



Religious Moderation in Responding to Gender, Human Rights, and Ecology Issues: An Examination in the Perspective of Contemporary Islamic Studies

¹Rini Asmiati, ¹Yulia Suprehatin, ¹Fahmi Kamar, ¹Kamaruddin, ¹Khojir, ¹Eko Nursalim

¹UIN Sultan Aji Muhammad Idris Samarinda, Indonesia

Corresponding Author  asmiatirini1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Religious moderation is a fundamental concept in Islamic teachings that prioritizes the principles of balance, justice and tolerance, both in religious and social life. In facing the challenges of globalization and the dynamics of modern times such as radicalism, gender inequality, human rights violations, and environmental crises, a moderate approach to religion is an important strategy in maintaining harmony, harmony, and diversity. This research aims to explore the relevance of religious moderation in the contemporary social context by highlighting the importance of reinterpreting Islamic teachings based on the values of gender justice, respect for human rights, and rejection of all forms of violence in the name of religion. Through a study of contemporary Islamic thought and the maqashid sharia approach (the main purpose of sharia), this study reveals that religious moderation can be used as a foundation in the formation of character education, the development of inclusive public policies, and the strengthening of constructive interfaith dialog. This approach not only plays a role in overcoming social polarization, but also in building a just, equal and sustainable society. Thus, religious moderation in Islam is not just a middle-of-the-road attitude, but an active commitment to the values of civilization, social justice and peace. The findings of this study confirm that a moderate and contextualized Islam is able to contribute to a just and sustainable society.

Keywords: Islamic Studies, Orientalism, Occidentalism, Epistemology, Decolonization, Academic Discourse

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INTRODUCTION

The term moderation in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) is defined as the act of distancing oneself from extreme behavior or reducing violence, which shows its association with moderation, not imposing one's will, and tending to seek the middle point as a solution to various social and spiritual problems. In English, the term moderation has various meanings such as average, core, standard, and non-aligned, indicating that the values of moderation are rooted in the principles of balance, justice, and openness.

In the practice of social and religious life, moderation plays an important role in guiding interactions between people, especially when facing differences in beliefs, views and cultures. Religious moderation, for example, is the attitude of rejecting all forms of

extremism such as radicalism and fanaticism, and promoting the middle way (wasathiyah) in addressing religious issues, by emphasizing the importance of dialogue, tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society.

In this fast-paced globalization and digital era, society is faced with changes in values and patterns of social interaction that are very dynamic. One of the impacts that is felt clearly is the erosion of the values of tolerance and mutual respect between community groups, including between religious communities (Fardiensyah & Admizal, 2023) . This phenomenon is not only contrary to the teachings of Islam, which emphasizes mercy and compassion, but also contradicts the reality of Indonesia's multicultural and multi-religious diversity. In this context, religious moderation becomes very relevant to answer the challenges of the times by building a balanced and fair perspective, attitude, and practice of religion, and rejecting all forms of extremism, intolerance, and radicalism.

Religious moderation is also an urgent need because Indonesia is a religious country based on Pancasila, which upholds the values of divinity and diversity. Indonesia's diversity in terms of religion, culture, language and ethnicity is a gift that must be preserved. However, the potential for religious and ideology-based conflict remains a real threat. In this case, religious moderation is present as a cultural and spiritual strategy that can maintain harmony, strengthen national unity, and prevent social disintegration. The concepts of moderation in Islam such as rahmatan lil 'alamin and wasathiyah show that Muslims must be the pioneers in maintaining harmony and social justice.

Religious moderation provides a value framework for instilling characters who are just, inclusive, and compassionate towards others and nature (Millah & Nasution, 2024) . By making religious moderation part of character education, community development, and state policy, Indonesia will be better prepared to face global challenges while maintaining its identity as a civilized and religious nation.

Today's global challenges are complex and interrelated, including gender inequality, human rights violations and the environmental crisis. Gender inequality remains a major issue in sustainable development. Gender equality is one of the core goals, goal 5, which aims to empower women and girls and eliminate all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence (Masela et al., 2024) . However, despite various policies and initiatives, data shows that violence against women has actually experienced a significant increase, as reflected in the Komnas Perempuan report in 2021 which recorded more than 338,000 cases of gender-based violence. This shows that the power gap and unequal social relations are still the root of the main problem.

On the other hand, human rights violations and environmental crises are also major challenges that impact across sectors, including vulnerable groups such as women and children. In the context of climate change, women are often the most affected group due to limited access to resources, information and decision-making. This exacerbates existing inequalities. In addition, the practice of human rights violations that occur due to conflict, environmental exploitation, and oppression of women environmental activists, shows that the struggle for social justice cannot be separated from environmental protection and the fulfillment of basic human rights (Hasan, 2025) . Therefore, a development approach that is gender-equitable, sustainable, and respectful of human rights is an urgency in responding to today's global challenges.

Islamic studies has a very important role in responding to contemporary issues such as gender equality, human rights violations, and social injustice. Islam as a religion that upholds justice and equality basically recognizes human dignity without

distinguishing gender, ethnicity, or social status. Universal values contained in the Qur'an and hadith such as justice (al-adl), compassion (rahmah), and human glory (karamah insāniyyah) can be used as a basis for building an inclusive and equitable social order (Afida et al., 2025a). Reinterpretation of religious texts that have been read patriarchally is important, especially so that Islamic teachings are not used as justification for discrimination and violence against women.

Contemporary Muslim thinkers such as Amina Wadud, Musdah Mulia, and Fatima Mernissi have made major contributions in developing gender-perspective interpretations to promote equal rights between men and women in Islam. Their thoughts prove that Islamic teachings have a wide space to emphasize social justice and the elimination of subordination against women. In the context of Indonesia, which is predominantly Muslim but is still overwhelmed by a patriarchal culture, Islamic studies become very relevant in providing gender-just theological enlightenment and becoming a means of social and religious education so that people are more critical and solutive in dealing with global issues related to human rights and equality. With a contextual and moderative approach, Islamic studies can play a transformative role in creating a more just and civilized society.

METHOD

This research is a qualitative type of literature study or library research reading and reviewing several articles, journals and books to find out the learning model of Islamic Religious Education based on religious moderation in the era of society 5.0. The approach used in this research is a descriptive approach (Afida et al., 2025b). Data collection techniques through primary data sources taken from journals, books, magazines and other relevant literature as secondary data sources. The data analysis technique used in this research is content analysis to draw conclusions through an effort to find the characteristics of messages that are carried out objectively and systematically.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Religious Moderation in Contemporary Islamic Studies

The concept of religious moderation or wasathiyah Islam is a principle in Islamic teachings that prioritizes the middle way, balance, and justice in behavior, religion, and social interaction. Etymologically, the term wasathiyah comes from the word "wasath" which means middle, fair, or balanced. In the Qur'an, Muslims are referred to as ummatan wasathan (the middle people) who are required not to be extreme, both in religious practice and social life (Pratama et al., 2024). In other words, moderation in Islam is not a compromise on principles, but rather a wise and proportional approach in living religious teachings in order to remain relevant, harmonious and inclusive in the context of a diverse society.

The characteristics of religious moderation include: First, tawassuth (being in the middle), which is not leaning to the extreme right (radical) or extreme left (liberal), but being fair and objective. Second, tawazun (balance), which is balancing between rights and obligations, between aspects of the world and the hereafter, and between thoughts and actions. Third, tasamuh (tolerance), which is respecting differences and being open to diversity of beliefs and cultures. Fourth, islah (improvement), which is always oriented towards the goodness and benefit of the people, both in social, cultural and religious matters.

In contemporary Islamic studies, approaches to tafsir, maqashid sharia, and modern ijihad play an important role in responding to the challenges of the changing

times. The thinking of al-Shafi'i, which distinguishes between general knowledge (qath'i) and specific knowledge (zhanni), became an important foundation in determining the scope of ijihad. Modern ijihad develops from this framework by emphasizing that ijihad can only be applied to legal matters that have not been explicitly regulated in the Qur'an and al-Sunnah. Scholars such as al-Ghazali and al-Amidi emphasized that ijihad does not cover matters of faith and qath'i laws that have clear evidence (Mukhibat et al., 2023). However, ijihad still has a wide scope in zhanni matters, both in terms of legal substance and interpretation, thus enabling the birth of Islamic law reform that is contextual and relevant to the needs of modern society. The maqashid sharia approach and thematic interpretation in contemporary Islamic studies also provide greater space to consider the maslahat of the people, so that Islamic law remains alive and applicable in addressing the social, political and cultural dynamics of Muslims today.

Gender Issues in the Perspective of Moderate Islam

Gender issues in an Islamic perspective are closely related to how Islamic teachings are understood and implemented in the context of the roles and positions of men and women in social, educational, and religious life. In the framework of Islamic education that refers to the Qur'an and Hadith as the main source, as stated by Zakiyah Daradjat, education does not only emphasize aspects of aqidah and worship, but includes all human dimensions, including justice and equality between men and women. Islam views men and women as equal beings who have the same spiritual and intellectual potential, as well as equal moral responsibility in shaping society (Taklimudin & Jannah, 2023). However, in practice, a biased understanding of religious texts often leads to unequal gender roles, where women tend to experience subordination. Therefore, a holistic and moderate understanding of Islamic education needs to be developed in order to be able to foster individuals who are physically and mentally balanced, and fair in respecting gender rights in accordance with the values of Islamic teachings.

The gender inequality that occurs in many societies cannot be separated from the influence of patriarchal religious interpretations and cultural constructions. One of the main concepts that explains this is patriarchy, which is different from patrilineal. Patrilineal simply indicates paternal lineage, while patriarchy is a social system that places men as the main rulers in the family and society (Amin & Kamarudin, 2020). In a patriarchal system, men hold authority over women and have control over economic, social, and spiritual resources. Women are considered as subservient, and this system maintains inequality through various cultural and symbolic mechanisms, such as gender role labeling, social norms, and laws that tend to favor men.

Furthermore, the patriarchal system not only physically restrains women through restrictions on their movement in the domestic sphere, but also psychologically. Women who are sequestered at home do not have access to economic independence, so they become socially and emotionally dependent on men. This dependency is then reinforced by moral and legal norms that affirm men's dominance as the superior party in the public sphere. This situation makes it increasingly difficult for women to obtain equal rights, both in the context of family, education, work, and decision-making. Therefore, criticism of the patriarchal system needs to be directed at the social structures and cultural interpretations that justify inequality, so that a more just and gender-equal society can be built.

Human Rights in the Perspective of Moderate Islam

Human rights in the Islamic context, especially in the Qur'an, show that this concept is not foreign to Islamic teachings. The term al-huquq al-insaniyah in Arabic

indicates recognition of the rights inherent in every human being because of their humanity, not because of social status, gender, religion, or ethnicity. The word *ḥaqq* (right) in Arabic means belonging, determination, and certainty, which implies that the right is fixed and cannot be violated. In the Qur'an, the meaning of *ḥaqq* is also related to truth, justice, and something that must apply (Nuraeni et al .., 2024).

The principles of human rights in the Qur'an and Sunnah not only affirm respect for basic human rights, but also place spiritual values as the basis for their fulfillment. In Islam, these rights are not merely a product of social agreement, but part of Allah's mandate to humans as caliphs on earth (Jalil, 2021) . In addition to dignity, equality, justice, freedom, peace, social security, and property rights, Islam also teaches the right to protection of the soul (*hifz al-nafs*), the right to education, and the right to freedom of thought and expression within limits that do not violate divine values.

The principles of human rights in the Qur'an and Sunnah include fundamental values that place humans as noble and dignified beings. These principles include. First, human dignity (*al-karamah al-insaniyah*) humans are created with glory and honor. Second, equality (*al-musawah*) all humans are equal regardless of race, gender, or social status, except in piety. Third, justice (*adl*) is affirmed in various verses to be upheld by every individual, including against non-Muslims. Third, freedom (*al-hurriyah*) includes freedom of thought, religion, and opinion while remaining within the ethical corridor Fourth, peace (*as-salam*) Islam encourages peaceful efforts in internal and external conflicts. Fifth, social security (*al-dhahan al-ijtima'i*) the obligation of zakat and attention to the poor is a form of social care. Sixth, the right to ownership (*al-haq fi al-milkiyah*) Islam protects individual property rights and prohibits (Herman, 2018).

The dialogue between international human rights and Islamic law is an important discourse in the contemporary world, especially in the context of Muslim countries. In this discourse, contradictory views often emerge (Amin & Kamarudin, 2020) . On the one hand, some Islamic thinkers, especially progressive ones, believe that Islamic teachings are essentially compatible with human rights principles such as justice, equality, freedom of religion, and the right to live with dignity.

These values can be found in the teachings of the Qur'an and Sunnah, which uphold human dignity regardless of background. In fact, human rights can be seen as part of religious responsibility (Ritonga et al., 2024) because Islamic law was revealed to protect the five main objectives of *maqasid al sharia* religion, soul, mind, offspring, and property. Therefore, the basic principles of human rights have many values in common with Islamic law.

On the other hand, many Islamic thinkers, especially traditional ones, are skeptical of the Western formulation of human rights. They believe that international human rights overemphasize individualism, which is not in line with Islamic principles that balance individual rights and the collective interests of society. In addition, there is a suspicion that human rights issues are often used as a political tool by Western countries to dictate to the Islamic world or even as a pretext for intervention (Sakup et al., 2025) . Therefore, some Muslim thinkers have tried to reformulate the concept of human rights rooted in Islamic values. They believe that the recognition of human rights will be more effective if it is done through the approach of Islamic law itself, rather than simply adopting Western standards. This dialogue shows the need for an inclusive, critical and contextual approach so that the bridge between universal human rights values and Islamic local wisdom can be built harmoniously.

The challenge of extremism and fundamentalism in the Islamic context today is a serious problem that not only affects social and political stability, but also tarnishes the

image of Islam as a religion of mercy for the universe. Fundamentalism, especially in extreme forms, tends to show a literal, rigid, and exclusive religious understanding, rejecting pluralism and closing the space for inter-religious interpretation and dialog (Nuraeni et al., 2024) . In its most extreme form, fundamentalism develops into radicalism that legitimizes violence, such as suicide bombings and takfir against fellow Muslims who disagree. This can be traced to the historical legacy of the Khawarij group who believed that the perpetrators of major sins deserved to be punished as infidels and killed (Umam & Koestanto, 2024) . In modern situations, such movements emerge as a response to dissatisfaction with political, social and globalization realities that are considered detrimental to Muslims, as well as an effort to bring back the glory of Islam in the past through strict enforcement of sharia formalization.

However, the biggest challenge of this extremism is how the teachings of Islam, which are supposed to be inclusive, humanist and uphold social justice, are used as a justification for violence and ideological domination. A rigid and textualist understanding of religion, accompanied by a rejection of contextual and historical approaches, gives rise to dangerous religious exclusivism. This challenge becomes even more complex when radical ideologies enter the realm of education, social media and public discourse without critical filters. So, the response to extremism is not enough only with a security approach, but also through moderate religious education, strengthening contextual Islamic literacy, and empowering the community to be able to sort out authentic teachings from dangerous ideological distortions (Lubis, 2022) . Deradicalization efforts must be carried out through interfaith dialogue strategies, balanced spiritual guidance, and the active role of the state and influential religious figures in spreading peaceful, just and tolerant Islamic values.

Ecology and Islamic Responsibility for the Environment

Ecology is a science that studies the reciprocal relationship between living things and the environment in which they live. In the Islamic view, the environment is not just a place for human life, but part of God's creation that has spiritual and moral values (Barizi & Yufarika, 2025) . Therefore, preserving nature is part of a Muslim's religious responsibility. Environmental degradation such as pollution, deforestation, and climate change are not only technical issues, but also involve violations of Allah's mandate to humans as caliphs on earth.

The Qur'an explicitly states that humans are caliphs who are given the responsibility to maintain and not destroy the earth. As Allah says in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 30, humans are appointed as caliphs to manage the earth wisely and responsibly. This responsibility is not only ecological, but also spiritual, because every action towards nature will be held accountable in the afterlife (Huwayda et al., 2025) . In addition, the universe in Islam is seen as verses (signs) of Allah's greatness that must be respected, as mentioned in QS. Ali Imran verse 190 about the creation of the heavens and the earth as a sign for those who understand.

Islam teaches several important principles in protecting the environment, including balance (tawazun), prohibition of excess (israf), and prohibition of doing damage (fasad). Allah created everything with perfect size and balance, as in QS. Ar-Rahman verses 7-8, humans are prohibited from destroying this balance. Excessive use of resources, such as water, food or energy, is also strongly condemned in Islam because it can cause environmental damage. In QS. Al-Isra verse 27, wasteful people are described as the devil's brothers (Asy'ari, 2021) (Pratama et al., 2024) . In addition, the command not to destroy the earth is emphasized in QS. Al-A'raf verse 56, which reminds humans not to make damage after Allah has repaired it.

The Prophet Muhammad also set an example in treating the environment wisely. He advocated planting trees, maintaining cleanliness, being economical in the use of water even when making ablutions in rivers, and forbidding the killing of animals without justified reasons. In a hadith narrated by Ahmad, the Prophet said that if someone has a tree seedling in his hand even though the end of the world will occur, he is still encouraged to plant it. This shows how important environmental conservation is in Islamic teachings.

In the midst of the current global ecological crisis, Muslims are required to take an active role in protecting and preserving the environment. Awareness of the importance of ecology must be part of the education and daily life practices of Muslims. The integration of environmental values in Islamic education, both in schools, madrasah, and pesantren, is a strategic step to form a generation that loves the environment (Emawati et al., 2021). In addition, concrete actions such as reducing the use of plastic, maintaining environmental cleanliness, supporting forest conservation, and using environmentally friendly energy are concrete forms of a Muslim's responsibility to the earth.

Thus, protecting the environment is not only a social or scientific obligation, but also a part of faith and a form of gratitude for the blessings of Allah SWT. Islam places nature as a trust, and humans as custodians who must care for and preserve it. In this context, ecology and environmental responsibility are integral parts of Islamic teachings that must be kept alive and practiced in daily life.

Religious Moderation as a Contemporary Islamic Approach

Religious moderation is an important concept in contemporary Islamic discourse that aims to present a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive face of Islam in a plural and dynamic society. In Islam itself, moderation is not a new concept, but an integral part of the teachings of Islam which from the beginning taught balance (tawazun), justice (al-'adl), and the middle way (wasathiyah) (Amrulloh & Hishamudin, 2023). In the Qur'an, the term wasathiyah is explicitly mentioned in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, where Allah refers to Muslims as "ummatan wasathan" or moderate people. This shows that Islam does not want its people to be extreme, either in the form of exaggeration (ghuluw) or trivialization (taqshir) of religious teachings.

In the contemporary context, religious moderation is a very relevant approach to respond to various challenges of the times such as radicalism, intolerance, violence in the name of religion, and social polarization that is getting stronger. This approach comes as a solution to create harmony between religious communities and build a peaceful civilization based on the principles of civilized Islam (Millah & Nasution, 2024). In the midst of a globalized world full of cross-cultural and religious interactions, moderation is the key to building social cohesion and maintaining national stability. Moderation does not mean mixing religious teachings or reducing the quality of Islamic commitment, but rather reaffirming the mission of Islam as a mercy for all nature (rahmatan lil 'alamin).

A moderate attitude in religion is reflected in the ability of Muslims to maintain a balance between text and context, between normative ideals and complex social realities. This approach prioritizes tolerance, deliberation, and respect for differences (Lutfhi et al., 2024). In its implementation, religious moderation is not only limited to the theological dimension, but also includes social, political, and cultural aspects. For example, in the field of education, moderation can be realized through a curriculum that instills values of diversity and interfaith dialogue. In the field of da'wah, a moderate approach encourages the use of language that is polite, persuasive, and does not corner

other parties. In social life, moderation is reflected in efforts to build harmonious relations with fellow citizens regardless of religious or ethnic backgrounds.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that religious moderation is not a form of secularization or an effort to reduce the role of religion in public life. Moderation instead strengthens religion as a moral and spiritual force capable of guiding people towards a life of justice and dignity (Alibe, 2022). In the midst of extremism that tends to close the space for dialogue and diversity, moderation is present to emphasize that differences are a necessity that must be addressed wisely, not with hostility. Therefore, religious moderation is an expression of mature, mature and responsible religiosity.

In Indonesia, religious moderation has become part of the national policy in building a harmonious and peaceful society. The government through the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has carried out religious moderation as a strategic program involving various elements of society, including religious leaders, educators, and youth (Masela et al., 2024). This shows that moderation is not only an academic discourse, but also a concrete and systematic social movement. Through this approach, it is hoped that Muslims can play an active role in resolving national issues without abandoning their religious identity.

Thus, religious moderation as a contemporary Islamic approach is not only a solution to various problems of the times, but also a form of Muslim awareness in actualizing the values of Islamic teachings that are compassionate, just, and respectful of diversity (Aulia, 2024). In this framework, Islam is not only understood as a ritual religion, but also as a life guide that guides humans to live in harmony with others and the universe

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation in Islam is an important approach to address contemporary challenges such as gender, human rights and ecological issues, based on the principles of balance (*wasathiyah*), justice and tolerance. To implement these values, it is necessary to integrate religious moderation in the education curriculum in order to form a tolerant and just generation. In addition, the government and related institutions should develop public policies that are inclusive, have a gender perspective, and respect human rights. Inter-religious and intercultural dialog also needs to be enhanced to strengthen social harmony, while environmental awareness should be promoted as part of religious responsibility. The role of religious leaders and community leaders is also crucial in spreading a moderate and contextualized understanding of Islam, so as to create a harmonious, just and sustainable society.

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