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Religious Moderation: A Systematic Literature Review

Muljono Damopolii[1]*, M. Shabir Umar[1], Muhammad Alqadri Burga[2], Muh. Idhul Awal[1]
[1]Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia
[2]Universitas Islam Makassar, Indonesia
Correspondence: E-mail: muljono.damopolii@uin-alauddin.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This systematic review critically examines existing research on religious moderation, focusing on its nomenclature, typologies, and scope. The study employs the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to enhance transparency in the progression from data collection to article screening. The findings indicate that religious moderation, a strategic initiative of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, encompasses the perspectives, attitudes, and behaviours of religious adherents. Its primary objective is to promote social harmony and foster inter- and intra-religious tolerance, thereby safeguarding the unity of the Republic of Indonesia. A total of 21 studies were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria. The scope of research on religious moderation is classified into five distinct scholarly domains: (1) education, (2) social sciences, (3) communication studies, (4) organizational culture, and (5) history. The study underscores the imperative for coordinated efforts between the Ministry of Religious Affairs and other governmental entities to mainstream religious moderation, mainly as institutions unaffiliated with the Ministry are at a higher risk of fostering radicalism. Additionally, future research should prioritize conducting empirical surveys on religious moderation within specific regions or institutions to generate evaluative data that will inform and support the Ministry's strategic initiatives for embedding the values of religious moderation across diverse settings.

A R T I C L E   I N F O

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its multicultural society, integrates religious attitudes as a core value of the nation's cultural character. This reflects that although Indonesia is not a theocratic state, religion has become an integral part of its national identity and serves as a foundation for the formulation of social and legal norms (Faisal, 2020). Notably, several Middle Eastern countries are looking to Indonesia as a model for fostering tolerance and religious attitudes as part of their efforts to promote peace within their own nations (Pektas, 2021; Sholeh, 2017).

Unfortunately, religious life in Indonesia has recently been marred by social conflicts driven by the misuse of religion (Mahmudah et al., 2023; Santoso et al., 2024). These conflicts are primarily fueled by exclusive religious attitudes and the politicization of religion, often instigated by both political and religious elites (Nashir, 2022; Pajarianto et al., 2022). Consequently, phenomena such as extremism, radicalism, hate speech, identity politics, and the breakdown of interfaith relations have become increasingly prevalent (Yulianto, 2020; Akhmadi, 2019). In response, there is a pressing need to strengthen moderate religious understanding to counter ideologies that contradict the nation's identity (Nopriansyah & Faizal, 2023).

The concept of religious moderation in Islam has its roots in the very inception of the religion itself (Nurdin, 2021). It is grounded in the principle of *wasathiyyah,* which signifies a middle path that rejects extremism, advocates for peace, promotes tolerance, and encourages the cultivation and practice of noble values (Faisal, 2020). This principle allows for continuous modification and renewal in the pursuit of goodness (Hasan, 2021). In Islam, moderation is understood as an openness to diversity, viewing differences as part of *sunnatullah* (the natural order of God) and a blessing for the community. Furthermore, moderate Islam is characterized by its refusal to condemn individuals or groups who hold differing opinions (Habibie et al., 2021). This perspective fosters brotherhood not only on the basis of faith and national identity but also on shared humanity (Hefni, 2020; Sutrisno, 2019). Thus, religious moderation does not compromise core beliefs but rather constructs a framework that bridges differences and strengthens tolerance and cooperation across religious boundaries (Nashir, 2022).

The concept of religious moderation was formally introduced by the Indonesian government in 2019 as a foundational pillar of national and religious identity, spearheaded by the Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Syaifuddin (Faiz, 2023). However, the concept remains a subject of debate, centered on two key issues: (1) The accommodation of local culture within religious practices is still often conflated with religious syncretism, leading to misunderstandings; and (2) Some groups reject the term "moderation" and prefer the term *wasathiyyah,* arguing that moderation is influenced by Western perspectives, whereas *wasathiyyah* is viewed as an authentically Islamic concept (Nashir, 2022). Furthermore, the definition of religious moderation remains diverse and lacks a universally accepted interpretation that can encapsulate the full meaning of the concept (Awadin & Witro, 2023).

The discourse on religious moderation has drawn the attention of numerous researchers, who have explored it from various approaches and perspectives. For instance, Samsul (2020) investigates the role of teachers in introducing religious moderation to students. This study employs a literature review methodology combined with an analytical descriptive approach. The findings suggest that religious moderation can be integrated into the teaching and learning process through methods such as discussions, group work, and excursions. These methods facilitate teachers in effectively communicating the importance of diversity, fostering respect for others, valuing differing opinions, and promoting tolerance (Samsul, 2020).

Sutrisno's (2019) research explores the implementation of religious moderation in educational institutions. This literature-based study concludes that in order to accommodate religious diversity within a multicultural society, educational institutions must serve as foundational laboratories for religious interaction, promoting a tolerant socio-religious approach (Sutrisno, 2019). Beyond the educational sphere, the discourse on religious moderation within communities has also garnered significant attention. For instance, Saputera and Djauhari (2021) examine the mainstreaming of religious moderation in Gorontalo. Their study highlights efforts to cultivate religious moderation in the region through the integration of local wisdom and collaborative efforts between the government and religious organizations (Saputera & Djauhari, 2021).

The socialization of religious moderation through social media has also been a focus of prior research. Wibowo (2019) examines the use of Facebook as a platform for promoting the concept and values of religious moderation. This study is based on three key premises: (1) the potential for conflicts related to ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations (SARA); (2) the critical role of social media in reinforcing religious moderation in Indonesia; and (3) the need to strengthen the idea of religious moderation through a national movement (Wibowo, 2019).

Considering the methods and focus of previous research, there has been no comprehensive identification, evaluation, or interpretation of research on religious moderation in relation to specific research questions, topics, or areas of concern. Thus, this study aims to conduct a systematic review of various studies on religious moderation, concentrating on three key areas: (1) the conceptualization and nomenclature of religious moderation, (2) the diverse types of research on religious moderation as documented in the literature, and (3) the mapping of the scope of religious moderation as explored in existing studies. This research is crucial because it synthesizes findings on religious moderation through a systematic review approach and translates them into actionable insights, such as policy briefs and papers. These outputs provide a more comprehensive and balanced evidence base for policymakers, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, to guide decision-making processes.

METHODS

This research employs a systematic review methodology comprising seven distinct stages. The first stage involves formulating the problem by developing research questions that specifically address the issues to be investigated, utilizing targeted search keywords. In this study, the principal keyword is "Religious Moderation." The second stage entails conducting a literature search to identify articles that correspond to the specified keywords across various databases, including Google Scholar. The third stage focuses on collecting information from the identified literature, employing the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework to ensure transparency in the information flow, from data collection through to article screening. In the fourth stage, the quality of the research is evaluated based on varying criteria, which aids in determining the literature to be included in the synthesis. The fifth stage involves interpreting the findings, specifically considering their implications for management practitioners and researchers. Subsequently, in the sixth stage, cumulative conclusions are drawn from the gathered research evidence. Finally, the seventh stage encompasses the presentation of the results, ensuring that the findings of the systematic review are communicated effectively (Perry & Hammond, 2002).

The data sources for this research encompass all articles pertinent to the topic of religious moderation. The primary object of this study consists of articles retrieved from the Google Scholar search engine, which have

undergone a rigorous screening process to ensure they meet the established inclusion criteria. These criteria are as follows: (1) the articles must focus explicitly on the subject of religious moderation; (2) they should be published in research journals indexed by Sinta; (3) the publication year must fall within the range of 2013 to 2022; (4) the authors should be of Indonesian nationality; and (5) the full text of the articles must be readily accessible. This careful selection process ensures that the research incorporates high-quality and relevant literature to support the systematic review.

Articles that meet the inclusion criteria are subjected to a thorough review, focusing on three key aspects of feasibility relevant to this study: the nature of religious moderation, the variety of research methodologies employed, and the scope of the studies. Following a systematic search and data processing, a total of 21 articles were identified as meeting the inclusion criteria. Consequently, these 21 articles were reviewed and synthesized in this study. A detailed overview of the data collection process is illustrated in the accompanying PRISMA flow diagram, which visually represents the flow of information throughout the systematic review.
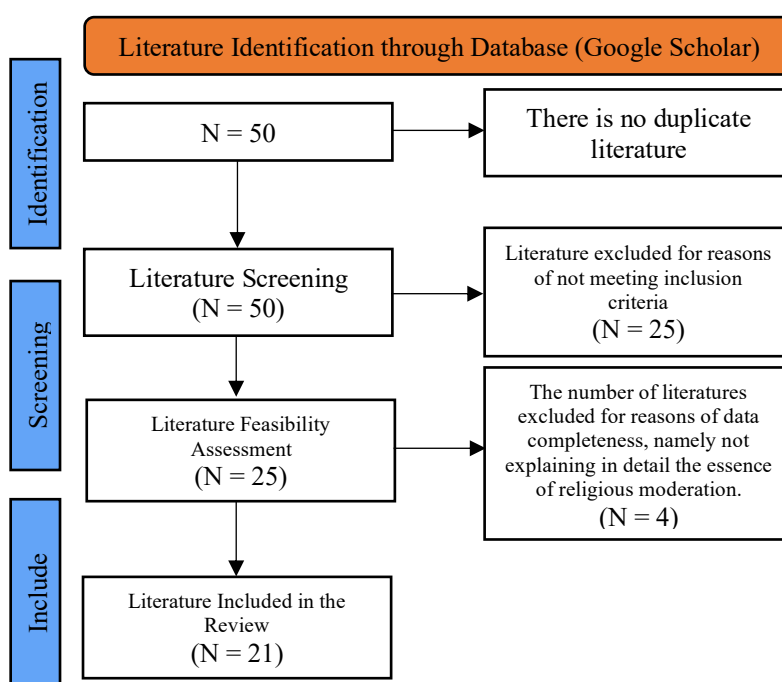

Figure 1. Prisma Flow

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Results of Literature Selection

The search for articles addressing the topic of religious moderation was conducted using the Google Scholar search engine. This search yielded a total of 21 articles that met the established inclusion criteria, as detailed in Table 1. These articles serve as the basis for further analysis and synthesis in the context of this study.

Table 1. Religious Moderation Literature Search Results

Number	Code	Author/Year	Journal/Edition
1	A1	Sitti Chadidjah, et al. (2021)	*Al-Hasanah: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)* 6 (1), 114-124.

Number	Code	Author/Year	Journal/Edition
2	A4	Syabila Gita Putri Cahyani, et al. (2023)	*Ta'lim: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam (Journal of Islamic Education and Islamic Education Management)* 2 (1), 9-14.
3	A5	Eka Putra Romadona, et al. (2022)	*At-Ta'dib: Jurnal Ilmiah Prodi Pendidikan Agama Islam (Scientific Journal of Islamic Education Study Program)* 14 (2), 115-128.
4	A7	Posman Rambe, Sabaruddin & Maryam (2022)	*Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah (Journal of Islamic Education)* 7 (1), 157-168.
5	A8	Suprima Suprima, et al. (2021)	*Kalimah: Jurnal Studi Agama dan Pemikiran Islam (Journal of Islamic Studies and Thought)* 19 (2), 229-250.
6	A12	Abdul Gani & Jumadi (2022)	*PAIDA Journal* 1 (1), 1-15.
7	A13	Miftahul Jannah, et al. (2022)	*Ulumuddin: Jurnal Ilmu-ilmu Keislaman (Journal of Islamic Sciences)* 12 (1), 107-118.
8	A16	Mayke Rinny Liando & Hadirman (2022)	*Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)* 11 (1), 379-392.
9	A19	Khaorul Mudawinun Nisa, et al. (2022)	*Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management* 3 (1), 1-12.
10	A21	Nasikhin, et al., (2022)	*Islamic Review: Jurnal Riset dan Kajian Keislaman (Journal of Islamic Research and Studies)* 11 (1), 19-34.
11	A22	Faturrahman, Arif Rumata, et al. (2021)	*Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah (Journal of Da'wah Science)* 41 (2), 172-183.
12	A25	Edi Nurhidin (2021)	*Kuttab: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)* 5 (2), 115-129
13	A27	Nur Hidayah (2021)	*Edukasi Islami: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam (Journal of Islamic Education)* 10 (2), 773-788.
14	A30	Rachma Widiningtyas Wibowo, et al. (2021)	*Madania: Jurnal Ilmu Keislaman (Journal of Islamic Studies)* 11 (2), 55-62.
15	A31	Vita Santa Kusuma Chrisantina (2021)	*Edutrained: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pelatihan (Journal of Education and Training)* 5 (2), 79-92.
16	A32	Pribadyo Prakoso (2022)	*Scientific Journal of Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)* 4 (1), 45-55.
17	A35	Muhammad Nur Rofik & M. Misbah (2021)	*Lectura: Jurnal Pendidikan (Journal of Education)* 12 (2), 230-245.
18	A39	Sulaiman W (2022)	*Edukatif: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan (Journal of Educational Sciences)* 4 (2), 2704-2714
19	A43	Aep Kusnawan & Ridwan Rustandi (2021)	*Nalar: Jurnal Peradaban dan Pemikiran Islam (Journal of Islamic Civilization and Thought)* 5 (1), 41-61.
20	A47	Putri Septi Pratiwi, et al. (2021)	*Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi (Journal of Da'wah and Communication)* 6 (1), 83-94.
21	A50	Rinda Fauziah, et al. (2021)	*Al-Wijdan: Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 6 (1), 1-14.

Table 1 illustrates that all twenty-one articles discussing religious moderation were published within the period from 2021 to 2023. The literature that meets the established inclusion criteria appears across a diverse range of academic journals, reflecting the broad interest in the topic and the multidisciplinary nature of the research on

religious moderation. This variety in publication outlets indicates a growing recognition of the significance of religious moderation in contemporary discourse and scholarship.

Literature Description

The results of the analysis and synthesis regarding the nature of religious moderation, as discussed in each selected piece of literature for this study, are presented in detail in Table 2. This table provides a comprehensive overview of the key themes, definitions, and perspectives related to religious moderation, facilitating a deeper understanding of its conceptualization across various studies. The insights gathered from this analysis contribute to the overall discourse on religious moderation and highlight its significance within the broader context of social and religious dynamics.

Table 2. The Essence of Religious Moderation in Various Literatures

Number	Code	The Essence of Religious Moderation
1	A1	There are two theological concepts that overshadow moderation: (1) QS al-Baqarah/1: 143, which indicates that the term *"wasathiyyah"* is more accepted than "moderation." *Wasathiyyah* signifies a central position, impartial to extremes, and is characterized by its moderate understanding, setting Islam apart from other religions. The values of *wasathiyyah* encompass several aspects, including *tawasut* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and national values (*wathaniah wa muwathanah*). (2) The hadith of the Prophet states, "the best thing is *awsatuha*" (middle/medium).
2	A4	Religious moderation, referred to as *"wasathiyyah,"* signifies a balance between faith and tolerance. It encompasses two meanings as a noun (*ism*) representing an intermediate or connecting pattern (*al-bainiyyah*) between two opposing conditions. It is characterized by being fair, a first choice, and the best (superior/*al-khiyār*).
3	A5	Moderation embodies a fair and balanced attitude within society and religion. A moderate individual must adhere to one faith, maintain conviction in it, and strive to follow the truth it presents.
4	A7	The concept of balance, derived from the Arabic term "*al-wasathiyah*," is explained in QS al-Baqarah/1: 143, which emphasizes that "*al-Wasath*" conveys the best meaning or the absolute best. A well-known hadith reinforces that the best is that which is in the middle. Hence, religious moderation stresses the importance of balanced and fair thinking.
5	A8	In Arabic, moderation is termed "*al-wasathiyyah*," originating from the root word "*wasath*." Terminologically, moderation refers to an understanding that adopts a middle path, avoiding extreme positions. Ibn 'Assyria offers two interpretations of *wasath*: etymologically, it means something situated in the middle, and terminologically, it represents Islamic values grounded in a straight and balanced mindset.
6	A12	In linguistic terms, moderation signifies a "middle way," representing the best between two undesirable extremes. It encompasses the understanding and practice of religious teachings in a fair and balanced manner, thereby averting excessive behaviour.
7	A13	Religious moderation is intrinsically linked to tolerance; it is a process wherein the application of moderation yields tolerance as a result. Tolerance encompasses an understanding and appreciation of differing opinions without imposing one's beliefs on others.
8	A16	Religious moderation is a concept rooted in Islamic teachings, aimed at shaping the character and behaviour of Muslims as *ummatan wasathan* (the middle/best ummah). The term "moderation" derives from the English word "moderation," corresponding to "*wasathiyyah*" in Arabic, which denotes an attitude that is neither excessive nor extreme. A person embodying moderation is characterized by reasonable and balanced behaviour.

Number	Code	The Essence of Religious Moderation
9	A19	The term moderation, or "*al-wasathiyyah*," derives from "*wasath*" and "*wasatha*n," denoting a position between two boundaries, embodying justice and balance. In application, "*wasathiyyah*" is popularly associated with a plenary thinking paradigm, especially regarding a middle-ground religious attitude in Islam.
10	A21	Moderation or *wasathiyyah* is often understood as embodying balance, fairness, and the notion of the middle ground. It encapsulates the principal idea of avoiding extremes, whether radical or excessively liberal. Religious moderation in Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is exemplified through the concept of Islam Nusantara, whereas Muhammadiyah promotes Progressive Islam.
11	A22	Religious moderation is characterized as a perspective that embraces fairness and a middle ground, eschewing extremes.
12	A25	Moderation is referred to in Arabic as "*wasath*" or "*wasathiyyah*," which is equivalent to *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (fairness), and *tawasuth* (middle ground). Conceptually, religious moderation signifies a viewpoint, attitude, and behaviour that consistently positions itself in the middle, ensuring fairness and rejecting extremism in religion.
13	A27	Islamic moderation, which appears as a new discourse or paradigm, upholds the values of the middle way, balance, fairness, tolerance, equality, deliberation, reform, prioritization, dynamism and innovation, and civilization. It advocates for unity and the cultivation of a civilized society, reflecting the principles of moderate Islam.
14	A30	Religious moderation refers to a middle approach in practicing religion, thereby avoiding extremes and exaggerations. In Arabic, "*al-wasathiyyah*" denotes the best and most perfect way, while those who embody it are termed moderate. Concepts similar to *wasathiyyah* exist across various religious traditions, including the "golden mean" in Christianity, "*majjhima patipada*" in Buddhism, "*madyhamika*" in Hinduism, and "*zhong yong*" in Confucianism, all of which emphasize the ideal religious attitude of choosing a middle ground.
15	A31	Religious moderation is understood as an attitude that prioritizes balance between one's religious experience and respect for the beliefs of others, thereby mitigating extreme and fanatical tendencies.
16	A32	A viewpoint, attitude, and behavior that continuously maintains justice and rejects radicalism in religious activity might be characterized as religious moderation.
17	A35	The term moderation, commonly referred to as "*wasath*" or "*wasathiyyah*," translates to balanced, moderate, and centered. In terminological terms, religious moderation signifies a real attitude that takes a middle ground between contradictory or excessive paths, ensuring that neither extreme dominates an individual's worldview.
18	A39	Moderation, known as "*wasaṭiyyah*," signifies a balanced and praiseworthy middle position. In a religious context, it encompasses a moderate attitude characterized by impartiality towards both extremes. It encompasses a holistic approach that integrates worldly and spiritual concerns.
19	A43	In the context of Islam, religious moderation is defined as "*wasathiyyah*," embodying a balanced approach to the actualization of Islamic values, encompassing both worship and social interactions (*muamalah*).
20	A47	Religious moderation involves the reduction of violence and the avoidance of extremism. It represents an attitude or perspective that seeks a neutral position between two excessive views, fostering deliberation and the capacity to navigate differences.
21	A50	Religious moderation can be understood as a practice of maintaining a middle ground between one's own religious beliefs and those of others, thereby fostering respect for differing faiths.

The results of the construction of each literature based on various types of research are divided into two categories: the methodological approach and the type of research used. The results of the analysis of the different types of research in each literature are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Various Types of Religious Moderation Research

Number	Approach	Type of Research	Literature Code
1	Qualitative	Literature Studies	A1, A4, A5, A8, A21, A22, A25, A27, A30, A39, A50
		Phenomenology	A7
		Case Studies	A8, A12, A13, A16, A32, A35, A43, A47
2	Quantitative	R&D (Research and Development)	A19, A31

Table 3 shows that research utilizing a qualitative approach is divided into three types: literature studies, phenomenology, and case studies. Of the studies, 11 are literature-based, 1 employs a phenomenological approach, and 8 are case studies, resulting in a total of 19 studies using a qualitative approach. Meanwhile, the quantitative approach is limited to research and development (R&D) studies, with only 2 such studies identified.

Furthermore, an analysis of the scope of religious moderation discussed in each piece of literature was conducted. The results of this scope mapping can be found in Table 4.

Table 4. Mapping the Research Scope

Number	Scope	Literature Code
1	Education	A1, A5, A7, A12, A13, A16, A19, A25, A27, A35, A50
2	Social	A4, A8, A22, A32, A43,
3	Culture and Organization	A21
4	Social Media	A30, A47
5	History	A39

Table 4 shows that the majority of discussions on religious moderation fall within the scope of education, with 11 studies addressing this area. Additionally, 5 studies focus on social issues, 2 on social media, and 1 study each on culture and history. This distribution highlights education as the primary domain where religious moderation is explored, followed by significant attention to social and media-related contexts.

Discussion
The Essence of Religious Moderation

The study's findings indicate that linguistically, "religious moderation" is a compound term composed of "moderation" and "religious." In the Islamic scholarly tradition, "moderation" is referred to as *wasathiyyah*, meaning fairness, balance, and the middle path between extreme left (liberalism) and extreme right (radicalism) (Arroisi, 2022; Fathurahman, 2020). The term "religious" refers to religious practices or one's perspective on religious texts (Islam), with a more contextual interpretation (Burga & Damopolii, 2022). Consequently, what is moderated is not Islam itself, as its teachings are considered perfect, but rather a person's understanding of religious texts (Qur'an and Hadith) within a contextual framework (A. R. Amin, 2020). Thus, "religious moderation" refers to the outlook, attitudes, and behaviours of believers, grounded in religious scripture, considering both textual and contextual elements (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

In terminology, the definition of religious moderation is shaped by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia's objective to promote the term

as a priority program. In the context of faith, religious moderation entails an unwavering belief in one's own religion while respecting the beliefs of others. From a socio-cultural perspective, it involves fostering awareness of religious plurality, promoting tolerance, encouraging cooperation and mutual assistance among religious communities, and accommodating local culture. In the national and state context, it ensures that all citizens are equal before the law, able to freely exercise their rights and obligations without preferential treatment for any particular religion. In intra-religious contexts, religious moderation emphasizes mutual respect and appreciation for differences in religious interpretations among various groups or sects, particularly in public spaces, while adhering to scientific principles (K. Amin, 2023).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia is actively working to maintain the harmony and integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) through the promotion of moderate religious understanding and practices. This initiative is driven by several sociological dynamics and challenges within the country, including (1) the rise of religious radicalism leading to acts of terrorism, (2) the spread of liberalism, which elevates reason to the extent that the authority of the holy book as a source of truth is undermined, and (3) the use of identity politics (A. R. Amin, 2020).

First, radicalism is characterized by a highly textual understanding of religion, without consideration of the socio-historical context of religious texts (Ibrahim et al., 2019). Anything that does not align strictly with the Qur'an and hadith is regarded as erroneous. New developments or practices that differ from those of the Prophet's time are often deemed heretical. Radical groups, furthermore, tend to label those with differing views as infidels. These groups exhibit rigidity in religious practice and intolerance towards other religious expressions and are often marked by hyper-religiosity or an excessive display of religious fervor (Meganck, 2021).

Hyperreligiosity, often described as religious overdose, represents an extreme

religious attitude characterized by an intense emphasis on outward religious symbols (Mitrev & Mantarkov, 2021). These symbols tend to reflect a form of religious egoism that is devoid of genuine spiritual values (Fernando, 2021). Individuals exhibiting hyperreligiosity may strive to emulate the external style and practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but often neglect the internal virtues that he embodied, such as patience, sincerity, humility, respect, and appreciation for diversity. The Prophet's exemplary conduct towards the pluralistic society of Medina (Yasrib), which included various religions, ethnicities, and nationalities, serves as a critical model for balanced religious engagement (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Second, liberalism represents a religious understanding that prioritizes reason over textual authority, thereby accepting only those religious doctrines that align with rational thought (Faizi & Rahman, 2022). This approach tends to elevate interpretation above the foundational texts of religion, such as the Qur'an. As a result, religious texts become subject to a wide range of interpretations by individuals, often free from the oversight of recognized scholarly authorities. This phenomenon not only invites philosophical critiques of the texts but also fosters a perception that simplifies and manipulates religious teachings (Jura, 2021).

Third, identity politics involves utilizing specific religions or religious organizations as instruments for political objectives (Schwörer & Fernández-García, 2021). In this context, sacred religious texts are interpreted in ways that serve particular political agendas, aiming to garner support from specific religious groups. Such practices have the potential to fracture national unity and divert public discourse into contentious debates surrounding theological issues, such as those found in kalam science (Paralihan, 2019).

This underscores the necessity of religious moderation in fostering harmony and promoting tolerance for the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. As a program initiated by the Ministry of Religion of the

Republic of Indonesia, religious moderation is oriented towards the betterment and upliftment of humanity (K. Amin, 2023). The understanding and practice of religious moderation must be mainstreamed in a manner that reflects the diverse conditions of Indonesian society. It is essential for moderate thinking to actively engage in filling the spiritual voids within the community, particularly through various digital platforms and social media channels (Subchi et al., 2022). Islamic teachings should be conveyed with wisdom (ḥikmah) and wholesome admonition (mau'iẓah al-ḥasanah), ensuring they embody the principles of raḥmatan li al-'ālamīn—a religion characterized by love, compassion, and peace (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Various Types of Religious Moderation Research

Research on religious moderation predominantly employs a qualitative approach, with 19 out of 21 studies utilizing this methodology, while only 2 studies adopt a quantitative approach. This predominance suggests that the study of religious moderation is perceived as a natural phenomenon. It supports the viewpoint of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion that religious moderation represents a perspective, attitude, and behavioural practice embraced by the majority of the Indonesian population from historical times to the present (K. Amin, 2023).

This perspective engenders distinctive religious practices that are not found elsewhere in the world (Damopolii & Burga, 2020). Universal Islamic values are amenable to acceptance across diverse cultures, leading to their acculturation and the formation of a rich mosaic of Islamic civilization. In Indonesia, for instance, Muslims radicalize these events while upholding strong Islamic values (Burga, 2019; (Arifin et al., 2024). The acceptance of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution as the foundational philosophy of the state by religious communities exemplifies this commitment, fostering a sincere willingness to coexist with adherents of other faiths as fellow Indonesian citizens. The cultivated attitude of tolerance transcends mere mutual respect and allowance for the rights and obligations of other religious groups; it also encompasses collaboration and mutual support in the pursuit of harmonious and peaceful coexistence (Damopolii & Burga, 2020).

Contextual religious attitudes and behaviors, accommodation to local culture, commitment to the Republic of Indonesia, and tolerance both within and between religious communities are critical indicators of an individual's moderation (Burga & Damopolii, 2022). These factors underscore the necessity for in-depth investigations into informants' perceptions and experiences regarding religious moderation (Sutrisno, 2019). The majority of existing research has employed phenomenological approaches and case studies to elucidate natural phenomena and unique instances within specific community groups related to religious moderation (Creswell, 2017).

Furthermore, a total of 11 studies on religious moderation have utilized literature reviews, suggesting that some researchers are critically examining the concept from a theological and normative perspective, thereby establishing it as a foundational source of Islamic doctrine. However, research employing a quantitative approach has predominantly focused on the development of educational models aimed at enhancing students' comprehension of religious moderation. Notably, there has been a lack of quantitative surveys assessing the state of religious moderation within specific regions or institutions. This deficiency in empirical data contributes to an incomplete understanding and mapping of religious moderation across various contexts.

The compilation of data regarding the mapping of religious moderation within diverse regions and institutions is essential for

the evaluation and strategic advancement of the religious moderation program established by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. To date, this program has not been rigorously evaluated through comprehensive research. As a result, discussions surrounding religious moderation have stagnated, remaining largely at the conceptual level, confined to academic discourse, and frequently characterized by claims from different religious groups or organizations asserting a more moderate position than their peers (Afwadzi, 2022)

Mapping the Scope of Religious Moderation Studies

Five scientific approaches have been identified in the examination of religious moderation, based on data derived from research findings. These approaches include: (1) education (11 studies), (2) social issues (5 studies), (3) media and communication (2 studies), (4) culture and organization (1 study), and (5) history (1 study). The data reveals several key insights:

First, research on religious moderation is predominantly situated within the educational sector, indicating that researchers view educational institutions as a primary domain for internalizing the principles and values of religious moderation. However, it is noteworthy that most of this research is conducted in educational institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. This suggests a lack of collaboration between the Ministry of Religion and other official institutions in efforts to mainstream religious moderation. Notably, the potential for radicalism and liberalism is often greater among religious individuals outside the Ministry of Religion, as they may lack a solid and comprehensive foundation in Islamic scholarship, rendering them more susceptible to textual and partial interpretations of religious thought (Basri & Dwiningrum, 2019).

Second, the exploration of religious moderation from a social sciences perspective continues to engage the attention of five researchers. A sociological approach is essential for understanding the attitudes and behaviours of tolerance that exist both between and within religious communities (Abdurrohman et al., 2023; Muhtador, 2021).

Third, the study of religious moderation within the realms of culture and organization is framed as an issue that encompasses: (1) anthropology, where the values of religious moderation are deemed culturally relevant as they align with the noble traditions of the nation's culture (Abdurrohman et al., 2023), and (2) organizations, where the moderate claims of various Islamic Community Organizations (CSOs) in Indonesia are examined. Generally, these organizations adhere to the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah tradition, with the exception of those identifying as Wahhabi or Shi'a (Muzakki, 2022).

Fourth, research pertaining to communication science, specifically the role of da'wah (religious preaching) through social media, has been conducted by two researchers. This area is particularly significant given the modernization that has transformed da'wah into a virtual and social media-based phenomenon (Iqbal & Asman, 2021). It is imperative that content related to religious moderation occupies more public space and captures the interest of the Islamic generation, as well as the nation's youth more broadly (K. Amin, 2023).

Fifth, research on religious moderation from a historical perspective serves as a conceptual study that enriches the body of Islamic theory. The socio-historical framework of religious moderation, exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) in Medina, is relevant to the noble cultural values of the Indonesian nation, which have been passed down through generations (Efendi et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

The conclusions drawn from this study reveal several significant insights. First, the term "religious moderation" was initially introduced by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia and has since been established as a priority government program. Religious moderation encompasses a perspective, attitude, and behavioural framework for adherents rooted in sacred texts as both written doctrine and contextual guidance. As a governmental initiative, the primary aim of religious moderation is to foster harmony and promote tolerance among diverse religious communities, thereby preserving the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia. Second, the study identified 21 investigations into religious moderation, comprising 19 qualitative studies and 2 quantitative studies. These investigations can be further categorized into 11 literature reviews, 1 phenomenological study, 6 case studies, and 2 research and development projects, highlighting a predominant focus on qualitative methodologies. Third, the research delineates five key areas of scientific inquiry into religious moderation: (1) education, (2) social sciences, (3) media and communication, (4) culture and organization, and (5) historical analysis. This mapping underscores the multifaceted nature of religious moderation and its relevance across various domains of society.

Based on the aforementioned conclusions, several recommendations are proposed for stakeholders involved in this research. First, the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, as the governmental body responsible for promoting religious moderation, should collaborate with other ministries to mainstream this concept effectively. The promotion of harmony and tolerance between and within religious communities is a collective responsibility that every Indonesian citizen must embrace. Given the heightened potential for radicalism in institutions outside the Ministry of Religion, a coordinated effort is essential. Second, future researchers are encouraged to undertake survey-based investigations to assess the state of religious moderation within specific regions or institutions. Such research could provide valuable evaluative data and serve as a foundation for subsequent strategic initiatives aimed at socializing and internalizing the values of religious moderation. Third, the diverse methodologies employed in the study of religious moderation indicate that the effectiveness of related programs is influenced by a variety of factors. Consequently, it is imperative for the broader public—not solely those within religious studies—to engage in enriching the literature surrounding the concept of religious moderation. This engagement will foster a more comprehensive understanding of religious issues and promote more judicious religious attitudes.

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