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## Interpreting the Quran's Teachings on Religious Moderation

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### Abstract

Religious moderation involves a balanced and non-extremist approach to religious worship. This article seeks to determine whether the Quran and Hadith, as the holy texts of Islam, contain any elements that could potentially incite violence and terrorism, particularly against individuals of other faiths. In this research, the author employs the *maudhu'i tafsir* method, which involves selecting a specific topic and then examining various Quranic verses and Hadiths related to religious moderation in the context of the study's focus. The findings of this study demonstrate that the Quran and Hadith do not encourage Muslims to engage in acts of violence or religious extremism. Instead, these sources emphasize the importance of practicing religion with balance and moderation, promoting a friendly, gentle, and compassionate approach. Balance is not only encouraged in matters of faith but also regarded as essential in maintaining the harmony of life and preventing the destruction of the world.

### Keywords

Religious Moderation, Qur'an, Hadith, Islam, Extremism

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia is a country that actively maintains and preserves its cultural diversity. The nation boasts 67 primary languages, 740 ethnic groups, and 583 languages spoken by these ethnic groups (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). Furthermore, Indonesia is home to people who practice various religions, including Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, Confucianism, and more, reflecting the beliefs deeply rooted in each region's local culture. This cultural diversity is often referred to as multiculturalism, signifying the natural convergence of diverse cultures. The interactions among individuals and groups are marked by a rich tapestry of cultural behaviors unique to each locale, all integrated within the Indonesian society (Abror, 2020).

For Muslims in Indonesia, the Quran serves as the primary guiding scripture, providing comprehensive and perfect legal references. The Quran is one of the sacred texts used to offer guidance, examples, and teachings that can be applied and implemented in both worldly life and the hereafter (Hasan, 2021). The concept of Islamic moderation, also known as Wasatiyah Islam, is a significant topic of discussion.

While articulating Islamic teachings, some individuals may harbor extreme thoughts within the community, which can lead to acts of violence. In Islam, there are numerous diverse references, but there remains a unifying factor, namely the Quran and Hadith (Junaedi, 2019). Nevertheless, events have demonstrated that the Islamic world exhibits diversity. When viewed from the perspective of religious practices and rituals, various Islamic groups possess distinct characteristics. These differences are considered a blessing desired by Allah (God). Apart from these variations in religious practices, diversity of opinions also emerges in the scientific field (Akhmadi, 2019).

Many teachings of a religion often manifest in religious practices, which typically exhibit multiple facets. There is a realm of moral ideas aspect (*sollem*) that intersects with the socio-religious reality encountered in the field (*das sein*). Furthermore, this discussion highlights an intolerant attitude as a representation of the Islamic image, which is perceived as capable of radiating goodness and grace (Hefni, 2020).

Caring for the soul, religion, property, descendants, and reason constitutes the core teachings of Islam. An intolerant attitude, however, threatens to undermine this objective. It is worth noting that Prophet Muhammad PBUH was sent by God with a mission to perfect morality and goodness. Therefore, from this perspective, the examination of Islamic moderation takes precedence. This approach aids in better comprehending and implementing the Prophet's example, which can then be translated into noble and universally applicable concepts and values. This serves as a reference and guide for Muslims in practicing their religion within society. Thus, studying the hadiths of the Prophet becomes essential (Fattah, 2020).

## 2. Research Methods

This qualitative research employs the *maudhu'i tafsir* method, a methodological approach used in interpreting religious texts, particularly the Quran and Hadith. The researcher selects a specific topic, in this case, religious moderation, and then identifies and analyzes relevant Quranic verses and Hadiths related to this topic. The selected verses and Hadiths are then contextualized and analyzed in relation to the research question, aiming to elucidate the Quranic and Hadith perspectives on religious moderation. In addition to the Quran, Hadiths, and classical religious sources, this research draws upon contemporary scientific research articles and journals in the field of Islamic studies and related disciplines.

These research articles serve as valuable references and contribute to the triangulation of findings. By integrating scientific research, this study bridges the gap between classical religious texts and modern scholarship on religious moderation in Islam, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The incorporation of scientific research articles enhances the research by providing a broader perspective and ensuring that the analysis is grounded in both traditional religious sources and current academic discourse. This approach contributes to a well-

rounded exploration of religious moderation in Islam, considering both historical religious teachings and contemporary scholarly perspectives.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 A Glimpse into Religious Moderation

The term moderation derives from Latin, *moderatio*, signifying being neither excessive nor deficient, a concept encapsulating self-mastery over extremes of advantage and disadvantage. In Indonesian dictionary, moderation carries two meanings: 1. The reduction of violence, and 2. The avoidance of extremes. Conversely, moderate refers to discouraging extreme behavior and gravitating toward a middle-ground dimension (Rohman, 2021). An individual deemed moderate tends to exhibit normal and reasonable attitudes. In English, moderation is often synonymous with average, core, standard, or non-aligned.

Broadly speaking, moderation entails prioritizing balance in shaping beliefs, character, and behavior, whether in personal conduct or in interactions with others and state institutions. Meanwhile, in Arabic, moderation is encapsulated in the term *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, equating to middle, fair, balanced, akin to *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *tawazun*. Those embracing *wasathiyah* principles may be referred to as *wasith*. Additionally, *wasathiyah* conveys the notion of "the best choice," emphasizing the selection of a middle-ground stance amidst various extreme options. The term *wasith* has even found its way into the Indonesian language, taking on the form of referee with three connotations: 1) mediator, intermediary (for example, in trade and business); 2) mediator, reconciler, resolving disputes; and 3) leader in a match (Yasin, 2022).

Religion pertains to binding oneself, adhering to, and being governed by the rules of a particular faith, whereas religiosity encompasses provisions related to divinity and belief in God, involving teachings to be upheld and prohibitions to be heeded due to this belief (Manshur & Husni, 2020). The world does not harbor a singular religion; instead, it abounds with various faiths. Within Indonesia, the recognized religions include Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Confucianism (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021).

In linguistic terms, religion refers to embracing a specific faith, while religiosity implies worship and compliance with the inherent rules. From a religious standpoint, it involves the dissemination of goodness, beauty, friendliness, affection, and peace under any circumstances, in any place, and with anyone. Cultivating a wise approach to religion is paramount, not as a means of harmonizing diversity, but as a response to it. The advent of religion has positively impacted human life, endowing it with dignity and worth, perpetually safeguarded. Consequently, as humans, the responsibility lies in fostering positive attributes, including peace, harmony, and happiness among others. Using an analogy, religion is analogous to movement toward the center, following a centripetal trajectory, while extremism constitutes a centrifugal departure from the center toward extremes. Comparatively, envisioning a clock, there is both dynamic motion and an inclination toward the middle. This signifies safeguarding the mind, upholding morals and ethics, and preserving nature (Arif, 2021).

The concept of religious moderation can be defined as a balanced perspective on religion, encompassing the understanding, application, implementation, and practice of religious teachings without veering to extremes, whether on the far right or far left. Presently, Indonesian society

grapples with prevalent issues such as hate speech, radicalism, and the dissemination of misinformation. Using an analogy, moderation can be likened to a movement from the edges toward the center, whereas extremism represents the opposite, moving away from the center (Subchi et al., 2022).

Expanding on this analogy, within the realm of religion, a moderate stance entails choosing a viewpoint that lies in the middle ground among several options. In contrast, religious extremism denotes a viewpoint or behavior that exceeds the boundaries set by the principles and practices of religious moderation (Senata et al., 2021). Consequently, religious moderation fosters an understanding of diverse perspectives and encourages fair-mindedness. Clearly defined limits and measurements are essential to discern whether a stance falls within the realm of moderation or extremism (Pajarianto et al., 2022). Religious moderation assumes a pivotal role in promoting harmony and tolerance, regardless of the context, whether at the subordinate or superior level. The cornerstone of balance in moderation lies in the ability to reject both extremism and liberalism. This approach paves the way for peace and the preservation of civilization. Such a stance encourages individuals of faith to treat one another with respect, propagate peace, and foster harmony among fellow human beings. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, religious moderation is not merely an option; it is an imperative (Mahrus et al., 2020).

### **3.2 Quran and Hadith Generalization on Religious Moderation**

Islamic scholars have unanimously affirmed the significance of the Qur'an and Hadith as essential references and guiding principles to address the challenges, intricacies, and trials encountered in their daily lives. This practice has been upheld and followed since the generation of Prophet Muhammad and continues to be a cornerstone of human civilization worldwide. This is equally applicable to the concept of religious moderation, which presently stands as a prominent topic of discussion across various media outlets (Saumantri, 2022).

The term religious moderation originates from a foreign language but has been integrated into the Indonesian language. As for whether this term, religious moderation, exists in both Muslim sources, the answer lies in the fact that the Qur'an and Hadith serve as living references for humanity, rather than mere dictionaries of terminology. The meaning of the Qur'an and Hadith is interpreted, explored, and sought after by Muslims, evolving to become a way of life for humanity in accordance with the principles set forth within these texts. Thus, the dynamic nature of Islamic religious teachings is evident. The term *wasathan* has been associated with the concept of religious moderation and carries the same meaning and significance as that found in the Qur'an and Hadith (Syarif, 2021).

Religious moderation, deeply rooted in Quranic verses and Hadiths, encompasses a multifaceted concept emphasizing balance and fairness across various dimensions of life and belief. It signifies chosen people, as seen in Al-Baqarah: 143, reflecting the idea of individuals chosen for their balanced and moderate approach. The Quranic verses Al-Mulk: 3 and Ar-Ra'du: 3, as discussed by Zulfahmi and Azmar (2022), emphasize the role of moderation in maintaining equilibrium in natural phenomena. Fattah (2020) extends the concept to encompass fairness, as exemplified in Annisa': 58. Additionally, religious moderation extends to leading a balanced lifestyle, as found in Al-Qashash: 77. Huda (2009) emphasizes its role in shaping behavior, while Ash-Syams: 7-9 highlight its significance in nurturing moral values. Lastly, Shihab (1996)

concludes that moderation extends its influence beyond individual aspects, resonating within the nation and state, a sentiment mirrored in Al-Hujurat: 13. Collectively, these references illustrate the diverse facets of religious moderation, underlining its importance in promoting equilibrium, fairness, and harmony across various aspects of life and society.

A series of hadiths conveys a consistent message about the importance of moderation in religious practice and life. According to Sahih al-Bukhari, Prophet Muhammad PBUH emphasized that a person's deeds alone cannot ensure salvation; it requires Allah's mercy. He advised maintaining sincere intentions while avoiding excessive deeds, advocating for a balanced approach to faith (Sahih al-Bukhari, 1955). Similarly, Sahih Ahmad, Al-Baihaqi, and Al-Hakim report an incident where the Prophet encountered a man engaged in excessive prayer. The Prophet questioned whether the man was seeking attention and stressed the significance of following the middle path in religious practice to avoid extremism. Sahih Muslim recounts that the Prophet's prayers and sermons were characterized by moderation, underscoring the importance of balance in all aspects of worship and communication. Sunan an-Nasa'i and Sunan Ibn Majah relay a hadith where Ibn 'Abbas warned against excessive attitudes in religion, as such extremism had led to the downfall of previous communities. Lastly, Sahih Muslim reports a hadith in which 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud quotes the Prophet, reiterating the grave consequences of transgressing limits in religious practices and highlighting the necessity of moderation (Muslim & An-Naisaburi, 1994). These hadiths collectively emphasize the significance of moderation in faith and actions, advocating for the avoidance of extremes and the pursuit of a balanced religious life..

### **3.3 Interpreting Quranic Verses on Religious Moderation**

The meaning of the Quran and Hadith serves as a fundamental source of reference and guidance, encompassing regulations and teachings for Muslims to apply in their daily lives while confronting diverse challenges and trials. In the contemporary world, marked by burgeoning technological advancements, there's no need to ignore or fear this development, as it's become an essential aspect of life. However, it's observed that individuals sometimes become preoccupied with their past achievements, which can lead to complacency and make the Islamic community susceptible to changes in our increasingly advanced world, including technological and industrial progress. In this context, it is evident that technology holds immense influence in our lives today.

In this sophisticated era, the accessibility of information has brought the world closer together, transcending ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious boundaries. Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates that Muslims often find themselves divided into various sects and interpretations, at times even in conflict with one another, mirroring the challenges faced in regions like the Middle East, plagued by internal strife. These divisions provide adversaries with potent tools to attack and undermine Islam, leading to the labels of radical Islam, terrorist Islam, and fundamentalist Islam being unfairly applied to the broader Muslim community.

Overcoming the aforementioned challenges poses a formidable task, primarily due to the prevailing lack of comprehensive understanding among Muslims regarding the tenets and teachings of their faith. Consequently, sentiments of animosity toward other religions arise, leading to the labeling of fellow Muslims as infidels. This perception extends to the belief that the Islamic world lags behind in technology, the economy, and industry, even though history

attests to Muslims historically being pioneers. Notably, Yusuf Qardhawi, often regarded as the proponent of religious moderation in the Islamic world, identifies a factor that fuels these conflicts—a tendency towards extremism that sows discord within religious communities. This extremism manifests in various ways, including holding excessively rigid opinions, imposing undue obligations not sanctioned by Allah SWT, exerting unwarranted pressure, exhibiting stubbornness and using derogatory language, nurturing suspicions about others, and even pushing individuals to the brink of apostasy (Al-Qardhawi, 2000).

Many of the aforementioned attitude's stem from the influence of external Muslims and their varying levels of comprehension, resulting in an exaggerated approach to religious practice. The lack of understanding of their own faith's teachings can undermine the sacred mission of Islam, which is to bring mercy to all of nature. It's essential to remember that the Prophet Muhammad was sent to perfect the morals of humanity. As conveyed in the excerpted verse mentioned earlier, Islam stands for beauty, harmony, peace, and serenity, extending its message to all living creatures on Earth. If Muslims actively seek to explore, understand, and delve deeper into the verses and principles guiding their worldly lives, they can foster acceptance among other religions.

The verses in Al-Quran, specifically Surah Al-Hujurat: 13 and Ar-Ra'du:3, promise Muslims a peaceful and joyful life when they coexist with other tribes and religions while comprehending and embracing the values of religious moderation found within the Quran. A deeper understanding leads to a life characterized by tolerance for diverse ethnicities, races, nations, and religions. The Prophet Muhammad's implementation of these principles in Medina is evident in the "Medinah Charter." Furthermore, the Quran encourages us to seek balance within society and in the observation of various natural and celestial phenomena. It emphasizes that the imbalance of planets and natural phenomena can lead to the destruction and end of nature, referred to as the apocalypse in Islam (Kawangung, 2019).

Nature stands as a magnificent creation of Allah, but due to negligence, anger, greed, and an insatiable desire for more, countries like China, America, and other highly industrialized nations with advanced technology often exploit natural resources for economic gain, contributing to the gradual degradation of the Earth. Within the Islamic world, educational institutions tend to prioritize normative curricula over empirical ones, resulting in a shortage of physicists. In some cases, belief systems and scientific findings clash, as exemplified by the misconception that the sky comprises seven layers, rather than atmospheric layers responsible for heat resistance from the sun to the Earth. Steven Howkin, a German physicist, delved into the origins of nature, proposing that it is self-made without a creator or doomsday. Such views have led to a divide between religious faith and atheistic scientific perspectives (Arifinsyah et al., 2020).

Surah Al-Baqarah: 143, underscores that Muslims are a moderate and noble people, known for their commitment to justice. Furthermore, in Surah Annisa': 58, humans are encouraged to be fair and impartial in all matters. Fairness is exemplified by individuals who maintain a balanced stance, much like a weight on a scale. The best people are those who make impartial decisions, even when handling cases involving nobles or kings, as illustrated by Umar bin Khattab's judgment of Jabalah bin Aiham. Jabalah initially embraced Islam but later renounced it due to a misunderstanding of qiss law. Umar, committed to upholding justice, treated Jabalah the same way he had treated an Arab man who had been mistreated by Jabalah. In Islam, fairness and non-

discrimination are fundamental principles applied universally, whether dealing with commoners, ordinary individuals, or nobility (Al Qaradhawi, 1995).

Surah Al-Qasas: 77, emphasizes that moderate individuals maintain a balance in their priorities, both in this world and in the hereafter. These two aspects must align and remain in equilibrium. Neglecting either of them would lead to a lopsided or unbalanced existence. In Islam, both worldly pursuits and the afterlife hold significance, with the latter being of greater importance. Focusing solely on the material world can trap an individual in materialism, while prioritizing only the afterlife can cause one to lag behind in worldly matters (Defrizal et al., 2020).

The Islamic world currently aligns more with the second pattern, largely due to educational institutions and thought patterns dominated by normative Islamic jurisprudence and Ashari theology. This influence has resulted in fatalism and a lack of discourse on empirical matters, which are instrumental for progress in industry, economics, and technology. Prioritizing empirical knowledge can lead to economic independence and a skilled workforce, reducing poverty and ignorance (Tepe, 2019).

Likewise, the Qur'an underscores the importance of moral values, balance, and steadfastness in the face of various temptations. It discourages succumbing to the allure of the material world, which could undermine faith and devotion to Allah SWT. It also warns against compromising one's principles to pursue personal interests, such as engaging in corruption or distorting facts for individual gain. Religious moderation in a pluralistic society is similarly emphasized in the Qur'an. It advocates for tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and harmonious relations among people of diverse cultures, ethnicities, and religions. The concept of *wasathiah*, or religious moderation, can help resolve conflicts arising from differences in interests and religious beliefs, promoting friendly, peaceful, and harmonious interactions. By studying and comprehending the Qur'an as a whole, it becomes evident that it promotes grace, peace, and harmony for all creatures on Earth. Historical examples, such as Sultan Muhammad al-Fatih of Ottoman Turkey showing respect to Christian priests and safeguarding their churches upon conquering Constantinople, further underscore the message of Islam as a source of grace, peace, and harmony (Azis et al., 2021).

Surah Al-Luqman's emphasizes that harmony is the essence of beauty in life, involving a balance with natural phenomena, good moral conduct, fairness, and proper behavior within pluralistic societies. The Hadith also discourages excessive worship, as it can burden individuals. During Isra' Mi'raj, the Prophet requested Allah SWT to reduce the daily prayers from a higher number to five times a day, considering the potential strain on future generations. The key lies in sincere worship, devoid of pretense or arrogance, stemming from the heart's devotion to Allah (Stearns et al., 2018).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The concept of religious moderation is currently a prominent topic of discussion. This enthusiasm stems from the belief that religious moderation holds the key to resolving public unrest, conflicts arising from religious differences, radicalism, religious violence, and terrorism. The Quran and Hadith serve as fundamental sources of reference and guidance for Muslims in navigating life's challenges and trials. Religious moderation, as advocated in both the Quran and Hadith, entails adopting a balanced approach, avoiding extremes, and refraining from exaggeration. This principle extends beyond interactions within pluralistic societies; it also

applies to addressing various moral dilemmas, conflicts related to natural phenomena, and challenges related to humanity's relationship with the world and nature. Failure to embrace and understand this concept of balance can lead to chaos, destruction, and disorder in both human existence and the world at large.

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