

RELIGIOUS MODERATION: The Middle Way in the Midst of the Noise of Differences in the Digital Era

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Abstrak

Moderasi beragama menjadi salah satu strategi penting dalam menjaga harmoni kehidupan masyarakat Indonesia yang majemuk di tengah pesatnya perkembangan teknologi digital. Arus informasi yang tidak terkendali melalui media digital menghadirkan peluang sekaligus tantangan, terutama meningkatnya penyebaran paham radikalisme, hoaks, ujaran kebencian, dan polarisasi sosial berbasis agama. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi moderasi beragama dalam konteks masyarakat Indonesia yang plural serta mengidentifikasi tantangan dan strategi penguatannya di era digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode *library research*, buku, artikel jurnal, dan dokumen yang relevan. Data dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis isi untuk mengidentifikasi konsep, temuan, dan pola yang berkaitan dengan moderasi beragama dan literasi digital. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa digitalisasi memperluas akses masyarakat terhadap pengetahuan keagamaan, tetapi pada saat yang sama meningkatkan risiko penyebaran konten intoleran, radikalisme, hoaks, dan ujaran kebencian yang dapat mengancam kohesi sosial. Selain itu, pengalaman sosial melalui interaksi lintas agama di lingkungan pendidikan, masyarakat, dan kegiatan Kuliah Kerja Nyata terbukti menjadi media pembelajaran yang efektif dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama. Pengalaman tersebut membentuk kemampuan berpikir kritis, sikap toleran, serta kebijaksanaan dalam menyikapi informasi keagamaan di ruang digital. Dengan demikian, penguatan moderasi beragama di era digital memerlukan integrasi antara pengalaman sosial yang inklusif dan penguatan literasi digital agar masyarakat mampu berinteraksi secara kritis, bertanggung jawab, dan tetap menjaga persatuan dalam kehidupan yang plural.

Kata kunci: Moderasi beragama, Era digital, Indonesia

Abstract

Religious moderation is one of the important strategies in maintaining the harmony of the lives of the pluralistic Indonesian people in the midst of the rapid development of digital technology. The uncontrolled flow of information through digital media presents opportunities as well as challenges, especially the increasing spread of radicalism, hoaxes, hate speech, and religion-based social polarization. This research aims to analyze the implementation of religious moderation in the context of pluralistic Indonesian society and identify challenges and strategies to strengthen it in the digital era. This research uses a qualitative approach with the *library research* method through the study of various scientific literature, books, journal articles, and relevant documents. The data was analyzed using content *analysis* techniques to identify concepts, findings, and patterns related to religious moderation and digital literacy. The results show that digitalization expands people's access to religious knowledge, but at the same time increases the risk of spreading intolerant content, radicalism, hoaxes, and hate speech that can threaten social cohesion. In addition, social experiences through interfaith interactions in the educational environment, community, and Real Work Lectures activities have proven to be effective learning media in instilling the values of religious moderation. This experience has shaped critical thinking skills, tolerant attitudes, and wisdom in responding to religious information in the digital space. Thus, strengthening religious moderation in the digital era requires the integration of inclusive social experiences and strengthening digital literacy so that people are able to interact critically, responsibly, and maintain unity in a plural life.

Keywords: Religious moderation, Digital era, Indonesia

Introduction

Religious diversity is the main characteristic of Indonesian society which makes the life of the nation and state have a high level of social complexity. As a country that is not based on a particular religion, Indonesia still places religious values as an integral part of public life through constitutional guarantees for freedom of religion as stipulated in the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia. The first precept of Pancasila emphasizes that state life is built on the recognition of the value of God without leading to a theocratic system. Thus, the relationship between religious freedom and national commitment must be managed proportionately so that diversity becomes social capital in strengthening unity, tolerance, and community cohesion (Maulana et al., 2025)

In this context, religious moderation is a relevant paradigm to maintain a balance between religious commitment and inclusive social life. Religious moderation is not simply interpreted as a position in the middle, but as an attitude of being fair (*i'tidāl*), balanced (*tawāzun*), tolerant (*tasāmuḥ*), and prioritizing deliberation (*syūrā*) in responding to differences. Quraish Shihab emphasized that moderation is the ability to actively maintain balance in the midst of various extreme tendencies, so intellectual maturity, wisdom, and moral fortitude are needed in the face of changing social dynamics.

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the communication patterns and religious practices of the community. Digital media provides increasingly wide access to religious literature, da'wah spaces, Islamic discussions, and cross-community networks. However, behind these benefits, the digital space is also a medium for the spread of radicalism, intolerance, disinformation, hate speech, and religious propaganda that has the potential to strengthen social polarization (Mu'ti & Burhani, 2019) The algorithmic mechanism of social media even forms *an echo chamber* that encourages users to only receive information that is in line with their preferences, thus reducing critical dialogue and magnifying the risk of digital extremism. The high intensity of social media use also has an impact on the decline in the quality of social interaction, communication ethics, and sensitivity to the social environment, especially in young age groups (Mubarak & Rustam, 2018)

In the last five years, the study of religious moderation has undergone significant developments. Maula's research confirms that religious moderation is an important foundation in strengthening national integration in a multicultural society (Maulana et al., 2025) Muhaimin pointed out that Islamic education has a strategic role in internalizing the values of moderation through a dialogical and inclusive learning process (Dewi et al., 2022) Pauziah's research reveals that digital media presents serious challenges in the form of increasing the spread of hoaxes, hate speech, and exclusive religious narratives (Paujiyah & Firdaus, 2025) Meanwhile, Mubarak and Sunarto found that the high intensity of social media use has an effect on the decline in the quality of social interaction and

communication ethics of the younger generation (Paujiyah & Firdaus, 2025). Other research conducted by Fauzi shows that strengthening digital literacy is able to improve people's ability to verify religious information thereby reducing the potential for the spread of intolerant content (Fauzi et al., 2025).

However, these studies generally still examine religious moderation from the perspective of education, public policy, or digital literacy in part. Studies that comprehensively link religious moderation with people's social experiences and digital literacy as a strategy to face religious challenges in the era of digital transformation are still relatively limited. Most of the research also focuses more on the implementation of moderation programs in educational institutions or government policies, while the formation of moderate attitudes through social experiences that then influence individual behavior in the digital space has not been studied conceptually.

Based on these conditions, this study offers a different perspective by placing religious moderation as the result of the interaction between social experiences in the real world and digital literacy skills in virtual spaces. Social experiences, such as interfaith interactions in education, society, and community service activities, are seen as the foundation for the formation of moderate attitudes. Furthermore, digital literacy functions as an instrument to filter, verify, and interpret religious information critically so that the values of moderation are maintained in the midst of the rapid flow of digital information. The integration of these two aspects is a *novelty* offered by this research in enriching the discourse of religious moderation in the digital era.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze religious moderation in the context of a pluralistic Indonesian society and examine the challenges and strategies for strengthening it through the integration of social experiences and digital literacy. The results of this study are expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of the study of religious moderation and digital literacy, as well as a practical reference for educational institutions, governments, and community organizations in designing strategies to strengthen religious moderation that are adaptive to the development of digital technology.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with the type of library research. This approach was chosen because the research focuses on a conceptual analysis of religious moderation in a pluralistic Indonesian society and its challenges in the digital age through the study of various relevant literature sources. *Library research* allows researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of published

concepts, theories, and empirical findings so as to be able to build a scientific synthesis of the issues being studied (Supandi, 2025)

The source of research data consists of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is in the form of scientific articles published in reputable national and international journals, especially publications in the last five years (2021–2025), which discuss religious moderation, digital literacy, diversity, and digital transformation. Secondary data are obtained from academic books, proceedings, government policy documents, research reports, and other scientific references that are relevant to the research focus.

Data collection was carried out through documentation studies by browsing various scientific databases, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, DOAJ, and Garuda. Literature is selected using inclusion criteria, which is directly related to the research theme, published in credible sources, and contains empirical concepts or findings that support the analysis. Furthermore, each document is classified based on theme, approach, and research results to facilitate the synthesis process.

Data analysis uses *thematic content analysis* techniques. The analysis process is carried out through several stages, namely: 1) data reduction by selecting the most relevant literature; 2) coding and grouping of data based on main themes, such as religious moderation, digital literacy, digital radicalism, social experience, and social harmony; 3) presentation of data in the form of analytical descriptions and conceptual synthesis; and 4) drawing and verifying conclusions iteratively by comparing various sources so that a consistent and comprehensive interpretation is obtained.

To improve the credibility of the findings, the study applied the source triangulation technique through the comparison of various literature from different authors, journals, and documents. In addition, each argument is built on the results of a synthesis of various references that complement each other so as to produce a valid, objective, and academically accountable analysis.

Research Findings and Discussion

Religious Moderation

Etymologically, the term moderation has its roots in the Latin *moderatio*, which refers to a state of equilibrium, which is a position between two extreme poles, without excessive tendencies or shortcomings. This meaning also contains a dimension of self-control, especially in managing impulses that can lead to excessive attitudes or deficits. In the lexical framework of the Indonesian language, the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) defines moderation as an effort to reduce violent tendencies while avoiding extremes in attitude. Thus, the predicate "moderate" does

not simply refer to an ordinary or neutral attitude, but to a disposition that is measurable, proportional, and able to keep a distance from excessive polarization (Yuminah & Ismail, 2022).

Conceptually, moderation refers to an attitude that rejects extremity by placing oneself proportionately and measurably. In practice, moderation also includes controlling intensity in various aspects to prevent adverse impacts. In the social and religious context, moderation manifests openness to differences, respect for the beliefs of others, and a commitment to avoid attitudes and actions that lead to radicalism or conflict (Zulkarnain, 2019). In the Qur'an there are verses that explain moderation, one of which is in surah Al-Baqarah verse 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

"And so We have made you (Muslims) a just and chosen people so that you may be witnesses of human beings and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness of your (deeds)..... (Q.S Al-baqarah:143)

The verse represents the concept of moderation through the use of the term *wasath*, which literally refers to the position of "middle". However, in the tradition of interpretation, this meaning does not stop at the spatial sense, but develops into a normative concept that is synonymous with justice, namely the ability to place something proportionally according to its context. Thus, the mention of Muslims as *ummatan wasatan* contains an idealization of a collective character that is oriented towards balance, both in the realm of actions, speech, and thought construction. The Qur'an does not leave the concept at an abstract level, but elaborates it through other verses that provide concrete parameters regarding behavioral forms, verbal expressions, and thought patterns that reflect the principle of balance (D. Hidayat, 2024).

Based on this description, religious moderation can be understood as an ethical framework that places balance and proportionality as the main principles in religion. This concept does not only refer to a passive "middle" position, but contains an active demand for self-control, rejection of extreme tendencies, and placing religious beliefs and practices fairly in context. In the perspective of the Qur'an, especially through the concept of *wasath*, religious moderation is constructed as the ideal character of the *ummah* which is reflected in the harmony between actions, speech, and thoughts. Thus, religious moderation is not just a tolerant attitude, but a normative orientation that emphasizes the balance between commitment to faith and respect for diversity, in order to prevent the birth of an exclusive attitude and social conflict.

The Challenges of Religious Moderation in the Digital Era

Misinformation due to *hoaxes*

In the digital era, the flow of information moves with an intensity that is difficult to control, so not all content circulating has a validity that can be accounted for. Among the abundance of information, hoaxes are present as a form of distortion of reality that spreads in various levels ranging from mild as pseudo-entertainment to those that have a serious impact because they have the potential to trigger social conflicts and disintegration. In the socio-religious context, hoaxes not only serve as misleading information, but can also reinforce stereotypes, deepen prejudices, and encourage the birth of discriminatory attitudes between religious communities. If left unchecked, this condition has the potential to disrupt social cohesion and damage inter-group relationships in a pluralistic society (Aziz et al., 2023).

This phenomenon is increasingly complex because the use of digital media is no longer limited to a certain age group. All generations ranging from Gen X, millennials, Gen Z, to Gen Alpha have been integrated in the same digital ecosystem. However, a number of studies show that older age groups tend to have higher susceptibility to misinformation due to limited digital literacy and information verification capabilities. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by contemporary social media characters, such as TikTok, which present information in the form of fragmented short video snippets and often detached from the context entirely.

In addition, the development of artificial intelligence technology has also complicated the information landscape. AI-based content, including manipulative videos that resemble reality, creates an illusion of truth that is difficult for ordinary users to distinguish. As a result, both the elderly group and the generation that is still in the stage of cognitive development, such as Gen Alpha, become more vulnerable to receiving information as it is without a critical verification process. In this situation, digital literacy can no longer be understood simply as a technical ability to access media, but rather as a critical capacity to assess, compare, and validate information. This effort requires an intergenerational pattern of mentoring. Generation Z, who are relatively more adaptive to the dynamics of digital media, have a strategic position to play a role as a literacy mediator not in the sense of superiority, but as a bridge of knowledge that can help other groups understand the risks and working mechanisms of digital information. Thus, strengthening literacy and collaboration between generations is an important prerequisite to suppress the spread of hoaxes while maintaining the quality of digital public spaces.

The Problem of Understanding Radicalism

Indonesia cannot be categorized as a religious country, but it is also not completely secular. This position places religious freedom as a constitutional right protected by the state. In the context of a pluralistic society, this condition requires a social foundation in the form of tolerance as a mechanism to bridge differences in beliefs. This effort cannot be separated from the role of education as a strategic space in forming inclusive and mutually respectful religious awareness (Subiantoro, 2023).

On the other hand, education also faces serious challenges when it is unable to manage diversity proportionately. Social spaces, especially in the digital realm, are often used to develop exclusive narratives that have the potential to lead to radicalism. This phenomenon can be seen from the emergence of online communities that carry certain ideologies wrapped in symbols and religious legitimacy, so that they seem credible to some users.

The support of digital technology with the speed of distribution and ease of access strengthens the massive spread of this ideology across social groups. As a result, extreme teachings can easily reach the public without going through an adequate verification or understanding process. In such a situation, the absence of a religious moderation perspective has the potential to accelerate the spread of exclusive ideas and cause adverse social impacts, including increased polarization and potential conflicts in society.

The dangers of social media polarization

Social media polarization occurs when algorithms filter and present content based on user preferences, so that information exposure becomes increasingly homogeneous. In this condition, the user does not completely choose the information, but is directed by a system that reinforces previous consumption patterns. For example, when someone watches a lot of cooking tutorial videos, the homepage that appears will be dominated by similar content. This pattern shows how the algorithm narrows down the variation of information through repetition. If this mechanism occurs in ideologically charged content, repeated exposure can influence users' perspectives and attitudes, potentially creating an increasingly closed perspective on differences.

Creating Moderation in Everyday Life in the Digital Age

Realizing religious moderation in daily life is no longer limited to direct interaction, but also takes place in the digital space that is now an integral part of social life. In this context, moderation is not only reflected in the attitude of respecting differences physically, but also in the way individuals interact, communicate, and respond to information on various digital platforms. A selective attitude

in receiving information, prudence in opinions, and a willingness to dialogue openly are important indicators of moderation practices in this era (Putra et al., 2024).

On the other hand, technological developments provide various means that can be used to strengthen the values of moderation. Communication platforms such as WhatsApp, for example, not only function as a medium for exchanging messages, but can also be an educational space by sharing content that encourages tolerance, either through discussion groups, statuses, or direct communication with those with scientific authority, such as teachers or religious leaders. Similarly, media such as Twitter (X), which has a high speed of information distribution, can be used to spread moderation narratives widely, as long as it is used critically and responsibly (Baedowi & Chamadi, 2025).

In addition, the emergence of new content formats such as podcasts and short videos has also opened up alternative spaces in conveying moderation messages in a more dialogical and accessible manner. Podcasts such as LOG-in hosted by Habib Ja'far, for example, present cross-perspective discussions involving religious leaders and individuals from different backgrounds, thus showing the practice of moderation in the form of inclusive conversations. Similar content can also be found on platforms such as TikTok, where creators present a narrative of diversity in everyday life including the reality of families or work environments with different religious backgrounds as concrete representations of harmonious coexistence.

Thus, social media is not solely a source of challenge for religious moderation, but also has the potential to be a strategic instrument in strengthening it. The key lies in how users use the technology consciously and responsibly. Moderation, in this case, is not only concerned with religious differences, but also includes broader diversity such as ethnicity, race, language, and customs. In the Indonesian context based on the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, the practice of moderation is an important foundation to take care of this diversity, both in the real space and in the digital space.

Conclusion

This research shows that religious moderation is an essential strategy in maintaining the harmony of pluralistic Indonesian society, especially in the midst of digital transformation that changes the pattern of interaction and dissemination of religious information. The results of the study confirm that the formation of moderate attitudes is not only influenced by normative understanding of religious teachings, but also by social experiences through interfaith interactions, dialogue, and participation in community activities that foster tolerant, inclusive, and mutual respect. On the other hand, the development of digital technology presents challenges in the form of increasing the spread

of radicalism, disinformation, hoaxes, hate speech, and polarization that have the potential to weaken the values of moderation if not balanced with adequate digital literacy skills.

The findings of this study confirm that strengthening religious moderation requires integration between inclusive social experiences and critical digital literacy. The synergy of these two aspects allows individuals to verify religious information rationally, respond to differences proportionately, and participate in building a peaceful and constructive digital space. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of religious moderation by placing social experience and digital literacy as two complementary dimensions in shaping moderate religious behavior. Practically, the results of this research can be a reference for educational institutions, governments, religious organizations, and communities in designing programs to strengthen religious moderation that are adaptive to the development of digital technology.

This study has limitations because it uses *a library research* approach that relies on literature analysis so that it has not empirically tested the relationship between social experience, digital literacy, and religious moderation. Therefore, further research is suggested to use quantitative, qualitative field approaches, or *mixed methods* to test the conceptual model on various different community groups and social contexts so as to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of strengthening religious moderation in the digital era.

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