahap et al., 2024). They emphasize the importance of Islamic ethical values and substance (justice, humanity) over political formalities (Jaya et al., 2024). In the contemporary era, religious moderation has been institutionalized by the state as a response to the increasing threat of radicalism and intolerance, including through the Ministry of Religious Affairs' (Kemenag) policy of officially establishing religious moderation as a national priority program (Taufiq & Alkholid, 2021).

This policy aims to mainstream the values of *wasathiyyah* throughout all elements of society, including education and bureaucracy, as a bulwark against polarization and extremism (Fauziyah et al., 2025). Yudian Wahyudi emphasizes that this step is a continuation of classical moderation in the context of modern Islam in Indonesia (Sugitanata et al., 2023). Thus, the history of religious moderation in Indonesia is a history of dialogue, acculturation, and national commitment that has always placed moderation as a cultural and political strategy to maintain harmony amid diversity.

Comprehensive Foundation of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation or *wasathiyyah* is a concept of balance and justice in understanding and practicing religious teachings (Moch Zainal Arifin Hasan & Muhammad Rizal Ansori, 2024). In Islam, this principle is not new, but has become the spirit of Islamic teachings themselves. According to Hidayat, the term moderate actually refers to three things, namely: 1). A religious term sourced from the Quran and Surah al-Baqarah 143, which reveals *ummatan wasatan*. 2). The practices carried out by the Prophet and his companions during the spread of Islam in Arabia. 3). The spread of Islam in Indonesia by the Wali Songo to the animist and dynamic communities of the Malay lands. This was then inherited by several

Islamic organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as figures who emerged from these two organizations.

Religious moderation is key to maintaining harmony, tolerance, and peace in a diverse society. In line with this view, Yusuf al-Qaradawi states that wasathiyyah is a balance between two extremes: between excess (ifrāt) and neglect (tafrīt), and placing things in their proper place. Thus, religious moderation is a manifestation of fairness, proportionality, and balance as taught by Islam.

1. Theological basis (the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of scholars)

a. The basis of the Qur'an and Hadith

The concept of moderation (wasathiyyah) is explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an, including QS. Al-Ma'idah [5]: 8: about being fair, QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13: Allah created differences so that humans would get to know and understand each other, QS. Al-Furqan [25]: 67: Describing the principle of balance (tawazun) in social and economic behavior, namely not being excessive or stingy, QS. Luqman [31]: 19: Emphasizing the importance of simplicity (iqtishad) and a wise attitude in interacting (not being arrogant and being gentle). QS. Al-An'am [6]: 108: Demonstrates practical tolerance by prohibiting the reviling of other religions' deities so as not to cause conflict. From the above verses, it can be concluded that the concept of religious moderation in the Qur'an covers three important things, namely justice and balance, tolerance and respect for diversity, as well as modesty and wisdom in attitude (Dharmawangsa, n.d.).

In the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad, there are many hadiths about religious moderation. For example, the concept of religious moderation (wasathiyyah) in Islam is not only sourced from the Qur'an, but is fundamentally embodied in the Sunnah and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (Fakhurokhman et al., 2022). The Prophet's hadiths serve as normative explanations and practical guidelines for applying balance, justice, and rejection of extremism (ghuluw) in daily life. For example, in the hadith about avoiding excessive behavior (ghuluw). The main foundation of moderation is reflected in the Prophet's prohibition of excessive behavior in religion (ghuluw), which is the root cause of fanaticism and radicalism. Hadith Prohibition of ghuluw The Prophet SAW said:

إِيَّاكُمْ وَالْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ، فَإِنَّمَا أَهْلَكَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ الْغُلُوَّ فِي الدِّينِ

Meaning: Avoid excessive behavior in religion (ghuluw), because what destroyed those before you was excessive behavior in religion (HR. Ibn Majah, no. 3029).

This hadith instills the theological principle that even the slightest extreme attitude can destroy the essence of religious teachings and bring down civilization, as happened to previous nations. Furthermore, in terms of spiritual balance and reality, the Prophet SAW emphasized the importance of balance (tawazun) between the rights of Allah (spiritual worship) and the rights of oneself and social rights (worldly realities) (Ambon, n.d.). For example, a hadith narrated from Anas bin Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, tells of three companions who intended to go to extremes in worship: one wanted to pray all night long, another wanted to fast all year without breaking his fast, and the third planned not to marry. Hearing this, the Prophet SAW rebuked them, saying: "... By Allah, I am the most fearful and most pious of Allah among you, but I fast and break my fast, I pray (at night) and sleep, and I marry women. Whoever hates my Sunnah is not of my community (HR. Bukhari, no. 5063; Muslim, No. 1401).

The Prophet's practice: This story is a fundamental example of moderation. The Prophet emphasized that worship must be carried out proportionally, without exceeding human capabilities (fitrah). There are many other examples taught by the Prophet to justify the importance of understanding religious moderation, both within religions and between religious communities. In addition to the Naqli and 'Aqli arguments, scholars also have opinions regarding religious moderation.

b. The basis of *ijtihad* and the thinking of scholars

Classical scholars and contemporary Islamic thinkers agree that *wasathiyyah* is the moral and spiritual foundation of Islam (Ismail, 2025). Classical exegetes, such as Imam al-Ṭabari (d. 923 CE), interpreted *ummatan wasathan* as a just community, neither excessive like the Christians nor neglectful of religious teachings like the Jews. Similarly, Imam al-Razi (d. 1209 AD) saw *wasath* as justice and balance that made Muslims role models. Even Imam al-Ghazali (d. 1111 AD) in *Ihya 'Ulum al-Din* emphasized that the middle path is a characteristic of true wisdom, placing goodness between two evils, such as generosity between stinginess and extravagance.

This view is shared by contemporary scholars who see moderation as an urgent necessity in the era of globalization. Yusuf al-Qaradawi (emphasizes that *wasathiyyah* is the most prominent characteristic of Islam, making it a methodology for thinking and interacting with the modern world. Sheikh Ahmad al-Thayyeb of Al-Azhar adds that moderation is the key to world peace because Islam rejects violence in the name of religion (Agama-agama, 2025). In Indonesia, figures such as KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) view moderation as socio-cultural *ijtihad*, in which Islam blends with and purifies local culture without losing its principles. KH. Said Aqil Siradj and Haedar Nashir see moderation as an expression of Islam that spreads mercy and brings benefits to all of humanity. In summary, Yudian Wahyudi concludes that religious moderation is a proportional way of practicing Islam, balancing between text (not extreme textualism) and reason (not liberalism that rejects revelation).

The concept of *wasathiyyah* has been firmly embedded in Islamic scholarly tradition through a balanced approach between text (*nash*) and context (*waqi'*) by the four imams of the *madhhab* (An et al., 2021). Imam Abu Hanifah (d. 767 AD) demonstrated rational moderation by prioritizing reason (*ra'yu*) and analogy (*qiyas*) in determining law, balancing compliance with *nash* and consideration of social realities. He rejected legal fanaticism that limited the interests of the people. Meanwhile, Imam Malik bin Anas (d. 795 AD) displayed traditional and social moderation by making the practices of the people of Medina a source of law, showing his appreciation for tradition and the needs of the local community, as long as they remained in line with *sharia*.

Imam al-Shafi'i (d. 820 CE) gave birth to methodological moderation by establishing the science of *usul al-fiqh*, which mediated between the textualist (Ahl al-Hadith) and rationalist (Ahl al-Ra'yi) groups. His approach combined textual authority with the importance of human *ijtihad* (Rusdi, 2025). Subsequently, Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (d. 855 CE) demonstrated spiritual and moral moderation, being steadfast in his beliefs but gentle in his character, rejecting violence and encouraging people to be patient in the face of injustice, promoting peace within the framework of faith (Ibn al-Jawzi, *Manaqib al-Imam Ahmad*).

Alwi Shihab concluded that these four major schools of thought have demonstrated how religion can be practiced with a spirit of moderation, rejecting violence, respecting differences, and upholding the welfare of the people. Thus, religious moderation is not a compromise of values, but rather an expression of the integrity of Islamic teachings that strike a balance between spiritual, moral, and social aspects (Mustang, 2024).

2. Philosophical, legal, and regulatory foundations

The concept of religious moderation in Indonesia is not only rooted in Islamic theological teachings (*wasathiyyah*) but is also strongly supported by the philosophical foundations of the state and legal instruments and legislation that guarantee justice and tolerance amid diversity (Pikahulan et al., 2025).

a. The philosophical foundation of the state

Philosophically, religious moderation in Indonesia is based on the national consensus enshrined in the foundations of the state, which strikes a balance between religious and national dimensions (Madinah et al., 2025). Pancasila and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika: Religious moderation is a manifestation of the values of Pancasila, particularly the First Principle (Belief in One God) and the Second Principle (Just and Civilized Humanity). The first principle philosophically guarantees freedom of religion and rejects the imposition of beliefs, while the second principle demands justice and equality for all citizens regardless of religious background. The principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity) provides a social framework that requires tolerance (tasamuh) and respect for differences.

b. Legal basis and legislation

Religious moderation is enshrined in the highest legal basis in the 1945 Constitution and implementing regulations, including (Ghofarrozin & Janah, 2024):

- 1) The 1945 Constitution: The highest legal basis is found in Article 29 Paragraph (2) of the 1945 Constitution, which states: The state guarantees the freedom of each citizen to embrace their respective religions and to worship according to their religion and beliefs. This article explicitly guarantees the right and freedom of religion, which is at the core of moderation, namely recognizing and protecting the rights of minorities to practice their beliefs.
- 2) Law No. 39 of 1999 on Human Rights: Article 22 Paragraph (1) affirms that everyone is free to embrace their respective religion and to worship according to their religion. This law reinforces that religious tolerance and non-discrimination are part of human rights that must be protected by the state.

Ministry of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) on strategic plans and religious moderation: religious moderation has been officially designated as a national priority program through Ministry of Religious Affairs policies, including (Taufiq & Alkholid, 2021):

- 1) PMA Number 23 of 2017 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2015-2019: This document formally includes Strengthening Religious Moderation as one of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' priority programs.
- 2) PMA Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020-2024: This PMA continues and strengthens the Strengthening of Religious Moderation as one of the seven National Priority Programs. The main objective is to prevent extreme religious views, both radical (ghuluw) and liberal (tafrith), and to maintain harmony among the people.

With this philosophical and legal foundation, religious moderation in Indonesia has a very strong position, serving as an ethical and legal guideline for all citizens and government officials in managing diversity because as a pluralistic country, it must increase understanding of respecting differences, the willingness to live together in a diverse society, and the promotion of inclusive values (Theguh & Bisri, 2023).

The Urgency and Characteristics of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation (wasathiyyah) in Indonesia is a strategic agenda promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) (Sazali & Mustafa, 2023). This concept aims to manage diversity, prevent extremism, and maintain national unity. Therefore, religious moderation is a very important endeavor in Indonesia. Religious moderation is particularly urgent in Indonesia, which is a multicultural country with various potential internal conflicts (Sari, 2022). This urgency is driven by several key factors. According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, the urgency of religious moderation includes (P. A. Islam & Garut, 2022):

1. The threat of extremism and radicalism: Moderation serves as a counter to extremism and radicalism, preventing rigid interpretations of religion (ghuluw) that lead to violence in the name of faith.
2. Social polarization: This concept is important for reducing political and social polarization that often exploits religious sentiment, thereby preserving the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and the principle of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity).
3. Strengthening national commitment: Moderation requires every religious adherent to balance religious commitment with national commitment. This means practicing religion optimally while respecting the constitution and the noble values of the nation (Pancasila).
4. Ensuring harmony and unity: Moderation is the key to creating harmony between and within religious communities, where differences are seen as a source of richness (sunnatullah) that must be managed through tolerance (tasamuh) and dialogue.

Meanwhile, according to Yudian Wahyudi, the urgency of religious moderation is as a foundation of humanity and justice: affirming that religious moderation is a proportional way of practicing Islam, upholding justice, balance, and humanity. Without moderation, religious practices have the potential to sacrifice human values for the sake of narrow ideologies (Manno, 2025). Azyumardi Azra views moderation as a manifestation of substantive Islam that places justice and tolerance as the main values of civilization. Religious moderation serves as a national commitment (mītsāq al-wathan) to maintain the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, especially in the face of social polarization arising from differences in beliefs.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) has formulated ten key characteristics of religious moderation that should guide the perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors of Indonesians. These ten characteristics are derived from the universal and contextual values of wasathiyyah (Amalia, 2025):

1. Tawassuth (moderation) is taking a middle path, neither excessive (ghuluw) nor neglecting religious teachings (tafrith).
2. Tawazun (balance) is being able to balance between the spiritual dimension (ukhrawi) and the worldly dimension (duniawi), as well as between individual rights and social obligations.
3. I'tidal (straightforward and firm) means being fair, straightforward, and firm in upholding the truth, without leaning towards the interests of certain groups or factions.
4. Tasamuh (tolerant) means respecting differences in beliefs and religious practices of others, especially in the context of interfaith life, without compromising the principles of faith.
5. Musawah (egalitarianism) is upholding the equal rights and dignity of every human being (egalitarianism), rejecting all forms of discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or social status.
6. Syura (consultation) is resolving problems and making decisions through consultation and dialogue, upholding the principle of participation in society.
7. Ishlah (improvement and reform) is always striving to maintain goodness and make improvements, whether in the personal, social, or national spheres.
8. Awlawiyyah (priority): Being able to determine priorities, giving precedence to things that are more important or beneficial to the welfare of the people and the nation (maslahat 'ammah).
9. Tatawwur wa Ibtikar (dynamic and innovative) is being open to the developments of the times, dynamic, and capable of innovation for progress, as long as it does not conflict with the basic principles of religion.

10. Civilized (civilized/noble character), which means upholding noble morals and ethics (akhlakul karimah) in every interaction and behavior, making religion a source of civilized character building.

Overall, these ten characteristics serve as a practical guide for religious communities in Indonesia to practice their faith in a contextual and inclusive manner, thereby becoming agents of peace and harmony, as all religions teach love, harmony, tolerance, and equality (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024).

Characteristics of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an important strategy in maintaining religious harmony and strengthening national unity amid Indonesia's diversity. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has compiled four main characteristics that serve as indicators of religious moderation, namely: commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Amran et al., n.d.).

1. National commitment

National commitment is a religious attitude and behavior that contributes positively to loyalty to the country and acceptance of the national consensus. A person who is moderate in religion will place religious values in harmony with the spirit of nationalism (Saumantri, 2022). National commitment means accepting Pancasila, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, and the constitution as a common agreement in the life of the nation and state (Nkri & Bela, 2020). As Lukman Hakim said, from the perspective of religious moderation, carrying out obligations as a religious believer is the same as carrying out obligations as a citizen.

A person's perspective, attitude, and mindset in religion greatly influence their commitment to their nation and state (Yanti, 2023). Someone who has a moderate attitude towards religion will make religion, ideology, and the foundations of the state the basis for their daily life (Mana et al., 2023). This means that moderate individuals will fairly position religion and their nation in their daily lives without favoring one over the other. Thus, it can be concluded that the spirit of nationalism is a manifestation of the practice of religious teachings that foster love for the homeland and maintain the integrity of the nation and state.

2. Tolerance

Tolerance is a key characteristic of religious moderation that reflects respect for differences in belief and freedom of religion. Tolerance is a tangible manifestation of the Islamic principle of *rahmatan lil-'alamin*, because through tolerance, communities can live together peacefully without denying their religious identity. As explained by (Hidayat), religious tolerance means giving space to others to have religious beliefs and practice their religion without interfering with them (Kesadaran et al., 2025). Religious tolerance applies not only to those of different faiths but also to those of the same faith (Santoso et al., 2022). Interfaith and intrafaith tolerance are practiced within certain boundaries based on the religion professed.

Interfaith tolerance does not mean following the teachings of other religions for the sake of unity and harmony between religions (M. M. Nasution, 2021). Interfaith tolerance is limited to mutual respect, not interfering with, insulting, or even harassing other religions on the grounds that they are wrong or misguided. For example, Muslims do not prohibit Christians from celebrating Christmas. Christians also do not invite Muslims to celebrate Christmas or wish them a Merry Christmas under the pretext of tolerance. Thus, the realization of tolerance, both between religions and within religions, will suppress radicalism that can destroy the integrity of the nation and state.

3. Anti-violence

Anti-violence describes a stance of rejection towards all forms of violence, both physical and verbal, in conveying religious teachings and in social activities. In the current context, violence is better known as radicalism or extremism, which can be understood as an ideology or belief that seeks to bring about change in the political and social system through the use of violence in the name of religion (Ilmiah & Pendidikan, 2024). According to Hidayat, violence can be verbal, physical, or mental. However, the essence of violence in this case is the attitude and actions of a person or group that uses various forms of violence to bring about change desired by a particular group (Am, 2022).

Radicalism can occur due to perceptions of injustice and oppression experienced by a particular individual or group, which are managed ideologically by inciting hatred towards groups considered to be the source of injustice and parties that threaten their identity (Remaja, 2023). The injustice referred to here is social, political, economic, and other forms of injustice that trigger radical attitudes and actions, even terrorism.

Thus, anti-violence is one of the religious attitudes that is in accordance with the meaning of Rahmatan Lil'alamin, that Islam is a religion that is a blessing for all of creation. Therefore, there should be no actions or attitudes that violate the meaning of Islam itself, namely Islam that is safe and saves, not Islam that appears harsh and cruel. Muslims are expected to be a source of safety and peace for their environment wherever they are (Millah & Nasution, 2024). They should prioritize the values of peace and deliberation in dealing with differences. A moderate person rejects the use of violence in preaching, social life, and politics, and prioritizes peaceful and polite methods (Muthowah et al., 2025).

4. Accommodation of local culture

Accommodation of local culture is a form of respect for the values and traditions that exist within society, as long as they do not conflict with the basic teachings of religion (Mukhtar, 2021). The Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes that this attitude means respecting local culture and traditions as long as they do not conflict with the basic teachings of religion (Riset & Agama, 2025). Respect for local culture is a hallmark of religious moderation in Indonesia, because religion is not present to negate local wisdom, but to enrich and guide it to be in harmony with universal human values.

In general, moderate people tend to be more accepting of local traditions and cultures in their religious behavior as long as they do not conflict with the core teachings of religion (R. P. Nasution, 2022). Individuals who are increasingly friendly towards local culture usually exhibit a moderate attitude in their religious practices. In a multicultural nation and state, it is impossible to live without direct contact with local culture, because culture existed long before Islam arrived in Indonesia. Even the spread of religion by early scholars, including the Wali Songo, was done through cultural channels.

Based on the above information, it is clear that these four characteristics show that religious moderation is not intended to weaken a person's belief in their religion, but rather to emphasize how religious teachings can be practiced fairly, balanced, and contextually in the life of the nation and state. By integrating the values of nationality, tolerance, peace, and respect for local culture, religious moderation becomes an important foundation for the creation of social harmony and national stability (Amtiran & Kriswibowo, 2024).

Challenges, Roles, and Strategies of Da'wah in Strengthening the Values of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation transcends mere theological concepts; it is a cultural and social da'wah movement that aims to build a peaceful, tolerant, and just life for the people (Fi, 2024). In today's global and multicultural context, da'wah must play an active role in strengthening the values of wasathiyyah (balance) amid the currents of extremism and secularism. Religious moderation is a middle ground in understanding and practicing Islam contextually, without losing the essence of divine values. Thus, the da'wah of moderation not only conveys religious teachings, but also brings to life universal human values that are in harmony with the spirit of rahmatan lil-'alamin (Bakar, n.d.).

1. The challenge of moderate preaching in a multicultural context

The implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia faces major challenges that require a strategic response, especially for scholars/preachers who are faced with the following issues (Bedagai, 2024):

- a. Religious extremism and ideological polarization: The rise of extremist ideologies and intolerance rooted in narrow textual interpretations threatens national harmony. Yusuf al-Qaradawi asserts that extremism (ghuluw) is a deviation from the spirit of Islam, which teaches moderation. This challenge is exacerbated by social media, which accelerates the spread of radical narratives, making it a new arena for ideological struggle.
- b. The crisis of role models and identity politics: The strengthening of social polarization due to religion-based identity politics, in which religion is often used as a tool for political mobilization, demands a central role for dai. M. Quraish Shihab reminds us that religion should not be used as a tool for division. In addition, the crisis of role models, in which religious leaders are caught up in hate speech, threatens the moral credibility of moderate preaching. Nurcholish Madjid has warned that religion can be a source of conflict if it is misused by those who do not understand its essence.

2. The role of da'wah in instilling religious moderation in a multicultural country

Da'wah is an important instrument for maintaining balance in religious understanding and practice in society. In the pluralistic context of Indonesia, da'wah serves as a medium for instilling the value of wasathiyyah through four main roles (Hanum, 2025):

- a. Means of educating moderation and character: Da'wah teaches balance, avoids extremism, and instills the importance of tolerance among religious communities. This is in line with Rahmat Hidayat's view, which places religious moderation as a new direction for systematic Islamic Religious Education (PAI), aiming to strengthen students' moderate attitudes and behavior amid ideological pressures.
- b. Media for strengthening brotherhood (ukhuwah): Da'wah strengthens three layers of brotherhood: ukhuwah Islamiyah (among fellow Muslims), ukhuwah wathaniyah (among fellow countrymen), and ukhuwah insaniyah (among fellow human beings). This approach is a manifestation of the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, who built the community of Medina on the spirit of interfaith togetherness.
- c. Filter and counter radical narratives: Through da'wah based on knowledge, rationality, and wisdom, preachers can act as a counterbalance to the tide of radicalism and provocation in public and digital spaces.
- d. Social and civilizational transformation: Da'wah should not merely aim to increase the number of followers, but must be oriented towards the development of a civilization that prioritizes ethics, social justice, and nationalism, in line with the principles of Pancasila.

3. Strategies for strengthening moderate preaching

To make preaching an effective means of implementing religious moderation, a comprehensive strategy that is adaptive to the social, cultural, and technological realities in Indonesia is needed. This strategy must focus on substance, method, and institutional approaches (Society, 2025):

a. Cultural and dialogical approach

Moderate da'wah must prioritize a cultural and dialogical approach (wisdom and good advice) rather than confrontational methods. Azyumardi Azra (emphasizes that cultural da'wah has proven to be more effective in building public awareness in the archipelago because it is able to accommodate local traditions (cultural balance) without losing the principles of faith. This approach is in line with the example of the Wali Songo, who made acculturation the main method of spreading peaceful Islam in Indonesia.

b. Optimization of digital da'wah (cyber da'wah)

The use of social media, YouTube, podcasts, and other digital platforms is essential to expand the reach of moderate da'wah. In the digital age, the public sphere is dominated by fast-paced information, so young preachers need to be empowered to create positive and engaging content that can counter extremist narratives. Ahmad Najib Burhani emphasizes that moderate da'wah must enter the digital space as a new arena for ideological struggle, because extremist groups often dominate these platforms more quickly.

c. Collaboration between mass organizations and educational institutions

Strengthening religious moderation requires institutional synergy. Collaboration between Islamic mass organizations (such as NU and Muhammadiyah), universities, and the government is very important. The Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasizes the need for synergy between da'wah and character education in schools and Islamic boarding schools to achieve national moderation targets. Formal educational institutions, from schools to universities, are strategic platforms for shaping moderate understanding from an early age.

d. Strengthening the moderation curriculum in Islamic preaching and educational institutions

Islamic preaching and educational institutions need to revise their curricula to explicitly integrate the values of moderation, ensuring that preachers are able to preach in a scientific and contextual manner. This is highly relevant to Rahmat Hidayat's view, which places religious moderation as a new direction for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) that must be strengthened in terms of attitude. This strategy finds its concrete implementation in the Merdeka Curriculum at the high school/vocational school level (Phase F), where religious moderation material is mandatory to ensure that students have wasathiyah behavior, are able to reject violence, and are committed to nationalism.

e. Empowerment of communities and local leaders

Community-based da'wah has proven to be more effective because it is able to adapt the message to local cultural values (local wisdom). Empowering local leaders (local champions) and community wisdom can create an environment that is resistant to foreign transnational ideologies. KH. Abdurrahman Wahid emphasized the need for Islam to blend with local culture, showing that da'wah must be adapted to grassroots social realities.

CONCLUSION

The general results of the study on religious moderation: challenges and the role of da'wah confirm that religious moderation plays a fundamental role in creating harmony and maintaining social stability amid a diverse society. Da'wah is positioned as an important instrument in the process of instilling religious values that are proportional, respectful of differences, and inclusive. However, the implementation of da'wah oriented towards moderation still faces a number of obstacles, such as the increasingly massive spread of extremist and intolerant discourse through digital platforms, low levels of religious understanding among some groups in society, and the use of religion for political interests that has the potential to widen social polarization. This situation requires that da'wah not only focus on normative aspects, but also be delivered contextually and be able to respond to developing social dynamics.

Referring to the results of the study, the recommended follow-up efforts are to improve the competence of preachers and da'wah institutions so that they are able to convey the message of religious moderation in an innovative and communicative manner, supported by digital literacy. In addition, synergy between religious leaders, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the government needs to be strengthened in order to create a da'wah environment that is conducive to strengthening the values of moderation. The development of a da'wah curriculum that is responsive to the times, the intelligent and responsible use of digital media, and the implementation of policies that support the dissemination of peaceful and inclusive religious discourse are strategic steps to curb the growth of extremism while strengthening social harmony in community life.

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