# RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE OBI COMMUNITY

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**Abstract**
Religious moderation is one of the policies pursued by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia to become a means of peace for Indonesian people who have a diversity of ethnicities, cultures and religions. This study aims to find out how the Obi people understand religious moderation and how it is implemented in the Obi community. This research uses descriptive qualitative research that is explaining the phenomena that occur descriptively, this research collects data using observation and interviews, the informants of this research are the Obi people. From the results of this study it can be concluded that the Obi people are not very familiar with the term religious moderation, but they are more familiar with tolerance between religious communities.
*Keywords: religious moderation, obi community*

**Abstrak**
Moderasi beragama adalah salah satu kebijakan yang ditempuh oleh kementerian agama republik Indonesia untuk menjadi alat perdamaian bagi masyarakat Indonesia yang memiliki keanekaragaman suku, budaya dan agama. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana pemahaman masyarakat Obi terhadap moderasi beragama dan bagaimana penerapannya dalam masyarakat Obi. Penelitian ini menggunakan penelitian deskriptif kualitatif yaitu menjelaskan fenomena-fenomena yang terjadi secara deskriptif, penelitian ini mengambil data dengan menggunakan observasi dan wawancara, yang menjadi informan dari penelitian ini adalah masyarakat Obi. Dari hasil penelitian ini dapat disimpulkan bahwa masyarakat Obi belum terlalu mengenal yang namanya moderasi beragama namun mereka lebih mengenal toleransi antara umat beragama.
*Kata kunci: moderasi beragama, masyarakat Obi*

## Introduction

The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia designated 2019 as the "Year of Religious Moderation". Religious moderation is used as a slogan in every programme and policy carried out by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In every activity carried out, the ministry of religion seeks to place itself as an intermediary institution (moderation) in the midst of diversity and the pressure of current developments that have an impact on aspects of religious life and nationality.(Junaedi 2019).

The religious moderation intended in this context is to bring people to a moderate understanding, not extreme in religion, and also not to deify the ratio that thinks freely without limits. Religious moderation is discussed, recited, and echoed as a benchmark in managing the lives of Indonesian people who are muticultural. The need for moderate religious narratives is not only a need for individuals and groups, but in general for citizens of the world, and especially Indonesian society, especially in the midst of the development of information technology in the face of global capitalism and accelerated politics called the digital era.(Hefni 2020).

Nowadays and in the future, the religious moderation movement promoted by the Ministry of Religion finds its momentum. Framing religious moderation is important in

maintaining the peace of religious life in Indonesian society which is diverse in religion.

Interestingly, it turns out that all recognised religions in Indonesia also recognise the teachings of religious moderation. In Islam, for example, there are concepts of washatiyah, tawassuth (middle), i'tidal (fair), and tawazun (balanced). People who apply the wasathiyah principle can be called wasith (A. Nurdin and Syahrotin Naqqiyah 2019).

In the Christian tradition, religious moderation is a perspective to mediate differences in the interpretation of Christian teachings understood by some of its adherents. One of the tips for strengthening religious moderation is to interact as much as possible between one religion and another religion, between one sect and another sect within the religious community.(Fahri, mohammad 2022)

Muslims are currently facing two challenges; First, the tendency of some Muslims to be extreme and strict in understanding the teachings contained in the Qur'an and Hadith, and trying to impose these teachings in the Muslim community, even in some cases using violence; Second, another extreme tendency is also to be loose in religion and submit to negative behaviour and thoughts that come from other cultures and civilizations. In this endeavour, they use religious texts (Qur'an and Hadith) and the works of classical scholars (turats) as a foundation and framework of thought, but by understanding them textually and regardless of historical context. So no doubt they are like a generation that was born late, because they live in the midst of modern society with the way of thinking of the previous generation.

The people living on the island of Obi have different religious beliefs, namely Islam and Christianity, after the conflict that occurred in 1999-2000 which was centred in Ambon, but spread to the Obi islands after the incident the people in the Obi islands coexisted between religious communities and looked after each other and created peace until now.

Based on the above description, several problem formulations can be formulated as follows: (1) what is meant by religious moderation? (2) how does the Obi community view religious moderation? (3) how is the implementation of religious moderation on the island of Obi?

## Research Method

In this paper, the author uses qualitative research methods. Research methodology is a science that explores research methods. Because qualitative research methods are research that intends to understand phenomena about what is experienced by research subjects, for example perceptions, motivations, actions, and others holistically, by means of descriptions in the form of language words, in a special natural context and by utilising various scientific methods.(Raco 2018)

Descriptive research is one type of research whose purpose is to present a complete picture of a social setting or is intended for exploration and clarification of a phenomenon or social reality. The method is by describing a number of variables related to the problem and the unit under study between the phenomena being tested.(Gunawan 2013)

According to Nazir in his book Research Methods, descriptive method is a method of researching the status of a human group, a subject, a set of conditions, a system of thought or even a class of events in the present. The purpose of this descriptive research is to make a description, description or painting systematically and the relationship between the phenomena being investigated.(Raco 2018)

The purpose of descriptive research is to produce an accurate description of a group, describe the mechanism of a process or relationship, provide a complete picture in either verbal or numerical form, present basic information about a relationship, create a set of categories and classify research subjects. This method also explains a set of stages or

processes, as well as to store contradictory information about the research subject.(Gunawan 2013)

This qualitative research method arises because there is a paradigm shift in looking at a phenomenon or reality or symptom. In using qualitative research methods, it is necessary to understand the method.(Gunawan 2013)

According to Nana Syaodih Sukmadinata, qualitative descriptive research is aimed at describing and describing existing phenomena, both natural and human-made, which pay more attention to the characteristics, quality, interrelationships between activities (Sandu Siyoto and Sodik 2015).

This type of descriptive qualitative research interprets and describes existing data along with the situation that is happening. This research also reveals the attitudes, conflicts, relationships and views that occur in a respondent's sphere. This type of qualitative descriptive research describes the conditions as they are, without giving treatment or manipulation to the variables studied. Descriptive qualitative research is a type of research with the process of obtaining data is what it is. This research emphasizes the meaning of the results.

The data collection technique in this research uses observation and interview techniques, the author took a sample of the Obi community, especially in the Waringi Village Community, North Obi District, South Halmahera Regency. The research was conducted on 15-30 April 2023.

**Results**

1. **Definition of religious modersion**

   In Arabic, moderate is known as al-wasathiyah. In Islamic teachings al-wasathiyah is a word recorded from the Qur'an letter Al-Baqarah verse: 143. The word al-Wasath in the verse means the best and most perfect. In a popular Hadith, it is also mentioned that the best problem is the one in the middle. In the sense of seeing and solving a problem, moderate Islam tries to approach and be in the middle, as well as in addressing a difference, both religious differences and differences in mazhab. Moderate Islam always promotes tolerance, mutual respect, while still believing in the truth and beliefs of each religion. So that all can accept decisions with a cool head, without having to divide and riot.(F. Nurdin 2021)

   Hashim Kamali, said that moderate cannot be separated from two other keywords, namely balance and justice. Moderate does not mean that we agree with the main principles (ushuliyah) of religious teachings that are believed in order to be tolerant of people of other religions. Moderate means "confidence, right balancing, and justice" Without balance and justice the call for religious moderation will be ineffective. So it can be concluded that, moderation means not to be extreme in each side of the view, both must come closer and find common ground.(Muaz and Ruswandi 2022)

   As long as extremity exists on one side, and religious moderation is absent, then religious conflicts will remain "embers in the chaff", which can explode at any time, especially if it is overgrown with political elements. This is because, as Kamali asserts above.(Duryat 2020)

   Moderation is the core teaching of Islam. Moderate Islam is a religious understanding that is very relevant in the context of diversity in all aspects, including religion, customs, ethnicity and nation. Undoubtedly, the diversity of religious understanding is a fact in the history of Islam. This diversity is caused, among other things, by the dialectic between text and reality, and the perspective on

the position of reason and revelation in addressing a problem. The consequence of this fact is the emergence of group names that follow behind the word Islam. For example, Fundamental Islam, Liberal Islam, Progressive Islam, Moderate Islam, and many other labels.(Salamah, Nugroho, and Nugroho 2020).

In the Qur'an, there are several verses that show the mission of Islam, the characteristics of Islamic teachings, and the characteristics of Muslims. The mission of Islam is as a mercy for the entire universe (rahmatan lil 'alamin), QS.al-Anbiya': 107. The characteristics of Islamic teachings are a religion that is in accordance with humanity (fitrah), QS.al-Rûm: 30, while the characteristics of Muslims are moderate people (ummatan wasatan), QS. Al-Baqarah: 143. In addition, there are also verses that command Muslims to be on the side of truth (hanîf), QS.al-Rûm: 30, as well as upholding justice (QS. al-Maidah: 8) and goodness in order to become the best people (khair ummah), QS. Ali 'Imrân: The above verses emphasise the need for religion with a moderate attitude (tawassuth) which is described as umatan wasathan, so that at this time many scholars teach the concept of Islamic moderation (wasathiyyah al-Islâm). Indeed, there are also Islamic groups that disagree with this concept of moderation, because it is considered to sell religion to other parties.(F. Nurdin 2021)

One of the scholars who have elaborated on moderation is Yusuf al-Qaradhawi. he is a moderate Ikhwan figure and is very critical of Sayyid Quthb's thinking, which is considered to inspire the emergence of radicalism and extremism as well as teachings that accuse other groups of being thâghût or takfiri infidels. Yusuf Al-Qardhawi said that the signs of this moderation include: (Abror Mhd. 2020). (1) a global understanding of Islam, (2) a balance between the provisions of sharia and the times, (3) support for peace and respect for human values, (4) recognition of religious, cultural and political diversity, (5) recognition of minority rights.

Since this moderation emphasises attitudes, the form can be different in each region, because the problems faced in one region are different from the problems that occur in other regions. In Muslim-majority countries, the attitude of moderation at least includes: recognition of the existence of the other side, the possession of a tolerant attitude, respect for differences of opinion, and not imposing the will with violence. This is based on Quranic verses, including respect for differences and respect for the willingness to interact (QS. al-Hujurât: 13), expression of religion wisely and politely (QS. al-Nahl: 125), the principle of convenience according to ability (QS. al-Baqarah: 185, al-Baqarah: 286 and QS. al-Taghâbun: 16).(Akhmadi 2019).

These basic criteria can also be used to characterise moderate Muslims in Muslim minority countries, although in reality there are differences, especially in relation to the relationship between religion and the state. In Muslim minority countries such as America, John Esposito and Karen Armstrong, as narrated by Muqtadir Khan, describe a moderate Muslim as someone who expresses Islam in a friendly manner and is willing to coexist peacefully with followers of other religions and is comfortable with democracy and the separation of politics and religion.(Hefni 2020)

Religious moderation must be understood as a religious attitude that must respect and appreciate the religion embraced by everyone. This balance or middle ground in religious practice will undoubtedly prevent us from being excessively extreme and fanatical. As previously hinted, religious moderation is a solution to the presence of different views in religion.(Abidin 2021)

Religious moderation is actually the key to creating tolerance and harmony, both at the local, national and global levels. The choice of moderation by rejecting extremism and liberalism in religion is the key to balance, for the maintenance of civilisation and the creation of peace. This is how religious believers can treat others with respect, accept differences, and live together in peace and harmony. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, religious moderation may not be an option, but a necessity." (Syatar et al. 2020)

**Discussion**

1. **Understanding of obi's people in religious moderation**

Research related to religious moderation has been quite a lot done in various regions, especially in Java. However, in the North Maluku region, especially in the Obi area, no one has ever conducted research related to religious moderation so it can be said that this research is the first research to discuss religious moderation on the island of Obi, so it requires researchers to work hard in collecting data in the field and presenting data according to what happens in the field.

The people in the Obi islands have been living peacefully and side by side between religious communities for quite a long time, they respect and appreciate each other between religious communities. The majority of Obi islanders are farmers and fishermen. Recently, there have been many mining operations on the island of Obi, although the tolerance between religious communities remains stable and maintained.

The word religious moderation is not very popular on the island of Obi. This is due to the lack of figures campaigning for religious moderation on the island. Nevertheless, the people of Obi island have implemented a life of religious moderation, because they have known the name of tolerance between religious communities.

The concept of religious moderation is not much different from the concept of tolerance. So it is not surprising that the people of Obi Island have implemented the concept of religious moderation long before it was announced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

According to the understanding of the Obi community, the concept of religious moderation is the same as the concept of tolerance that they have lived so far. So they no longer feel unfamiliar with the concept of religious moderation. The people of Obi Island are used to coexisting between religious communities so there is no doubt about the understanding of religious moderation. The only difference between religious moderation and tolerance is the use of the arrangement of letters that form the word, but in essence it is the same for the Obi community.

2. **Implementation of religious moderation in Obi society**

In the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), implementation means implementation or application. Implementation is usually done after planning has been considered perfect. According to Nurdin, implementation is not just an activity, but a planned activity to achieve goals. Thus, implementation is an action that must follow the initial thinking so that something actually happens.(Haryani 2020)

Purwanto said that implementation has a core understanding as an activity to distribute policy output (to deliver policy output) carried out by implementers to the target group as an effort to realise the policy. (Hasan 2021)

So it can be concluded that the implementation of religious moderation is a community activity that does not cause conflict and creates harmony and peace between religious communities in accordance with predetermined goals.

In the Obi community, before the existence of religious moderation, they hardly knew tolerance between religious communities and had applied it in their daily lives. In the application of religious moderation is not much different from tolerance between religious communities, indirectly they have also applied religious moderation in everyday life.

In the daily life of the Obi community, they respect and appreciate each other between religious communities. When there is a religious momentum, for example on Eid al-Fitr, people of non-Muslim religions enliven the Eid al-Fitr holiday, by visiting Muslim homes.

Similarly, with Christian religious events on Christmas, for example, there are Muslims who come to meet Christians and enliven the event and even make special food for their Muslim brothers and sisters because they know in the teachings of Islam they are prohibited from eating pork. This has been going on for a long time safely and peacefully.

## Conclusion

Moderate Islam is the core teaching of Islam, which is very relevant in the context of diversity in all aspects, including religion, customs, ethnicity and nation. Moderation is a religious understanding that is very relevant in the context of diversity in all aspects, including religion, customs, ethnicity and nation. The consequence of this fact is the emergence of group names that follow behind the word Islam. The consequence of this fact is the emergence of the names of the groups The verses above emphasise the need for religion with a moderate attitude (tawassuth) which is described as umatan wasathan. Yusuf al-Qaradhawi said that the signs of this moderation, between a global understanding of Islam, a balance between the provisions of the shari'ah and the times, support peace and respect for human values, recognition of religious, cultural and political diversity, and recognition of the rights of minorities.

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