

Religious Moderation Policy: Concept, Implementation, and Challenges in Indonesia

Yevi Yasmini ^{1*}, Muh. Sobari ², Yuniar ³, Junaidah ⁴

¹ Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan; Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang; Indonesia; Email : yeviyasmini@madrasah.kemenag.go.id

² Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan; Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang; Indonesia; Email : muhammadsobari010183@gmail.com

³ Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan; Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang; Indonesia; Email : yuniar_uin@radenfatah.ac.id

⁴ Program Studi Manajemen Pendidikan Islam; Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan; Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang; Indonesia; Email : junaidah@radenintan.ac.id

*Corresponding author : **Yevi Yasmini**

Abstract. Indonesia as a multicultural country with religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity faces serious challenges in maintaining social harmony amidst increasing intolerance, extremism, and politicization of religion. In response, the government developed a religious moderation policy to instill just, balanced, and tolerant religious values. However, this policy has not been fully grounded in society, given the gap in understanding between state idealism and the developing social reality. This study aims to analyze the concept, implementation, and structural and cultural challenges in the implementation of religious moderation policies in Indonesia. The method used is a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) technique on various relevant national and international scientific publications in the period 2018–2024. The results of the study show that the implementation of this policy is still dominated by a formalistic approach and has not involved active participation from grassroots communities. In addition, ideological resistance, weak public communication, and minimal impact-based evaluation are the main challenges. Therefore, a more participatory, contextual, and local culture-based moderation approach is needed so that this policy does not just become a state project, but a shared life value.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Public Policy, Tolerance, Multicultural Society.

1. Introduction

In the dynamics of multicultural national and state life, Indonesia faces a major challenge in maintaining a balance between religious freedom, harmony between religious communities, and the integration of national values. Amidst the diversity of tribes, religions, races, and groups, the state requires a policy approach that is not only normative and reactive, but also transformative in responding to the increasingly complex challenges of religiosity [1]. One such approach is religious moderation, a paradigm that emphasizes the principles of justice, balance, and anti-extremism in religious practice. This concept has begun to gain a place in Indonesian public policy discourse along with the increasing socio-religious tensions that are prone to leading to intolerance, discrimination, and violence. By placing moderation as a cultural strategy and national policy, Indonesia seeks to strengthen social cohesion which has so far been the backbone of the country's integrity [2].

The policy of religious moderation faces serious challenges, both at the ideological, structural, and cultural levels. The phenomena of intolerance and radicalism that have emerged in various public spaces, including educational institutions, social media, and even government institutions, show that the internalization of the values of moderation has not yet been fully rooted in society. For example, the continued existence of acts of prohibition of worship against minority groups, rejection of the construction of houses of worship, and

Received March 15 2025;

Revised March 29 2025;

Accepted April 27 2025;

Published : April 30 2025

Curr. Ver: April 30 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the author.
Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

widespread religious-based hate speech in the digital world, are a reflection that moderation has not yet become a collective consciousness. [3] . On the other hand, the implementation of this policy also often faces resistance from certain groups who consider moderation as a form of limiting religious expression or even as a political agenda. Therefore, understanding the implementation and challenges of this policy is crucial to analyzing the effectiveness of the state's approach in responding to existing religious plurality.

There is a phenomenon where religious moderation is often only understood as a ceremonial institutional project, without in-depth efforts to ground its core values in the education system, public services, and the culture of religious organizations. Moderation often stops at a slogan without being accompanied by a substantial and measurable implementation strategy [4] . When religious moderation is positioned only as an administrative policy or short-term projects, the long-term goal of transforming values and changing an inclusive religious culture becomes difficult to achieve. For example, a religious moderation training program for ASN, teachers, and religious figures has indeed been running, but the question is how much influence does it have on changing religious views and behavior in the field? This challenge is exacerbated by the lack of evaluation indicators that can measure the success of the policy objectively and comprehensively. As a result, it is difficult to assess whether this policy really addresses the root of the problem of intolerance or simply covers up its symptoms.

Based on data released by the Setara Institute in 2023, there were still 109 cases of violations of freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia, including prohibitions on worship, destruction of places of worship, and attacks on minority groups. This data shows that although the government has launched various religious moderation programs, their impact on social reality has not been very significant [5] . In addition, a survey by the Indonesian Survey Institute (2022) showed that 47% of respondents stated that they were reluctant to live side by side with religious groups with different views. This shows that resistance to pluralism is still high in society. Meanwhile, at the policy level, not a few local governments still issue discriminatory regulations against certain groups, which are contrary to the spirit of moderation. These various data reflect the gap between the policy narrative and the reality of its implementation in the field.

Several studies have attempted to examine this issue from various perspectives. For example, research by [6] highlighted the government's approach to implementing religious moderation through character education in religious-based schools, but found that its implementation was still limited to the theoretical level and had not yet touched on the curriculum as a whole. Meanwhile, a study by [7] examined the role of religious figures in socializing the values of moderation, but found a disparity between religious figures at the center and in the regions in interpreting the concept of moderation. Another study by [8] examined the strategy of the Ministry of Religion in mainstreaming moderation through ASN training, but revealed that this training had not been balanced with strong monitoring, so it had little impact on institutional attitudes and policies. From these three studies, it appears that although religious moderation has become part of national policy, the implementation challenges and gaps between narrative and action are still very real.

Based on all previous studies above, it seems that most researchers only focus on the institutional and formalistic approach of religious moderation policies, and emphasize the role of the state as the main actor in socializing its values. However, there is less focus on the dynamics of implementation at the grassroots community level, including how society perceives this concept and the cultural challenges that accompany it. Therefore, to fill this gap, this study will focus more on exploring the conceptualization, implementation, and challenges of religious moderation policies in Indonesia with a sociological and cultural approach, and highlight how non-state actors such as civil society organizations, the media, and local communities are involved in supporting or even rejecting the practice of religious moderation.

The purpose of this study is to examine in depth how the concept of religious moderation is formulated in public policy in Indonesia, how the implementation process takes place at various levels of society, and the challenges that arise in its implementation. This study also aims to analyze the dynamics between the formal state narrative and public perceptions of religious moderation, in order to find common ground between state policy and social needs in a multicultural society. In addition, this study is expected to provide

strategic recommendations in the formulation and implementation of more inclusive, adaptive, and sustainable moderation policies, taking into account the diversity of religious perspectives and the complex socio-cultural conditions of Indonesia. Thus, the results of this study will not only enrich the academic treasury regarding the study of religious policy, but also provide a real contribution to strengthening public harmony and civility in Indonesia.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Religious Moderation in the Perspective of Social and Religious Theory

Religious moderation is an approach that arises from the awareness of the importance of balance in carrying out religious teachings, both in terms of belief, practice, and social interaction. Conceptually, religious moderation does not simply mean a position in the middle between the extreme right and the extreme left, but rather reflects a wise, just, and common-interest-oriented attitude. In the context of social theory, moderation can be understood through the perspective of social constructivism which views that religious identity is formed and developed in relation to the social environment, not as a static entity [9]. In this view, a person's religiosity will be greatly influenced by socio-cultural construction, education, and cross-group interaction experiences. Therefore, moderation is a process that is continuously formed and renewed in the space of social interaction. In the Islamic framework, religious moderation or *wasathiyah* is a principle taken from the Qur'an (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143) and refers to Muslims as *ummatan wasathan* (middle people), namely people who prioritize balance between the world and the hereafter, between spirituality and rationality, and between tolerance and firmness of values.

In contemporary religious studies, the concept of religious moderation is increasingly gaining scientific and political legitimacy along with the increasing threat of radicalism and intolerance. Religious moderation is not understood as a form of compromise with religious teachings, but rather as a middle way that combines commitment to teachings and adaptation to the social context. In this case, a social hermeneutic approach is used to interpret religious texts contextually so that they remain relevant to the challenges of the times. Moderation is not an attempt to dilute beliefs, but to reaffirm the importance of practicing religion with an awareness of the diversity of humanity. Therefore, the policy of religious moderation developed by the state through the Ministry of Religion, including through ASN training, strengthening the religious education curriculum, and religious literacy on social media, must be understood as a form of articulation of religious values that are oriented towards the welfare of the community at large. Moderation is a way to ensure that religion is not used as a tool for identity politics or justification for violence, but rather a source of inspiration for peace and solidarity.

2.2. Implementation and Challenges of Religious Moderation Policy in Indonesia

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Indonesia shows the state's commitment to responding to the dynamics of religiosity that often give rise to friction between religious communities. The government, through various institutions such as the Ministry of Religion and the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency, has launched a number of programs aimed at mainstreaming the values of moderation, such as training to strengthen national insight, the formation of moderation ambassadors, and the integration of moderation values into the religious education curriculum. However, the implementation of this policy has not always run smoothly [10]. The main challenges faced include resistance from conservative groups, gaps in understanding between the center and regions, and limited capacity of implementing actors in the field. Many state officials still understand moderation superficially or even suspect it as a particular political project. In addition, the absence of standardized indicators of success makes the evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy weak. This shows that the implementation of moderation is not sufficient with just a structural approach, but also requires a more adaptive and contextual cultural approach.

Another challenge lies in the aspect of religious literacy among the community. In the digital era, the rapid and uncontrolled flow of information is often exploited by intolerant groups to spread narratives of hatred and violent ideologies by utilizing virtual space. Religious moderation has not been fully able to match the rapid infiltration of extremist ideas in cyberspace, especially among the younger generation. Many government programs are still

top-down and have not touched on the root of the problem at the community level. On the other hand, there is also a gap in the involvement of non-state actors such as civil society organizations, Islamic boarding schools, digital communities, and local figures in the process of socializing and internalizing the values of moderation. In fact, the success of moderation is not only determined by formal policies, but also by the extent to which society becomes an active subject in building a tolerant and inclusive culture. Therefore, a participatory, locally-based, and sustainable policy design is needed to ensure that religious moderation truly becomes part of the collective consciousness and not just a symbolic state project.

3. Method

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a *Systematic Literature Review* (SLR) approach. This approach was chosen because it is able to provide a comprehensive understanding of various scientific literature that discusses religious moderation policies from various perspectives and implementation contexts [11]. SLR as a systematic literature review method is used to identify, select, evaluate, and synthesize relevant previous research results, in order to formulate theoretical and empirical understandings of the development of concepts, policy implementation, and challenges faced in implementing religious moderation in Indonesia. The research procedure involves the stages of formulating problem formulations, determining keywords, filtering journals based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and thematic analysis of selected literature. The data sources used come from national and international scientific journals indexed in databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, Scopus, and Garuda, with a publication period between 2018 and 2024 to maintain data relevance to the context of ongoing moderation policies [12].

In data analysis, researchers used thematic coding techniques to classify the findings into three main focuses, namely the concept of religious moderation, policy implementation by state and non-state actors, and challenges that arise in its implementation [13]. This analysis was carried out inductively to capture general patterns that emerged from various sources, while identifying gaps or research gaps that were rarely explored. The validity of the SLR results was maintained by applying the principle of transparency in literature selection, triangulation between sources, and peer debriefing to minimize interpretive bias [14]. By using this approach, the study not only summarized previous findings, but also attempted to produce a critical synthesis that could be used as a basis for developing more inclusive, participatory, and contextual religious moderation policies in the future [15].

4. Results and Discussion

The policy of religious moderation in Indonesia is a strategic effort by the state to build a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive religious civilization amidst the reality of a very pluralistic society. This idea did not emerge suddenly, but rather was a response to the increasing social tension based on religion that emerged in various forms such as intolerance, radicalism, and social fragmentation due to the politicization of religious identity. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has been the main actor in formulating and mainstreaming this policy since 2019, and has officially designated it as a national priority program. However, the implementation of this policy is not free from structural, cultural, and political problems that cause a gap between the policy narrative and social reality. This study found that although the concept of religious moderation has begun to be introduced through various training programs, educational curricula, and digital literacy, its internalization in everyday life is still not optimal due to various obstacles, both in terms of community understanding and resistance from certain groups.

Conceptually, religious moderation is interpreted as a middle way in religion, namely practicing religion in a balanced way, not extreme, and respecting differences. This concept is actually in line with the principle of "ummatan wasathan" in QS. Al-Baqarah: 143:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا **God willing, God willing**
 شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا **God willing, God willing**
 لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى **God willing God willing**
God bless you

Meaning: " In the same way, We have made you (Muslims) a medieval people so that you may be witnesses of human (deeds) and so that the Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) will be a witness of your (deeds). We have not established the Qibla (Baitulmaqdis) that you (formerly) turned to, except so that We know (in reality) who follows the Messenger and who turns back. Indeed (moving the Qibla) is very difficult, except for those who have been guided by Allah. Allah will not wasting your faith. Indeed, Allah is Most Gracious, Most Merciful to humans."

The verse describes Muslims as a group in the middle, who are just and not excessive. However, in its implementation, people's understanding of religious moderation is still very varied and sometimes biased towards political and ideological issues. This study found that some people view religious moderation as an effort to "soften" religious teachings or even suspect it as a secularization project. This shows an epistemic gap between what the government means by moderation and how the community understands it. This phenomenon is reinforced by the findings [16] which show that there is a significant difference in understanding between policy-making elites and local religious figures in interpreting the concept of moderation. While bureaucrats interpret it in the framework of national stability, many local figures see it as a restriction on religious expression.

Programs launched by the government such as ASN training, strengthening religious education curriculum, and social media campaigns do show structural commitment. However, the effectiveness of these programs still depends heavily on the capacity of implementers and local contexts. For example, in the ASN training program on religious moderation, many participants still understand the material normatively and are unable to apply it in inclusive public services. This is reinforced by a study [17] which found that the lack of contextual modules and the absence of post-training follow-up were the main causes of the weak impact of the program. In addition, the involvement of civil society, religious organizations, and local communities is still limited. The implementation of policies that are too centralized and less participatory causes moderation programs to often be considered elite projects that are far from the needs and aspirations of the grassroots.

This study also found that the main challenge of the religious moderation policy is ideological resistance from conservative groups who consider that this concept has the potential to blur the line between truth and relativism. In public discourse, this group actively voices criticism of moderation through social media channels, religious lectures, and opinion publications, which in turn creates polarization in society. This is where it can be seen that religious moderation is not only a matter of technical policy, but also a battle of narratives. This finding is in line with the results of research [18] which states that in the context of Islamic education, the idea of moderation is often rejected because it is considered to be contrary to the principle of preaching *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*. In fact, when viewed from the perspective of *maqashid al-syari'ah*, moderation is a way to maintain the five basic principles of religion (soul, property, reason, descendants, and religion itself). Unfortunately, this understanding has not been widely internalized by religious leaders or religious educational institutions.

Another challenge is the fragmentation between the central and regional governments in implementing policies. Some local governments have shown strong initiatives in adopting religious moderation programs into local policies, but others have actually created regulations that are discriminatory against minority groups, such as restrictions on the establishment of houses of worship, prohibitions on celebrating certain religious holidays, or expulsion of religious communities that are considered "deviant". This shows that there is no uniform legal framework that guarantees the implementation of religious moderation fairly and consistently. In many cases, regional policies are still subject to pressure from the majority group or certain mass organizations, so that the values of justice and inclusivity in moderation are ignored. Studies from [19] noted that more than 30% of regional regulations still contain discriminatory elements based on religion. This shows that moderation has not been used as a normative reference in the formation of regulations at the local level.

The dynamics of social media have also become a new arena that shows the vulnerability of the implementation of religious moderation. On the one hand, social media has been used by the government and activists to socialize the values of tolerance and anti-extremism. However, on the other hand, the same platform is used by radical groups to spread hate propaganda, conspiracy theories, and negative framing of moderation. This study shows that

the digital strategy used by the government is still less effective than the more aggressive and populist alternative narratives from intolerant groups. According to a study from [20], one of the main reasons for the weak influence of moderation in the digital space is the lack of involvement of the younger generation in content production. While extremist content is designed with a strong emotional and visual approach, moderated content tends to be normative and monotonous. Therefore, the challenge of moderation policies in the digital era is not only about the spread of messages, but also about communication design and digital community involvement.

Overall, religious moderation policy in Indonesia can be said to be at a crossroads: between becoming a sustainable and transformative policy foundation, or ending up as a political slogan without substantive impact. This study emphasizes that in order to make religious moderation a pillar of authentic public life, the state must build a more participatory approach, adaptive to local contexts, and oriented towards value transformation. Moderation must be grounded, not in the air. Its benefits must be felt by ordinary citizens, not just celebrated in elite seminars. Thus, the implementation of this policy needs to be evaluated comprehensively, involving various stakeholders from the national level to grassroots communities. If this is done consistently, then religious moderation has the potential to become a national strategy that not only maintains tolerance, but also strengthens social integration amidst the diversity that is the hallmark of the Indonesian nation.

4.1 . Conceptual Dynamics of Religious Moderation: Between State Idealism and Social Reality

The idea of religious moderation in Indonesia was born from a deep awareness of the complexity of religious diversity that is an inseparable part of national identity. Moderation is not just a product of bureaucracy, but a reflection of urgent social needs: creating a peaceful religious space amidst increasing tensions between religions, the development of rigid religious understandings, and the increasing politicization of religion in public spaces. Doctrinally, moderation has strong roots in the principles of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other local beliefs in Indonesia which have historically demonstrated tolerant, inclusive, and contextual religious practices. However, in its development as a state policy narrative, religious moderation has undergone an institutionalization process that has epistemological consequences: this concept is no longer merely part of the social practice of the people, but has become an instrument of public policy that is institutionalized through training programs, strengthening regulations, and discourse campaigns in formal spaces.

The formalization process then gives rise to a paradox between the state's idealism and the way society understands and internalizes this concept. The state views moderation as a normative platform to address the problems of intolerance and extremism, but society does not always respond in the same way. Instead of accepting it as a collective value, some groups suspect moderation as part of ideological control over religious freedom. This is not only caused by the resistance of conservative groups, but also by the state's failure to explain the concept of moderation dialogically and organically. When moderation is only conveyed through formal and institutional channels, such as in seminars or ASN training, the meaning of this concept becomes dry, technocratic, and detached from the reality of society's religious experiences. In this context, the discourse of moderation often loses its vitality because it is absent from more fluid daily dialogue spaces, such as interfaith conversations, community forums, and socio-religious rituals that touch on everyday life.

Conceptual discussions of religious moderation also need to be linked to the reality of identity politics that have developed post-reformation. When the state tries to strengthen the narrative of moderation, at the same time some political forces are using religious symbols as electoral instruments. In this situation, society is confused about distinguishing between sincere religious discourse and interest-laden discourse. This inconsistency puts moderation in a dilemma: on the one hand, it is idealized as an answer to the problem of radicalism, but on the other hand, it is often compromised when faced with short-term political considerations. As a result, society finds it increasingly difficult to use moderation as a shared moral reference, and prefers to remain silent or neutral in order to avoid conflict [1]. Therefore, it is important for the state and policy makers to seek to reintegrate moderation into social dynamics in a more authentic manner, namely through cultural, educational, and civil movement approaches that prioritize exemplary practices, not just discourse socialization.

One of the structural problems that weakens the conceptual dynamics of moderation is the failure of policy to recognize the plurality of interpretations of moderation itself. The state often forces a single understanding of this concept, as if moderation only has one final and standard definition. In practice, however, moderation has a broad spectrum that for one group is considered moderate, for another group it can be considered too permissive or even deviant. For example, the idea of tolerance for minorities is often perceived as a form of weakening of religious identity by exclusive groups. On the other hand, the failure to understand the dynamics of these different interpretations makes the state not sufficiently prepared to build a public communication strategy that is adaptive to the various socio-religious backgrounds of society. Instead of encouraging healthy interfaith discussions, the state is trapped in the rhetoric of repeating the narrative of moderation that is not developed and not deep.

Amidst this complexity, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize moderation not as a “state project” but as a “cultural project.” In this sense, moderation must be seen as the result of ongoing social negotiations at the local level, in families, communities, schools, places of worship, and digital spaces. This means that the state should not position itself as the sole producer of moderation discourse, but rather as a facilitator that provides space for the growth of social practices of religiosity that respect differences, provide space for discussions across interpretations, and foster a shared moral awareness of the importance of social peace. A number of community initiatives, whether from inclusive Islamic boarding schools, interfaith forums, or interfaith youth movements, have proven that when the values of moderation are instilled through a cultural approach and role models, they are more effective in building public awareness than narratives formed from above [2].

Thus, the main challenge in the conceptual dynamics of religious moderation lies not in the lack of socialization, but in the inappropriateness of the approach method used by the state. This concept requires epistemological renewal, namely by making it an open space for debate of ideas, theological reflection, and living social practice. Moderation will not be able to grow in a space that is exclusively controlled by the state or certain elites, but instead will develop if it is allowed to have a dialectic with the life experiences of a diverse society. If the state is able to entrust this process to civil society, and provide policies that guarantee space for expression, then moderation will emerge not only as a social security strategy, but as a national value that grows from shared awareness. In this way, the gap between state idealism and social reality can be bridged in a more just, egalitarian, and meaningful way.

4.2 . Policy Implementation and Structural Challenges in Realizing Religious Moderation

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Indonesia is a strategic step by the government in responding to the increasing practice of religious practices that are exclusive, intolerant, and in some cases, even leading to violent extremism. In both global and national contexts, the tendency of religious radicalization and religion-based identity politics has become a real challenge to social resilience and national integration. The Indonesian government responded to this condition by designing various programs based on religious moderation, such as training for state civil servants (ASN), revising the religious education curriculum, strengthening the role of religious and community leaders, and social media campaigns that promote the values of tolerance and diversity. This policy was launched through various institutions, especially by the Ministry of Religion as the spearhead of implementation, and supported by other institutions such as the Pancasila Ideology Development Agency (BPIP), the Ministry of Education, and various civil society organizations. However, as found in this study, although institutionally the policy framework has been prepared, at the implementation level there are still many significant structural and cultural challenges.

One of the main findings of this study is the still limited technical and conceptual understanding of policy implementers in the field regarding the substantive meaning of religious moderation. Many ASN and education providers only participate in training administratively, without experiencing internalization of the values to be developed. The trainings held are often one-way and tend to be normative, without adequate reflective and contextual space. Burhanuddin's (2023) study confirms this, by showing that after the training there was no monitoring and evaluation mechanism that was strong enough to measure the impact of changes in ASN behavior or understanding regarding religious moderation [3]. As

a result, moderation becomes just a "training project" that is repeated from year to year, without a transformative impact on the bureaucratic or educational environment. Moreover, training materials are often not adapted to the local context, so that participants feel that moderation is an abstract issue that is far from the daily problems in their place of duty.

Differences in interpretation between the central and regional governments are a crucial challenge in the successful implementation of this policy. The central government may have established a clear policy and regulatory framework, but not all regional governments have responded proactively. In some regions, discriminatory regulations against certain religious groups are still found, such as prohibitions on minority worship or restrictions on the establishment of houses of worship. Findings [4] show that in the past two years, there have been dozens of regional regulations (*perda*) or local policies that conflict with the principles of religious moderation. This shows the weak harmonization between the central and regional governments in instilling inclusive and anti-discrimination values. More than just technical coordination, differences in local political orientation, pressure from religious organizations, and the power of majoritarianism are the main obstacles to the success of the moderation policy as a whole throughout Indonesia.

Religious moderation has also been attempted through the restructuring of the religious education curriculum to be more open to plurality and differences in interpretation. However, research results show that the implementation of this curriculum still faces many obstacles. One of them is resistance from some religious teachers who feel that the moderation material is considered too "soft" and not in accordance with the theological doctrines that they have long adhered to. In addition, the lack of training that targets changes in pedagogical perspectives also makes the delivery of material only textual without strengthening aspects of values and practices. Research [5] shows that strengthening moderation in education requires a dialogical approach between the state and educational institutions, not just a normative approach. An approach that only changes the contents of textbooks, without touching on the values believed in by educators, will not be able to create a learning environment that truly reflects moderation in religion.

In the public sphere and social media, an equally big challenge is the dominance of intolerant narratives that often go viral faster, are more emotional, and are more visually appealing than the state's official narrative about moderation. The government has indeed launched a number of digital content and social campaigns on various platforms to voice moderation, but they have still not been able to match the intensity and breadth of the spread of hate speech and radical narratives. Much of the moderated content is formal, rigid, and unattractive to the younger generation. Meanwhile, intolerant and radical groups are able to design populist narratives, adapt to social media algorithms, and touch on the emotions and concerns of internet users. Study [6] underlines the importance of the government and civil society in building a moderate digital ecosystem that involves young content creators, religious influencers, and pro-tolerance online communities to create a stronger, more credible, and viral counter-narrative. Without it, the state's efforts to voice moderation will continue to lag behind in the increasingly competitive and vulnerable digital space.

From the structural side, this study also found that there are no standard and measurable evaluation indicators in assessing the success of the implementation of religious moderation. As a result, many institutions report program success only based on the quantity of training or the number of activities, not based on changes in attitudes, behavior, or a more tolerant religious climate. This indicates an urgent need to build a policy evaluation system that is more impact *-based monitoring*, not just based on administrative output. In addition, the involvement of non-state actors such as civil society organizations, local religious communities, and independent media is still not optimal. In fact, the success of moderation is very dependent on collaboration and synergy between the state and civil society. [7] shows that in some areas, local community initiatives such as tolerance *pesantren*, interfaith forums, and youth peace movements have a more significant impact on grounding the values of moderation than formal and ceremonial state programs. Therefore, moderation policies need to be redesigned as participatory social processes, not just technocratic state programs.

By looking at all these findings, it is clear that the implementation of religious moderation policies in Indonesia is not sufficient with just an institutional and administrative approach. A paradigm shift is needed in the way the state views moderation, namely from merely an instrument of national stability to a social movement that respects differences, opens up space

for criticism, and fosters values of public civility. The state needs to encourage the formation of a moderate ecosystem network in every line of education, bureaucracy, community, and media by providing broad participation space for all parties. Moderation will not grow under the shadow of fear or administrative coercion, but will live if it is carried out as a collective consciousness built through dialogue, trust, and recognition of diversity. If this can be carried out consistently and inclusively, then religious moderation has the potential to become not just a policy strategy, but a foothold for national civilization in facing the complexity of diversity in the modern era.

5. Comparison

The results of this study indicate that religious moderation in Indonesia still faces complex structural challenges, especially in the aspect of policy implementation that tends to be normative and not yet grounded in society. This is in line with the findings of [8] which states that there is a gap between the moderation narrative built by the central government and the response of society at the local level. However, this study broadens the scope by highlighting that resistance to moderation does not only come from conservative ideological actors, but also because of the state's failure to involve civil society and religious communities in the development of contextual narratives. [9] focuses more on the criticism of the absence of a strong evaluation mechanism for ASN training programs in moderation, while this study emphasizes that this weakness also comes from the government's communication approach which is too technocratic and less sensitive to cultural dynamics in the field.

While research [10] highlights the government's weak digital strategy in spreading an attractive moderation narrative that is able to compete with intolerant content, this study strengthens the argument by adding that the ineffectiveness is also caused by the minimal involvement of young content creators and grassroots communities. If previous research focuses more on structural failures in formal implementation, this study emphasizes the importance of transforming the conceptual paradigm from "moderation as a state project" to "moderation as a socio-cultural movement". Thus, this comparison shows that the main contribution of this study lies in expanding the perspective on the importance of a participatory, cultural, and dialogical approach in bridging the idealism of state policy with the plural and dynamic social reality in Indonesia.

6. Conclusion

Based on the overall results and discussion, it can be concluded that the policy of religious moderation in Indonesia is an important normative strategy in responding to the challenges of diversity and overcoming religious-based social polarization. However, its implementation still faces various structural and cultural obstacles, ranging from weak understanding at the implementer level, a technocratic communication approach, to minimal involvement of local communities and grassroots religious figures. Religious moderation has not fully become a collective consciousness of society because it is still perceived as an elitist and normative state project. Therefore, there needs to be a transformation of the approach so that moderation does not just become a policy slogan, but becomes a life value that grows organically in the social practice of religiousness in Indonesian society.

A more participatory, inclusive, and local culture-based approach is needed in designing and implementing religious moderation policies. The state needs to open up a space for dialogue involving religious figures, religious communities, civil society organizations, and the younger generation so that moderation can be developed contextually and authentically. In addition, the moderation communication strategy in the digital space must be strengthened through the involvement of content creators and public figures who are relevant to society, especially the younger generation. Policy evaluation must also be directed at social impacts and changes in religious attitudes, not just administrative output. Thus, religious moderation can become a foundation of values in building a peaceful, just, and harmonious Indonesian society in diversity.

Author Contributions: Yevi Yasmini^{1*} was responsible for formulating the research idea, compiling the methodological design, conducting the literature review, analyzing the primary data, and writing the initial draft of the article. Muh Sobari² played a role in strengthening the theoretical structure, validating the findings, and providing substantial input to the final draft of the article. Yuniar³ provided academic supervision throughout the research process, ensuring the appropriateness of the methodological approach, and directing the development

of scientific arguments. Junaidah⁴ supported the process of compiling the conceptual framework, reviewing the relevance of references, and providing corrective input to improve the scientific quality of the article. All authors were actively involved in the content discussion, the substantive revision process, and approved the final version of the article for publication.

Funding: This research did not receive any funding from any institution and was entirely self-funded by the author.

Data Availability Statement: The data and literature sources used in this study are available and can be obtained upon request to the corresponding author. Given the nature of this research as a systematic literature study, no personal or sensitive data are published publicly.

Acknowledgements: The author would like to express his deepest appreciation and gratitude to the supervisors, especially Mrs. Yuniar and Mrs. Junaidah, for their guidance, critical evaluation, and meaningful scientific support during the process of compiling this article. Thanks are also extended to fellow researcher Muh Sobari for the solid academic collaboration, as well as to all parties who have made positive contributions in the implementation and refinement of this research.

Conflict of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest whatsoever related to this research, whether financial, academic, or personal.

Reference

- [1] S. Sitompul, H. Siregar, B. Purba, and T. Simanjuntak, "Mendesain Kebijakan Sekolah dalam Moderasi Agama: Studi Kasus di SMA Negeri 2 Sidikalang," **Cendikia Pendidik.**, vol. 14, no. 9, 2025.
- [2] Asy'ari, "Menyelami Makna Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia: Kritik dan Refleksi atas Praktik Keberagaman Kontemporer," **JIS**, vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 205–226, 2021.
- [3] E. Wijayati, "Penerapan Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia: Harmonis dan Inklusif," **El-Faqih J. Pemikir. dan Huk. Islam**, vol. 10, no. 2, pp. 301–315, 2024.
- [4] F. Dewi, "Dinamika dan Tantangan Moderasi Beragama di Negara-negara Mayoritas Muslim di Asia Tenggara," **B. Chapter Proc. Journey-Liaison Acad. Soc.**, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 32–42, 2024.
- [5] D. Amalia, "Diskursus Moderasi Beragama: Penerapan Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama pada Kurikulum Merdeka dalam Mengatasi Isu-Isu Keagamaan," **Pendas J. Ilm. Pendidik. Dasar**, vol. 9, no. 4, 2024.
- [6] Destian *et al*., "Implementasi Kebijakan Pendidikan Moderasi Agama di Sekolah Islam Nasional tentang Moderasi Agama di Sekolah Islam," **Didakt. J. Kependidikan**, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 3811–3820, 2024.
- [7] J. Creswell, **Qualitative Inquiry Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches**, 2017.
- [8] J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, **Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed-Method Approaches**, 2023. doi: 10.4324/9780429469237-3.
- [9] Jamaluddin, "Implementasi Moderasi Beragama di Tengah Multikulturalitas Indonesia (Analisis Kebijakan Implementatif pada Kementerian Agama)," **AS-SALAM J. Ilm. Ilmu-ilmu Keislam.**, vol. 7, no. 1, pp. 1–13, 2022.
- [10] Jubaidah, "Religious Moderation in The Formal Education in Indonesia," **Islam. J. Ilm. Keagamaan**, vol. 1, no. 2, 2024.
- [11] K. Srikandi, B. A. Saebani, and M. Amin, "Tinjauan Siyash Dusturiyah Tentang Peran Kementerian Agama dalam Mengimplementasikan Program Moderasi Beragama (Studi Kasus di Kabupaten Bekasi)," **Ranah Res. J.**, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 2382–2400, 2025.
- [12] L. Wardati, "Pembelajaran Agama Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama: Analisis Kebijakan, Implementasi, dan Hambatan," **Fitrah J. Islam. Educ.**, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 175–187, 2023.
- [13] M. Mubarak, Sari, and Wibowo, "Comparative Study of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Utilization in Digital Marketing Strategies Between Developed and Developing Countries: A Systematic Literature Review," **Ilomata Int. J. Manag.**, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 156–173, 2025, doi: 10.61194/ijjm.v6i1.1534.
- [14] M. Munif, "Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia," **DIRASAH**, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 417–430, 2023.
- [15] M. Rokib and Inayati, "Integrasi Konsep Moderasi Beragama Dan Multikulturalisme Oleh," **J. Lentera**, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 288–301, 2024.
- [16] R. Fahreza, "Moderasi Beragama sebagai Upaya Menjaga Kerukunan di Indonesia," **J. Educ. Sharia**, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 25–29, 2024.
- [17] S. K. Lubis, "Implementasi Pendidikan Kewarganegaraan dalam Meningkatkan Sikap Moderasi Beragama Siswa di SD IT Al Munadi Medan Marelan," **Didakt. J. Kependidikan**, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 373–390, 2023.
- [18] Sugiyono, **Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Kualitatif**, 3rd ed. Bandung: Alfabeta, 2019.
- [19] Sugiyono, **Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, R&D**, Bandung: Alfabeta, 2021.
- [20] Y. Gultom, "Axiological Prespective of PAI Teachers on Religious Moderation in Mas Al-Ikhlas Tarutung Dua North Tapanuli," **J. Pembelajaran dan Ilmu Kependidikan**, vol. 2, no. 2, 2024.