AOSIS

Religious moderation of Islamic university students in Indonesia: Reception of religious texts

CrossMark
click for updates

Authors:
Benny Afwadzi[1]
Umi Sumbulah[2]
Nur Ali[3]
Saifuddin Z. Qudsy[4]

Affiliations:
[1]Department of Islamic Education, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

[2]Department of Islamic Family Law, Faculty of Syariah, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

[3]Department of Islamic Education Management, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia

[4]Department of Quranic Studies, Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Thought, Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding author:
Benny Afwadzi,
afwadzi@pai.uin-malang.ac.id

Religious moderation has been popular and widely promoted to students as a countermeasure to radicalism. However, it runs across several challenges. Not to mention that radicalism has extended its influence within Islamic universities in Indonesia. Many research organisations have found that Indonesian students tend to be radical. Hence, the discussion around religious moderation among students highlights its urgency. With emphasis on the reception of Islamic university students to religious texts, this study proposed the appropriate approach to religious moderation in the context of plural Indonesian society with the reception of Qur'anic verses and hadiths that promoted moderation. It employed a qualitative approach with a purposive sampling technique involving 81 students of Islamic Religious Education of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang as the research subjects. They were students from four semester IV and VI classes. This study revealed several key findings: firstly, the majority of students equate religious moderation with religious tolerance; secondly, students draw from a range of verses and hadiths that emphasise religious moderation, primarily on tolerance promotion; and thirdly, students' application of religious moderation based on religious texts manifests through verbal, written and practical approaches. This study presents a model for developing religious moderation rooted in students' comprehension of religious texts advocating moderation. This study implies using religious texts to promote moderate thought to lessen radicalism and intolerance in the world.

Contribution: This study introduces a religious text-oriented approach to enhance the development of religious moderation, thereby refining strategies and methods that have predominantly emphasised aspects of social reality. The religious texts that advocate for moderation are accepted and applied by students in their lives. This contribution is crucial to lessening radicalism and intolerance in Indonesia.

Keywords: religious moderation; reception of religious texts; religious tolerance; Islamic education; Qur'an; hadith.

Introduction

The concept of religious moderation, which is meant to be instilled among students as a remedy for radicalism, aligns differently from the desired outcomes and faces several obstacles. The obstacle is rooted in two fundamental facts. The first challenge arises from the prevalence of radicalism among students in Islamic universities, a widespread phenomenon in Indonesia (Ismail et al. 2021; Sirry 2023). The research by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM), the National Agency for Counter-Terrorism (BNPT), and Setara Institute has led to conclusions that students in Indonesia exhibit tendencies of radicalism (Ali et al. 2021:383; Sirry 2020:3). The second obstacle pertains to certain factions that reject the concept of religious moderation, perceiving it as a mere 'project' driven by political and ideological agendas. They believe that the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the initiator of religious moderation, wants to discredit certain parties – such as Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) and Islamic Defender Front (FPI) – using this terminology. In fact, religious moderation is considered a misguided understanding that lacks serious adherence to religious teachings (Afwadzi & Miski 2022:366–367; Kementerian Agama RI 2019:12–14). Hence, discussing religious moderation among students and identifying an appropriate approach within Indonesia prove its urgency.

The literature about religious moderation among students is divided into three categories. The first category is the study that examines the conditions of student moderation and radicalism. Student moderation and radicalism are generally complex and vary depending on the individual

conditions and the campus environment (Ismail et al. 2021; Sirry 2023; Suyanto, Sirry & Sugihartati 2019). The second category is the study on the implementation of religious moderation by students, which is manifested in many aspects, from classroom learning to direct action in the community (Ma'arif, Rofiq & Sirojuddin 2022; Mulyana 2023; Mustakim, Ali & Kamal 2021). The third is the study that describes the development of religious moderation in Indonesia with different methods and strategies. The development is made by studying the empirical facts of plural life in Indonesia and the creation of a religious moderation-based curriculum (Ali et al. 2021; Maskuri, Ma'arif & Fanan 2020; Purwanto et al. 2019). Some of these categories tend to position religious moderation within the scope of social reality.

This study discusses religious moderation with different perspectives by involving religious texts. More specifically, it attempts to show that religious texts inspire the understanding and practice of religious moderation among students. This study is intended to complement the shortcomings of the previous studies and propose an appropriate approach to religious moderation in Indonesia. It also responds to researchers who blame the textual approach as a source of religious radicalism (Mutawali 2023:348; Ramle & Huda 2022:1), even though this approach can lead to religious moderation, as seen in this study. Accordingly, this study puts forth three questions: (1) How is the manifestation of students' understanding of religious moderation? (2) What are the verses of the Qur'an and hadith that inspire students upon understanding religious moderation? and (3) How is the practice of religious moderation among students based on religious texts? These questions shape the reception of religious texts among students.

In order to analyse the reception of religious texts among Islamic university students, the researchers base the view on three arguments. Firstly, historically, the reception of religious texts has evolved. It continuously adapts to the reception context and to one's subjective condition (De Wit & Haines 2022:3–4). From this, the reception of religious texts may vary. Secondly, functionally, religious texts serve as a spirit for religious moderation when interpreted with the proper perspective (Baidowi et al. 2021:30). Adopting this model of thinking ensures a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation that avoids any potential deconstructive interpretations. Thirdly, in practice, religious texts can live within society. The text is subject to creative interpretation in this context, which subsequently crystallises in specific social practices (Basri et al. 2022:541–543).

Literature review
Religious moderation among students

Religious moderation is a religious behaviour that is in the middle, neither radical nor liberal. Its essence denotes harmony, justice, and the middle way (Zaduqisti et al. 2020:3). In particular literary works addressing religious moderation, terms that are deemed synonymous in meaning often arise, such as 'moderate Islam' and 'Wasathiyah Islam' (Salik 2019:374–376; Shihab 2020:1–17). Both terms – this study does not differentiate these terms and religious moderation – define ideas that emphasise balance, tolerance and adaptation in various situations based on religious guidance and social conditions (Helmy, Kubro & Ali 2021:379; Shihab 2020:43). In this adaptation, Nasir and Rijal (2021:215) stated that it does not cover acts of violence in the name of religion, yet instead presents inclusivism that respects the beliefs of others. However, the word moderate has different interpretations according to the common understanding and the West. Commonly, moderate is interpreted as teachings derived from the Qur'an and hadith, while in the West, the word is associated with pro-Western political norms (Ab Rashid et al. 2020:838). The different interpretations imply labelling moderate as liberal (negative perspective); therefore, the study of moderation should return to religious texts (Afwadzi 2022:188–197).

Religious moderation envisions tolerance and anti-radicalism (Dodego & Witro 2020:200) with four indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence and accommodating local culture. Pajarianto, Pribadi and Sari (2022:1) suggested that tolerance should be realised through the application of moderate religious values and local wisdom. In the Indonesian education system, religious moderation is presented in the learning materials of Islamic Religious Education, which are popular at Islamic universities (Ma'arif et al. 2022:77–78). Besides, the implementation is exhibited with the insertion of materials, an approach to learning with critical thinking and tolerance, and religious moderation training (Aziz et al. 2021:151–152). Subchi et al. (2022:1) argued that student religiosity (religious intellectuality, ideology, public practice, private practice and religious experience) and socio-economy (gender and parental income) supported students' religious moderation.

Religious tolerance among students

The concept of religious tolerance emerges from diversity and differences within social reality, which subsequently prompts these different societies to be open-minded and acceptant of other people's religions (Lubis & Sianipar 2022:4; Penthin et al. 2022:84). There are two types of religious tolerance: intra-religious and inter-religious. Religious tolerance manifests as mutual respect to create intra- and inter-religious social harmony (Muda & Mohd Tohar 2020:195). Respect is not necessarily intended to free others from engaging in religious practices and rituals based solely on personal belief but rather signifies acknowledging the presence of other religions (Alabdulhadi 2019:423–424; Tasheva 2021:265).

Religious tolerance today is an important topic to study in either the theoretical or practical realm. In practice, religious

tolerance often encounters misunderstanding. Society, including students, often finds themselves entangled in inconsistencies, struggling to differentiate between actions rooted in theology and those driven by sociological-humanistic factors (Angkat 2021:23). It has significant implications for social harmony, such as discrimination, marginalisation and segregation. Disharmonious relationships can occur in the cultural and structural spheres. In the cultural sphere, for example, it is viewed through religious fanaticism, extremism or denial of particular identities (Barreto 2021:401–408; Somasundram et al. 2021:137–155). In the structural realm, it can be seen through gaps in social institutions – such as government regulations, prohibitions on the construction of places of worship – or educational spaces (Galamba & Matthews 2021:581–584; Setiabudi, Wibowo & Paskarina 2021:16). A comprehensive understanding of religion in social behaviour plays a significant role in shaping a just, prosperous, and equal society regardless of differences in identity, ethnicity or ideology (Desky & Rijal 2021:45).

Reception of religious texts

Reception of religious texts refers to the compliance of readers or religious believers to religious knowledge in the religious text (Ahmadi, Hefni & Mutrofin 2019:70; Rafiq 2021:470). It includes intergroup dialogue in improving understanding, acceptance and tolerance among groups in a pluralistic society (Ardi et al. 2021:2). Those who accept religious texts rely on their capacity to understand sources, such as textbooks, scriptures, images and other forms of discourse (Unstad & Fjørtoft 2021:1). In particular, the reception of religious texts always talks about how the beliefs of their adherents influence the way they behave. They focus on how spirituality encourages them to accept diversity and strive to have their standards of behaviour (Eise & Rawat 2023:1). Thus, the reception of religious texts involves embracing them and expressing their teachings through behaviour.

Iser (1978) stated that reception depends on one's personality, background, knowledge and overall life experience so that variations might occur (Johansson 2021:5). Readers' reception of religious texts can be divided into three main models, which are verbal, written and practical (Suryadilaga 2007:114–130). The verbal model dwells on how the reception of religious texts is manifested in the speech of specific individuals or communities. Meanwhile, the written model concerns how the reception of religious texts is realised through written media. Writing in this context is in the real world and the virtual one. Lastly, the practical model refers to a specific individual or community's concrete act rooted in the reception of a religious text. Although the three acceptance models are commonly perceived as overlapping, they can elaborate the reception of religious texts more creatively and exploratively (Nirwana & Saifuddin 2019:58–68; Salleh et al. 2019:1130–1131).

Research methods and design

This study examined Islamic university students' reception of religious texts (read: verses of the Qur'an and hadith) about religious moderation. This topic is essential as it offers a perspective of religious moderation according to the religious character of the Indonesian nation. Religious moderation is claimed to come from the values in the religious texts. Shihab (2020:4–16) stated that religious moderation was originated from Qur'an and hadith, and the essential *dalil* was Al-Baqarah [2]: 143. Previous research has focused more on looking at and developing religious moderation in the context of social reality. Meanwhile, the current research can link three rarely and directly connected entities, namely the theory of religious moderation, students' conduct and religious texts. Besides proposing an appropriate approach to religious moderation in Indonesia, this study also aims to reconstruct the view that some religious texts teach radicalism.

This study employed a qualitative approach involving the state Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang (from now on referred to as UIN Malang) as the research object. There are three arguments behind this. Firstly, UIN Malang is an Islamic university that collaborates with the higher education system and *pesantren*, so this campus's Islamic character is very inherent. Every UIN Malang student must live in the students' dorm (*Ma'had*), at least in the first year. Secondly, UIN Malang students come from 41 countries and thus the university has received award for being the Islamic campus with the most number of international students in Indonesia. Thirdly, the leader of UIN Malang has instructed lecturers to insert the values of religious moderation in classroom learning materials and has even formed consortia and textbooks related to religious moderation. However, this study has potential biases when similar studies are carried out at Islamic universities under different characters.

Students of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) were selected as research subjects. Islamic Religious Education is a study programme that characteristically stands between general science and pure Islamic studies in Islamic universities. Thus, IRE students are deemed to be representative. Besides, they are prospective teachers who will serve in some schools around Indonesia. The educational patterns and materials significantly impact how young Indonesians develop, whether moderately or radically. For these reasons, selecting IRE students as a specific focus can be a generalisation – with all limitations – for students at Islamic universities.

The researchers selected four classes of the IRE programme as primary data sources: two classes from the year 2021 and the other two from 2020. They were students of semesters IV and VI, thus believed to be familiar with the discourse of religious moderation. The data were collected by distributing questionnaires via Google Forms and conducting in-depth

interviews via WhatsApp. The validity of the data was tested by triangulation and focus group discussion. The questionnaire consisted of several key points: student identity, student understanding of religious moderation, verses of the Qur'an and hadith that inspire them, and the practice of religious moderation grounded in those Muslim books. The total number of informants was 81 students, and they agreed to publish the data. The informants' identities have been concealed to respect their privacy.

The collected data were analysed using data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion or verification (Miles, Huberman & Saldana 2014). Data condensation was performed with several steps: collecting data via Google Forms and interviews, organising them by grouping, filtering the irrelevant and corrupted data, and sorting and merging them to reduce data complexity. In this step, the researchers found that a student wrote twice in Google Forms. The problem was solved by connecting. The researchers used Microsoft Excel to calculate. Then, the data were presented by visual description, linking them to the verses of the Qur'an and hadith that pertain to religious moderation in tables and narratives to ensure easy comprehension. Finally, conclusions were drawn by analysing, interpreting, linking with theories, and preparing actual actions.

Results
Students' understanding of religious moderation

Students understand religious moderation with diverse perspectives. Their understanding is derived from a compilation of academic sources within the university setting, such as classroom instruction and seminars, as well as external sources encompassing learning experiences in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) and information from the internet. Some findings on the manifestation of students' understanding of religious moderation are presented in Table 1. In this table, the researchers categorise student understanding using orientation coding after determining the substance of students' arguments.

According to the data in Table 1, the researchers found several findings. Firstly, there are four orientations in the manifestation of students' understanding of religious moderation, namely the orientation of tolerance, *wasath* in religion, the doctrine of the Qur'an and hadith, and accommodating to local culture. Of the four orientations, an understanding of religious moderation, like religious tolerance, is most widely conveyed by students. Fifty-two students hold tight with this orientation. They mainly focus on interfaith tolerance, intra-religious tolerance, and some combine the two.

Secondly, why most students are oriented towards tolerance? After conducting in-depth interviews, the researchers found that, for students, the key to religious moderation is tolerance. In addition, according to them, intolerance was the real problem in religious moderation. They got this understanding from academic sources and information from the internet. One of the informants, FAR, noted that religious moderation is in harmony with tolerance, and tolerance is the fruit of moderation. More clearly, she stated:

> 'Moderation is balancing, not leaning on one particular side or neutral. Seeing a very complex life with a variety of differences, one of which is religion, religious moderation is very much in harmony with the word tolerance, where we learn to respect each other and respect the followers of other religions to create a harmonious life. If depicted, religious moderation is the process, and tolerance is the result. If moderation is applied in life, the fruit of that moderation is tolerance, or moderation is the key to creating tolerance.' (P29, age 22, female)

Another informant, MUS, viewed religious moderation as an attitude or form of tolerance, balance, and fairness in religion. Tolerance is meant by not interfering with other religions in worship and inviting them to worship according to their respective teachings. A person who implements religious moderation has a balanced attitude in worship according to the level of his ability, does not abandon world affairs, and demonstrates fairness to his or her fellow human beings even though he or she comes from another religion.

TABLE 1: The manifestation of religious moderation understanding of students ($N = 81$).

No.	Orientation	Quantity	Manifestation of understanding
1.	Tolerance	52	'Religious moderation is a concept that prioritises and emphasises mutual respect and tolerance among different religious groups'. (MUS) 'The concept emphasises mutual respect and tolerance between different religious groups, such as Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah, and others'. (QT) 'The attitude of tolerance among religious people and mutual respect should not force others into the religion that we profess, nor should we. In addition, with people of different organizations with us, we respect each other by not blaming or considering that we are the rightest'. (MMA)
2.	*Wasath* in holding religion	25	'Religious moderation is our way of moderate religion, not the secular nor the extremist Islam'. (MM) 'Religious moderation entails adopting a balanced and moderate stance, avoiding extremes and radicalism when practicing religious principles. In simpler terms, it avoids the extremes of both right and left ideologies'. (ZA) 'Moderation, in my understanding, is a religion that is not fanatical or in the middle. Moderates seek for a way of religion that is always in the middle, not on the right or left'. (SLZ)
3.	Doctrine of the Qur'an and hadith	2	'The concept that Muslims, especially the *Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah*, hold the principle of neither extreme right nor extreme left, based on surah Al-Baqarah, 143'. (IH) 'Religious moderation is the way a person views and believes in Islam according to the teachings of the Shariah, namely *Ahlussunah Wal Jamaah*, guided by the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad'. (LMF)
4.	Accommodating to local culture	2	'Religious moderation is an accommodating and accepting attitude towards differences in traditions and cultures. We must be open and acceptant towards differences, not creating divisions'. (ENMA) 'Religious moderation is an attitude where we can position ourselves according to the customs and habits of the local community but not reduce or add religion'. (ALAM)

Verses of the Qur'an and hadith that inspire the understanding of religious moderation

Researchers found that 64 students wrote verses from the Qur'an and hadith as inspiration in religious moderation, while the remaining 17 went for the opposite. This significant number represents the views of students. In Table 2, the researchers present the verses of the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet submitted by the students in the order from the most inspiring to the least.

Table 2 reveals some of the findings of this study. Firstly, 12 verses of the Qur'an and three hadiths inspire students to understand religious moderation. Two hadiths – or rather *qaul* of Islamic scholars – were mentioned by the students and a hadith that they only presented the meaning. The orientation of the 11 verses of the Qur'an and the three hadiths is divided into five forms: tolerance (Al-Baqarah [2]: 256; Al-Kafirun [109]: 6; Al-An'am [6]: 108), moderation (Al-Baqarah [2]: 143; Al-Isra' [17]: 110; Luqman [31]: 19; Al-Qashash [28]: 77; hadith 2), justice (Al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8; Al-Maidah [5]: 8), plurality (Al-Hujurat [49]: 13; Yunus [10]: 99; Al-Shams [91]: 7–9; hadith 1), and unity (hadith 3).

Secondly, from the 12 verses of the Qur'an and three hadiths, the orientation most widely referred to is about tolerance. This finding is also equivalent to the most widely referred verse, which is also oriented to tolerance, namely Al-Baqarah [2]: 256, which calls for no compulsion in embracing Islam. It is consistent with the initial findings that students equate the understanding of religious moderation with that of religious tolerance. Tolerance is an essential indicator of religious moderation.

The students' practice of religious moderation based on the Qur'an and hadith

Data on the practice of religious moderation based on Qur'anic verses and hadith are patterned into verbal, written and practical forms. This categorisation follows a division in the reception of religious texts divided into these three forms. The finding in this section is that student practices predominantly lean towards tolerance, which follows the previous orientation trend. Here is an explanation of the three forms:

Verbal

The students' practice of religious moderation in verbal form varies. However, the common thread is that understanding religious moderation is synonymous with tolerance, and it implies tolerant practices. Students manifest it by speaking appropriately to the followers of other religions, not bad-mouthing them. FMU believed that one's speech reflects the religion he or she professes. When lousy word comes out of the mouth of a Muslim, the portrayal of Islam will undoubtedly be wrong, too. Therefore, a Muslim should not offend different beliefs, such as degrading and making fun of non-Muslim teachings. Even further, another student, ILNA, admitted that she often exchanged religious information with her non-Muslim friends.

TABLE 2: Verses of the Qur'an and hadith that inspire the understanding of religious moderation ($N = 64$).

No.	Source	Qur'anic verse or Hadith	Quantity	Orientation
1.	Al-Baqarah [2]: 256	'Let there be no compulsion in religion, for the truth stands out clearly from falsehood. So, whoever renounces false gods and believes in Allah has certainly grasped the firmest, unfailing handhold. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing'.	15	Tolerance
2.	Al-Baqarah [2]: 143	'And so We have made you (believers) an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you. We assigned your former direction of prayer only to distinguish those who would remain faithful to the Messenger from those who would lose faith. It was certainly a difficult test except for those (rightly) guided by Allah. And Allah would never discount your (previous acts of) faith. Surely Allah is Ever Gracious and Most Merciful to humanity'.	13	Moderation
3.	Al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8	'Allah does not forbid you from dealing kindly and fairly with those who have neither fought nor driven you out of your homes. Surely Allah loves those who are fair'.	11	Justice
4.	Al-Kafirun [109]: 6	'You have your way, and I have my Way'.	5	Tolerance
5.	Al-Maidah [5]: 8	'O believers! Stand firm for Allah and bear true testimony. Do not let the hatred of a people lead you to injustice. Be just! That is closer to righteousness. And be mindful of Allah. Surely Allah is All-Aware of what you do'.	5	Justice
6.	Al-Hujurat [49]: 13	'O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may (get to) know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware'.	4	Plurality
7.	Yunus [10]: 99	'Had your Lord so willed (O Prophet), all (people) on earth would have certainly believed, every single one of them! Would you then force people to become believers?'	2	Plurality
8.	Al-Isra' [17]: 110	'Say, (O Prophet) "Call upon Allah or call upon the Most Compassionate – whichever you call, He has the Most Beautiful Names." Do not recite your prayers too loudly or silently but seek a way between'.	1	Moderation
9	Luqman [31]: 19	'Be moderate in your pace. And lower your voice, for the ugliest of all voices is certainly the braying of donkeys'.	1	Moderation
10.	Al-Syams [91]: 7–9	'And by the soul and (the One) Who fashioned it' 'Then with (the knowledge of) right and wrong inspired it!' 'Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul'	1	Plurality
11.	Al-Qashash [28]: 77	'Rather, seek the (reward) of the Hereafter by means of what Allah has granted you, without forgetting your share of this world. And be good (to others) as Allah has been good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for Allah certainly does not like the corruptors'.	1	Moderation
12.	Al-An'am [6]: 108	'(O believers!) Do not insult what they invoke besides Allah, or they will insult Allah spitefully out of ignorance. This is how We have made each person's deeds appealing to them. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them of what they used to do'.	1	Tolerance
13.	Hadith 1	'The difference among my people is mercy'.	2	Plurality
14.	Hadith 2	'The best thing is in the middle'.	1	Moderation
15.	Hadith 3	The story of the Prophet who united the Muhajirin with the Ansar and made the Medina Charter	1	Unity

Furthermore, the students also maintain harmonious communication with people from different Islamic organisations (intra-religious). Some students claimed not to speak on contentious religious themes when the interlocutors are people from different Islamic organisations. This is done in order not to invite confusion. MBH explained that when talking to people from different Islamic organisations, he attempts not to discuss the exclusive teachings, let alone to compare it with the teachings of Nahdlatul Ulama, the basis of his ideology. He claimed to avoid discussions that could potentially cause debate and hostility in the future.

The students also conveyed religious moderation in learning activities to students. NA recounted that she taught religious moderation to students at school during the teaching assistance programme, precisely during Ramadhan Camp. A similar point is also mentioned by RDA, which claims to convey religious moderation in fiqh subjects in the classes of students with cross-Islamic organisations. He discussed the differences in jurisprudence so learners can be more acceptant (*legowo*) and slowly apply religious moderation to several groups.

Written

In the written form, the practice of religious moderation is manifested in not writing a statement that can offend people with different beliefs, both intra and interreligious, or that is contrary to the values of religious moderation. Instead, they write content of religious moderation published in various media. VA disclosed her intention to work on her final project centred around religious moderation. Several other students also claimed to have written articles and light writing that spread the idea of religious moderation. RYC admitted that he sometimes writes holiday greetings to followers of other religions through pamphlets in the organisations he participated in.

The students write about religious moderation on printed media and digital platforms, such as WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. SFE asserted that he once wrote religious moderation on WhatsApp status with the following editorial:

> 'The moderation issue is no longer confined to an individual case or personal interests; it has become a public concern for the entire region. Everyone should work together to make the religious atmosphere polite and moderate. Recently, many perceptions have been free to enter and influence increasingly liberal [*extreme*] attitudes. They exhibit religious attitudes with arguments that deviate significantly from the essence of the true teachings of Islam.' (P11, age 23, male)

The WhatsApp status above shows that students demonstrate reception in the written form by utilising technological and information developments. They re-share posts about religious moderation from Muslim scholars and intellectuals they are familiar with and even write their own words about it, as SFE exhibits above. IA also admitted that she had made a video about religious moderation and then uploaded it on YouTube, and it was finally posted on her WhatsApp status.

Practical

In practice, religious moderation is demonstrated by respecting the religious freedom of each individual to choose and practise their beliefs without discrimination or coercion. It includes helping to create social harmony by avoiding false news or the news that incites religious conflict and by spreading the message of peace and interreligious cooperation. ILNA noted that she had attended the event of an organisation she was involved in. Her non-Muslim friend, who was fasting, also attended the event. Then, out of tolerance, ILNA and her other Muslim friends did not eat or drink until the non-Muslim friend had completed his fast that day. The story of AN also strengthens tolerance in the tradition of this practice:

> 'I have a circle of friends with incredibly diverse backgrounds, representing a rich spectrum of beliefs. Among us are Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Catholics, Adventists, agnostics, and, of course, fellow Muslims. I also live in the student secretariat of Balikpapan, where Hindu, Islamic, and Christian students live. I have always respected them with all their worship practices and understanding of their religion. As much as they celebrate Eid al-Fitr and appreciate us fasting during Ramadan, I do not mind my friends celebrating *Nyepi* (Bali's Day of Silence) or Christmas and New Year. I still try to keep respecting it as they respect me.' (P48, age 22, male)

Correspondingly, in the realm of inter-adherents of Islamic organisations (intra-religious), students tend to behave with critical reasoning and view that differences are God's provisions. One of the students, for example, VA, stated that she exhibited the practice of religious moderation by respecting differences of opinion and belief between Islamic organisations (such as differences in the calculation of Eid al-Fitr) and being open to differences of opinion when discussing religious teachings (e.g. about the law on using veils) with friends of different schools. This behaviour is encouraged based on the belief in the plurality of religious teachings in Islam; Islam does not only have one face.

Discussion

This study found three prominent points related to the reception of Islamic university students towards religious texts about religious moderation. Firstly, the manifestation of understanding religious moderation is patterned in four orientations: the doctrine of the Qur'an and hadith, *wasath* in religion, tolerance, and accommodating local culture. Tolerance is the orientation of the majority of students. Secondly, various verses and hadiths are submitted by students as inspiration for religious moderation and are patterned into five orientations: tolerance, moderation, justice, plurality, and unity. Like the previous findings, tolerance-oriented verses become the most common choice of the students. Thirdly, student religious moderation is manifested in three primary forms (verbal, written and practical) that promote tolerance.

The significance inferred from the above findings is that religious texts hold a central role in shaping the students'

moderate understanding and practices. Studying students' reception to religious texts makes it evident that religious texts that promote moderation inspire students to practise moderate behaviour. In this way, religion will appear peaceful and tolerant (Baidowi et al. 2021:24). To mitigate radicalism among students, it is necessary to maximise the role of religious texts that promote moderation in developing religious moderation. The process of spreading religious moderation with religious texts that promote moderation will indirectly eliminate the image of religious texts as a source of radicalism because the radicals often cite them to justify their actions (Syam et al. 2020:4–7).

In addition, intolerance as the main problem of moderation in Indonesia, as mentioned in some research (Sirry 2023; Zaduqisti et al. 2020), is expected to be mitigated through the thinking patterns discussed earlier. This study found that many students emphasised the understanding of religious moderation as religious tolerance and confirmed by tolerance-oriented religious texts as inspiration. Likewise, the practice of religious moderation can be derived from the religious text. This finding reinforces the view that the appropriate strategy to resolve the problem of intolerance is to approach religious texts that promote moderation. The religious approach can mute the effects of intolerance that may come from religious teachings. Indonesia has a very high cultural and religious diversity. This fact needs tolerance, one indicator of religious moderation, as a unifying instrument (Pajarianto et al. 2022:2–3).

This research perfects various strategies and methods in the dissemination of moderate understanding based more on social reality; for example, Subandi et al. (2020), which present an integrated learning management strategy with Islamic moderation, Ali et al. (2021), which implements interreligious literacy learning, and Athanasoulia (2020) which focuses on the political aspects of power. Several other studies have also confirmed that religious texts are the right approach to solving society's problems in the contemporary world. Daher-Nashif et al. (2021) denoted that the text of the Qur'an and hadith can be converted into an ideology of belief in Qatar, which develops a wide variety of social practices and is used as a diagnostic and treatment tool. Also, Ummaru and Sharif (2020) claimed that Prophet Muhammad's conflict management could resolve the inter-religious crisis in Nigeria.

However, the researchers realise that this study only released religious texts that supported religious moderation, even though there are also religious texts that are used to justify radicalism and extremism, such as the persecution of minorities, suicide bombings and acts of terror (Eunike & Putrawan 2021:161–165). Some researchers, such as Mutawali (2023) and Ramle and Huda (2022), oppose the text-only approach in strengthening religious moderation because several religious texts show violence and radicalism. Therefore, these religious texts must be reinterpreted by relating the historical context and *maqashid al-shari'a*. According to the researchers, these two methods must work together to strengthen religious moderation and lessen radicalism: the religious text or textual approach and the historical context or contextual approach.

Furthermore, real action also requires actualisation in order to develop religious moderation. Firstly, the Islamic university, as the pilot project for the development of religious moderation in Indonesia, must intervene in spreading moderate thoughts by harnessing the potential to excel in Islamic studies rather than solely handing over to the institution of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Sodikin & Ma`arif 2021; Sumbulah 2017). Secondly, universities, especially Islamic ones, should establish religious moderation learning with curricula that accommodate Islamic perspectives with critical thinking models (Mizani 2022). Thirdly, it is also essential to conduct a public campaign so that they can understand the concept of religious moderation and the arguments of religious texts comprehensively, not partially.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that religious texts, often underestimated due to their perceived detachment from reality, inspire students in religious moderation. They embrace religious texts about religious moderation, subsequently implemented in life. If religious texts are thoroughly understood, the rejection and misunderstanding of religious moderation will not happen, which indirectly minimises radicalism in the university environment. This study also found that the students' reception to religious texts about religious moderation poses a tendency to tolerance orientation. Nevertheless, this observation underscores the necessity of re-emphasising national commitment, a key indicator of moderation, among students, as it may need to be more prominent in their awareness. The emergence of thoughts that threaten the unity of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) in universities is the leading cause of the importance of national commitment.

This study presented a model for developing religious moderation rooted in students' comprehension of religious texts that endorse moderation. The religious text approach can complement other strategies and methods focusing more on social reality. Promoting the incorporation of religious texts that promote moderation should be actively encouraged by the Government of Indonesia in Islamic education as it can construct students' moderate minds and, indirectly, counter the radical interpretation of religious texts that textually speak of violence. Students' reception towards religious texts on religious moderation is essential to generate understanding that combines religious beliefs with daily behaviour.

However, this study is limited solely to the reception of UIN Malang students and implies that findings may not be universally applicable, and results might vary across different contexts. This study could also be further enhanced with the students' perspectives on war verses as an opposition

to religious moderation in future research. Besides, it is imperative to carry out further research involving students from public universities. Scientifically, students of public universities might lack sufficient religious knowledge, so they are more susceptible to the exposure to radicalism. The radicals will always carry religious texts as justification for their movement, so the study of religious texts concerning religious moderation still offers the utmost urgency.

Acknowledgements

References

Ab Rashid, R., Fazal, S.A., Ab. Halim, Z., Mat Isa, N., Mohamad Yusoff, Z.J., Musa, R. et al., 2020, 'Conceptualizing the characteristics of moderate Muslims: A systematic review', *Social Identities* 26(6), 829–841. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2020.1814720

Afwadzi, B., 2022, 'Resepsi atas Islam Moderat: Antara Kritik dan Sikap yang Representatif', *NUANSA: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu Sosial dan Keagamaan Islam* 19(2), 182–208. https://doi.org/10.19105/nuansa.v19i2.6687

Afwadzi, B. & Miski, M., 2022, 'The articulation of moderate Islam among Muslim students', in W. Striełkowski, J.M. Black, S.A. Butterfield, C.-C Chang, J. Cheng, F.P. Dumanig, et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Religious Literature and Heritage (ISLAGE 2021)*, Atlantis Press, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 30 November 2021–02 December 2021, vol. 644, pp. 363–373.

Ahmadi, R., Hefni, W. & Mutrofin, M., 2019, 'Indonesian Global Ikhwan's reception and expression toward Sunnah Polygamy in online media', *Ulul Albab: Jurnal Studi Islam* 20(1), 70–94. https://doi.org/10.18860/ua.v20i1.5660

Alabdulhadi, M.M.J., 2019, 'Religious tolerance in secondary Islamic Education textbooks in Kuwait', *British Journal of Religious Education* 41(4), 422–434. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2019.1585329

Ali, N., Afwadzi, B., Abdullah, I. & Mukmin, M.I., 2021, 'Interreligious literacy learning as a counter-radicalization method: A new trend among institutions of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 32(4), 383–405. https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2021.1996978

Angkat, I., 2021, 'Budaya Politik Emha Ainun Nadjib dalam Meretas Problematika Pluralitas Agama di Indonesia', *Hikmah* 18(1), 13–27. https://doi.org/10.53802/hikmah.v18i1.102

Ardi, R., Tobing, D.H., Agustina, G.N., Iswahyudi, A.F. & Budiarti, D., 2021, 'Religious schema and tolerance towards alienated groups in Indonesia', *Heliyon* 7(7), e07603. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07603

Athanasoulia, S., 2020, 'From "Soft" to "Hard" to "Moderate": Islam in the Dilemmas of post-2011 Saudi foreign policy', *Religions* 11(4), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11040211

Aziz, A.A., Masykur, A., Anam, A.K., Muhtarom, A., Masudi, I. & Duryat, M., 2021, *Implementasi Moderasi Beragama dalam Pendidikan*, 1st edn., Kelompok Kerja Implementasi Moderasi Beragama Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, Jakarta.

Baidowi, A., Abdullah, I., Qudsy, S.Z. & Najwah, N., 2021, 'Promoting Qur'anic verses that reject violence', *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 10(6), 23–34. https://doi.org/10.36941/ajis-2021-0150

Barreto, R.C., 2021, 'Racism and religious intolerance: A critical analysis of the coloniality of Brazilian Christianity', *Mission Studies* 38(3), 398–423. https://doi.org/10.1163/15733831-12341811

Basri, H., Miswar, A., Hasan, H. & Khalik, S., 2022, 'Inheritance Rights of Women in Makassar Society: A study of living Qur'an and its implications for Islamic Law', *Samarah* 6(2), 537–557. https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.13882

Daher-Nashif, S., Hammad, S.H., Kane, T. & Al-Wattary, N., 2021, 'Islam and mental disorders of the older adults: Religious text, belief system and caregiving practices', *Journal of Religion and Health* 60(3), 2051–2065. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-020-01094-5

Desky, H. & Rijal, S., 2021, 'Pengembangan Kerukunan Masyarakat Multikultural Melalui Pendekatan Agama', *International Journal of Islamic Thought* 20, 45–52. https://doi.org/10.24035/ijit.20.2021.209

De Wit, S. & Haines, S., 2022, 'Climate change reception studies in anthropology', *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 13(1), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.742

Dodego, S.H.A. & Witro, D., 2020, 'The Islamic moderation and the prevention of radicalism and religious extremism in Indonesia', *Dialog* 43(2), 199–208. https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v43i2.375

Eise, J. & Rawat, M., 2023, 'Spiritual but not religious seek unrestricted connection to selves, others, and earth: Formative research on the explosive growth of an "inactive public" beyond the organization', *Public Relations Review* 49(1), 102276. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2022.102276

Eunike, P. & Putrawan, B.K., 2021, 'Islamic radicalism: History and a case study in the Indonesia context', *Jurnal Theologia* 32(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2021.32.1.7906

Galamba, A. & Matthews, B., 2021, 'Science education against the rise of fascist and authoritarian movements: Towards the development of a pedagogy for democracy', *Cultural Studies of Science Education* 16(2), 581–607. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11422-020-10002-y

Helmy, M.I., Kubro, A.D.J. & Ali, M., 2021, 'The understanding of Islamic moderation (wasaṭiyyah al-Islam) and the hadiths on inter-religious relations in the Javanese Pesantrens', *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11(2), 377–401. https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.351-376

Iser, W., 1978, *The act of reading: A theory of aesthetic response*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, MD

Ismail, S., Abubakar, B., Matsyah, A., Thalal, M. & Yahya, H., 2021, 'Religious radicalism and Islamic universities in Aceh: Between campus, environment and family', *Samarah* 5(2), 1044–1068. https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v5i2.10958

Johansson, M., 2021, 'Literary socialisation through education: A comparative study of Swedish and French upper secondary school students' reception of narrative text and the paradox of literature', *L1: Educational Studies in Language and Literature* 21(2), 1–25. https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2021.21.02.03

Kementerian Agama RI, 2019, *Moderasi Beragama*, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementrian Agama RI, Jakarta.

Lubis, S.I. & Sianipar, A., 2022, 'How religious tolerance can emerge among religious people: An investigation on the roles of intellectual humility', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology* 25(2), 276–287. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12493

Ma'arif, M.A., Rofiq, M.H. & Sirojuddin, A., 2022, 'Implementing learning strategies for moderate Islamic religious education in Islamic higher education', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8(1), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajsp.12493

Maskuri, M., Ma'arif, A.S. & Fanan, M.A., 2020, 'Mengembangkan Moderasi Beragama Mahasantri Melalui Ta'lim Ma'hadi di Pesantren Mahasiswa', *J-PAI: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7(1), 32–45. https://doi.org/10.18860/jpai.v7i1.11239

Miles, M.B, Huberman, A.M. & dan Saldana, J., 2014, *Qualitative data analysis, a methods sourcebook*, 3rd edn., Terjemahan Tjetjep Rohindi Rohidi, UI-Press, Jakarta.

Mizani, Z.M., 2022, 'Inclusive-pluralistic Islamic religious education model as an alternative to investing the values of religious moderation', *Muslim Heritage* 7(2), 487–504. https://doi.org/10.21154/muslimheritage.v7i2.5018

Muda, K. & Mohd Tohar, S.N.A., 2020, 'Definisi, Konsep dan Teori Toleransi Beragama', *Sains Insani* 5(1), 194–199. https://doi.org/10.33102/sainsinsani.vol5no1.179

Mulyana, R., 2023, 'Religious moderation in Islamic religious education textbook and implementation in Indonesia', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8592

Mustakim, Z., Ali, F. & Kamal, R., 2021, 'Empowering students as agents of religious moderation in Islamic higher education institutions', *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7(1), 65–76. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i1.12333

Mutawali, M., 2023, 'Maqāṣid al-Sharī'a as the foundation of Islamic moderation: Theo-philosophical insight against extreme religious ideology', *Ulumuna* 27(1), 341–366. https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.560

Nasir, M. & Rijal, M.K., 2021, 'Keeping the middle path: Mainstreaming religious moderation through Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia', *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11(2), 213–241. https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241

Nirwana, D. & Saifuddin, S., 2019, *Studi living Sunnah Terhadap Upacara Daur Hidup di Kalangan Masyarakat Banjar*, Antasari Press, Banjarmasin, viewed 23 November 2023, from https://idr.uin-antasari.ac.id/17869/1/Studi/livingsunnah-new.pdf.

Pajarianto, H., Pribadi, I. & Sari, P., 2022, 'Tolerance between religions through the role of local wisdom and religious moderation', *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78(4), a7043. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043

Penthin, M., Christ, A., Kröner, S., Pirner, M.L. & Scheunpflug, A., 2022, 'Relationships between religious-spiritual and professional-ethical beliefs of schoolteachers', *Zeitschrift fur Erziehungswissenschaft* 25(1), 81–106. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11618-021-01063-y

Purwanto, Y., Qowaid, Ma'rifatanini, L. & Fauzi, R., 2019, 'Internalizing moderation value through Islamic religious education in public higher education', *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 17(2), 110–124. https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v17i2.605

Rafiq, A., 2021, 'Living Qur'an: Its texts and practices in the functions of the scripture', *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-Ilmu al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 22(2), 469–484.

Ramle, M.R. & Huda, M., 2022, 'Between text and context: Understanding hadīth through Asbab al Wurud', *Religions* 13(2), 92. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020092

Salik, M., 2019, 'Conserving moderate Islam in Indonesia: An analysis of Muwafiq's speech on online media', *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 13(2), 373–394. https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2019.13.2.373-394

Salleh, N.M., Usman, A.H., Wazir, R., Abdullah, F.R. & Ismail, A.Z., 2019, 'Living hadith as a social cultural phenomenon of Indonesia: A systematic review of the literature', *Humanities and Social Sciences Reviews* 7(6), 1125–1133. https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2019.76161

Setiabudi, W., Wibowo, H. & Paskarina, C., 2021, 'To explore the issue of religion and the development of tolerance among religious communities, especially the Yyouth in Indonesia', *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 11(3), 16–25. https://doi.org/10.48047/rigeo.11.03.02

Shihab, M.Q., 2020, *Wasathiyah: Wawasan Islam tentang Moderasi Beragama*, Lentera Hati, Jakarta.

Sirry, M., 2020, 'Muslim student radicalism and self-deradicalization in Indonesia', *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 31(2), 241–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2020.1770665

Sirry, M., 2023, *Pendidikan dan Radikalisme: Data dan Teori Memahami Intoleransi Beragama di Indonesia*, Suka Press, Yogyakarta.

Sodikin, A. & Ma`arif, M.A., 2021, 'Penerapan Nilai Islam Moderat Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Perguruan Tinggi', *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 19(2), 187–203. https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v19i2.702

Somasundram, S., Habibullah, M.S., Sambasivan, M. & Rasiah, R., 2021, 'Antecedents of religious tolerance in Southeast Asia', in A. Almakaeva, A. Moreno & R. Wilkes (eds.), *Societies and political orders in transition*, pp. 137–155, Springer Nature, London.

Subandi, B., Alamsyah, A., Ahid, N., Abdullah, M., Thahir, A. & Jannah, R., 2020, 'Management learning strategies integrated with moderate islam on preventing indonesian radical ideology', *Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana* 25, 377–387.

Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Latifa, R. & Sa'diyah, S., 2022, 'Religious moderation in Indonesian Muslims', *Religions* 13(5), 451. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451

Sumbulah, U., 2017, 'De-radicalisation of Indonesian students: A case study of UIN Malang', *Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* 25, 155–164.

Suryadilaga, M.A., 2007, 'Model-model living Hadis', in S. Syamsuddin (ed.), *Metodologi Penelitian Living Qur'an dan Hadis*, pp. 105–130, Teras, Yogyakarta.

Suyanto, B., Sirry, M. & Sugihartati, R., 2019, 'Pseudo-radicalism and the de-radicalization of educated youth in Indonesia', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 45(2), 153–172. https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1654726

Syam, F., Mangunjaya, F.M., Rahmanillah, A.R. & Nurhadi, N., 2020, 'Narrative and the politics of identity: Patterns of the spread and acceptance of radicalism and terrorism in indonesia', *Religions* 11(6), 1–27. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060290

Tasheva, M., 2021, 'The religious tolerance in medieval Spain', *Balkan Social Science Review* 17, 265–280. https://doi.org/10.46763/BSSR21170265t

Ummaru, A. & Sharif, M.F.M., 2020, 'The efficacy of applying prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) practical methods of conflict management in resolving inter-religious crises in Nigeria', *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 13(1), 499–517, viewed 27 June 2023, from https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol_13/13141_Ummaru_2020_E_R.pdf.

Unstad, L. & Fjørtoft, H., 2021, 'Texts, readers, and positions: Developing a conceptual tool for teaching disciplinary reading in religious education', *Learning and Instruction* 73, 101431. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2020.101431

Zaduqisti, E., Mashuri, A., Zuhri, A., Haryati, T.A. & Ula, M., 2020, 'On being moderate and peaceful: Why Islamic political moderateness promotes outgroup tolerance and reconciliation', *Archive for the Psychology of Religion* 42(3), 359–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/0084672420931204