

## Religious Moderation from a Gender Equality Perspective

**SITI-NUR AZIZAH**

*Faculty of Law, State University of Surabaya, Indonesia*

### Abstract

The potential of religious conflict is quite high in Indonesia. It is often triggered by the behaviour of exclusive religion and the various religious thought that always try to conquer the truth within community without respecting each other. This study aims to know religious moderation in its development needs and potential optimalization of the role of gender equality. A qualitative approach was used, and the study methodology was library-based research. The results show that religious moderation in the perspective of gender equality can be a tool to read the religious cultural's community in religious practice, respectively tolerance, respecting differences, and recognizing the diversity. Religious moderation was Indonesia policy in bilateral, regional and multilateral level to create the world's peace. Moreover, this study indicated that women should be the main indicator in religious moderation mainstreaming to change the weakness of women and the nation. It is expected to become the power of religious culture that puts and fights for the interests of the nation if there is a religious conflict.

**Keywords:** *moderation, religious, perspective, gender equality.*

Religious moderation is a tolerant way of religion that recognizes the differences, existences, and beliefs of a religion that is believed by other parties. Moderation is derived from latin language, *moderatio*, which mean average, not more and not less. According to Great Dictionary of Indonesian Language (KBBI), moderation refers to reasonable behaviour and trying to avoid violence or something extreme. In Arabic language, moderation is known as *al-wasathiyah (religious moderation)*<sup>182</sup>. This surah show that every Muslim know two human unsure and they have those two perfections so that they become the witness for all humans, because every Muslim is commanded to *tabbayun*<sup>183</sup> and *tawakal*<sup>184</sup> while listening, seeing and completing a problem. In Islamic thought, religious moderation is an attitude of respect towards diversity; it is inclusive (Dawing, 2018). Religious moderation is also viewed as one of the *minhaj* that put forward the behaviour of *tawassuth* (moderation), *al-adl* (justice), *al-hikmah* (wise), *al-khairiyah* (kindness), and *i'tidal* (harmony). Also occurring as universal

<sup>182</sup> QS. Al Baqarah ayat 143

<sup>183</sup> QS Al-Hujurat ayat 6

<sup>184</sup> QS Ali Imran ayat 159



characteristics of thought are *tawazun* (fairness), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderate), *infitah* (open), and *al-hiwar* (dialogic) (K. M. Arif, 2020). Religious moderation does not mean mixing the truth among religions or removing the identity of each person's belief.

The challenge faced by religious moderation regards how to be a mediator between the controversions of the Islamic schools and thoughts by defending their truth in society. The first is contextual schools and thoughts (*Ad-dzahiriyah*). The founding father is Daud bin Ali Ad-dzahiriy bin Khalaf Al-Baghdadiy (201-207H/816-864M), born in Kuffah, from Isfahan and live in Baghdad (Zuhayli, 2006). *Addzahiri* is a thought that not follow any worship practices outside the religious text (Qardlawi, 2007) that is, Qur'an and As-Sunnah/Hadith. The only agreement (*ijma'*) that recognized is from the Prophet Muhammad *shallallahu alaihi wasallam*'s companions (Zuhayli, 2006). This thought rejects democratisation and political parties along with its aspects because it is considered as infidel product (M. K. Arif, 2020), including the prohibition on usury (*riba*) in six categories (Zuhayli, 2006). The point is, this thought rejects everything outside the religious text and what the Prophet Muhammad *shallallahu alaihi wasallam* not to do, even if it is *ijtihad* (Qardlawi, 2007). It also refuses sharia bank because it considered to have mixed up with usury (M. K. Arif, 2020). The second is Islamic thought of *salafiy* (*al-ushuliyah*). It was established by Syaikh Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab AlMasyrafiy, At-Tamimiy, An-Najdiy (1115-1206H/1703-1791M) (World Assembly for Muslim Youth, 2003). *Salafiy* is the school of thought that based on the basic Islamic foundation from Qur'an, As-Sunnah/Hadith, and scholarly consensus (*ijma'*) (Qardlawi, 1998) and monotheism set by Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* and His Messengers. It rejects *ta'wil* and *tafsir* in the form of illustration (*tamtsil*) and does not allow to start a question with "how" (*takyif*) (Wahhab, 2008; World Assembly for Muslim Youth, 2003).

The third is Islamic liberalism (*aklaniyah*), born from Socrates (469 SM-399 SM) and Aristoteles (384 SM-322 SM), Greek philosophers. This thought assumes that sense is absolute, to describe the truth and the form of God, because "I think, and I exist". It means, the universe and the life can only be understood using logic and reason (World Assembly for Muslim Youth, 2003). Religion is a spiritual and metaphysical thing that not relate to the State, Government, and Politics (Razik, 2000). The religious principle is constant, whereas the human life is dynamic, thus it is impossible to unity human flexibility with constant religious teachings (Audah, 1987). Indeed, it contradicts with Islamic teaching. The fourth is the thought of religious pluralism (*at-ta'ddudiyah*). This thought recognizes the existing diversity and religious characteristic differences (Thoha, 2005), but also the belief that all religions are the same and have their own God, and can be merged as global religion (M. K. Arif, 2020). Moreover, there two Islamic features that present the condition of community's social culture, those are; moderate and kind (Schwartz, 2007). The resistance of religious conflict in Indonesia is quite worrying. The intolerance keeps increasing and throughout the year of 2018 there are 160 violations of freedom of religion/belief with 202 forms of action, spread in 25 provinces, and other cases of blasphemy and radicalism that happen nowadays (Hermawati et al., 2016).

Religious moderation is important to be reviewed from gender equality's perspective. Gender is the cultural concept that differ the mentality role characteristic and community's behaviour (Perdana, 2019). In order to understand the culture and diversity, the concept of gender can be one of the assessment indicators of moderation behaviour (Ali, 2017). The gender matter is commonly linked to the equality problem, that is, an access to get a similar

chance and rights as a human. This study will see the religious moderation from a gender equality perspective, especially the role of women's abilities and scientific development in implementing the religious moderation. Women prefer to work rather than dominate, and they also like to create peace rather than conflict (Grele, 1979). Women have bigger tolerance potential compared to men in religious moderation (Riniti Rahayu & Surya Wedra Lesmana, 2020), but this potential is not yet implemented and optimal. Therefore, the government issued a regulation of law on Gender Equality and Justice (2012) and Inpres (no.9/2000) on Gender Mainstreaming in National Development.

Based on the point of view of social community, women are more dynamic in building their family relationship. They tend to be open to experience, to be more communicative, more selective of what they want, aware of their rights, able to position themselves, and have high confidence (Maimanah, 2013). Moreover, women's ability to adapt is better than men's. Thus, it can be said that women's natural abilities can be the primary factors to implement religious moderation. One of the social politics stabilities that is needed by Indonesia is to ensure the religious moderation. A religious behaviour that put forward the religious belief and truth, that also respecting other religions and beliefs. This kind of religious moderation can prevent Indonesia's citizenship from the unnecessary religious conflict that may lead to society's conflict, which can disunite the Nation.

The problem of this study is how to build religious moderation behaviour from the perspective of gender equality as a cultural concept. It requires knowledge of religious moderation from the characteristics of masculinity and feminism. Therefore, this study aims to know the religious moderation in its development needs and potential optimalization of the role of gender equality.

## **Methodology**

This study used library research approach as the methodology. Library research was conducted to collect various materials, including books, scientific journals, internet, and so on. The collected data was elaborated based on the need of the literature in a systematic way. After that, the data was analysed using critical descriptive methods based on interpreted theories and concepts.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Religious moderation in development needs***

In Indonesia, religious life is very complex, plural and multicultural. The existence of diverse religious thought along with its various perspectives may cause potential collisions, not only thought-provoking, but also physically provoking. It is necessary to have a narration of religious moderation to prevent one-sided justifications on righteousness claim within religion. The narration of religious moderation is also needed to guard human honor and dignity. In Indonesia's *National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN)* of 2020-2021, religious moderation is included as one of the strategical issues, the theological base and the policy to prevent extremism, sectarianism, and conflict among religious people, which done simultaneously in national mental revolution program and cultural establishment. The

reinforcement of religious moderation is implemented through regulation, institutional support, good governance, and budget policy to assist human resource actors that needed within (Kemenag, 2020).

The Ministry of Religion Affairs is appointed as the leading sector in strengthening religious moderation which then forming a working group to identify the intolerance problems. One of the results is the high percentage number of intolerance opinion, especially from schools under the guidance of non-Ministry of Religion Affairs (Kemenag, 2018). Thus, the Indonesia's Ministry of Religion Affairs makes the religious moderation guidance to initiate the social religious relation that is productive, respect each other, and doing some activities to enhance the religious moderation. There were 31 times of moderation and multicultural insight coaching with 3.600 participants and 172 times of religious moderation dialogue with 110.760 participants since 2015 until 2019. This includes people from cross religions and promote moderate religion speech (Kementerian Agama Islam, 2020).

Religious moderation is not only becoming the national policy but also the Indonesia policy in bilateral, regional, and multilateral level in attempt to build the world peace. Indonesia's role in managing religious issues has so far been considered successful by the world, even it is used as a model and education of religious harmony by other countries. Religious moderation does not merely exist in Islam, but also exists in other religions. For instance, in Christian tradition, religious moderation is defined as the perspective to mediate the extremity of Christian teachings. Religious moderation in the perspective of Catholic church is a point of view of faith, fellowship, hope and love. The three virtues of these teachings are made in the attitude of believers into love that moves life. Religious moderation in Hindu can be seen through *Satya Yuga (golden age)*, *Treta Yuga (the age of three or triads)*, *Dwapara Yuga (the age of two)*, and *Kali Yuga (dark age)*, in which the rhythm of religious teachings and human character must be in harmony, and religious moderation becomes the spirit within. In Buddha, religious moderation can be traced from four *prasetya* teachings, including harmony with the universe and compulsion to help each other.

Religious moderation in its structure has been implemented throughout the country's policy. Yet, the thing that has not been optimally conducted is pushing the religious moderation to be the community's cultural movement, which starts from the awareness and the needs of the community itself. Indonesia is a big country with various cultures, customs, languages and religions. This mean that religious moderation is not enough to be done only by the country, but it should be felt as community property to create peace for everyone. This is not an impossible thing because basically, religions in Indonesia have a harmonious and tolerant religious culture. They are appreciating and respecting each other from the beginning. Thus, in the future, religious moderation is becoming the only choice to realize the goodness together. Religious moderation in Indonesia has significant influence on the creation of constructive relations between religions, either in external way or internal way. Religion has the important role within the life of Indonesia's community, especially in arranging the social norms. It is considered as a fortress that can guard and protect the human needs from the imbalance of life.

The progress of religious moderation can be measured from: (a) national commitment – this is the most important indicator to see the perspective and implementation of person's mentality characteristic which impacted on the national interest, (b) tolerance – it is an indicator to measure the honor and recognition toward the differences and beliefs of each religions, (c)



human beings that worth for their self and environment around. Islam does not teach the difference between men and women in a schematic way, but placing them both biologically and socio-culturally intact, thus they both feel of having a role. Both men and women can do similar role, such as the office job, but there are some roles that can only be done by women, those are; pregnancy, giving birth, and breast feeding. Whereas, there is a certain role that humanely can only be done by the men, that is, the work that requires more enery and muscle. In normative Islamic perspective, the relationship between men and women are equal. The quality of a person is only be seen through the devotion and piety to Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala*. The same reward is given to people on all of their deed by Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala* without discriminating between men and women (Tanwir, 2018).

Muslim feminists are those who believe that the existing patriarchal system is not covenant with the principles of the Koran on gender equality and justice (Harisuddin, 2015). Thus, Muslim feminists base their arguments by interpreting the Koran and religious texts in rejecting the patriarchal system (Badran, 2013). They believe that Islam is not against feminists even Islamic teachings uphold equality between men and women. Thus, religion can be used to encourage critical discourse about gender equality (Rinaldo, 2014). In the Arab region, where the majority of people are Muslims, strengthening the interpretation of emancipatory religions is an efficient strategy to increase gender equality (Glas & Alexander, 2020).

Women are portrayed having more potential to teach the religious moderation behaviour early, in the family environment, to create the culture of tolerance that will affect the wider environment in society. The application of religious moderation will be effective if it is started from the smallest area – household. In a household, a woman who have good religious understanding will create safe and comfort atmosphere for her husband, and vice verse. That situation can initiate the family's members to open to each other about their personal feeling, their problem in work place, and other. Women are also viewed as having big potential to maintain tolerance. Psychologically, the role of women as mothers who have intense relationship with their children and the environment around make them become selective of values, and knowledgeable when it comes to tolerance and respecting other's behaviours. Thus, women have the main role in actualizing religious moderation simultaneously and intensively. This is also supported by women who are able to play multiple roles as herself, wife, mother, and member of community (Jannah & Awaludin, 2020). Those three roles above need to be facilitated and supported to make the growth of religious moderation run effectively. Strengthening the religious moderation requires a mature strategy, such as how to involve women to participate in the development by providing the room for women to work and participate in the environment. Thus women will have opportunity to attend in the public service field, which will slowly mainstream religious moderation.

Then, the government is kept prioritizing and pushing the programs related to religious moderation mainstreaming and gender equality. The religious values need to be awakened in order to create the norms within the community. However, the community need a reference or guide in the middle of cultural diversity that needed to be respected and recognized through understanding and characteristic of community's mentality. These programs are addressed to create un-excessive religious behaviour. Moreover, it has been recognized by the basic constitution of the Republic of Indonesia in third paragraph of 1945 Constitution of Republic of Indonesia, that stated Independence is achieved by the grace of Allah *subhanahu wa ta'ala*.

Thus, religious behavior needs to be controlled by the State so that the current religious dynamics do not fall into the abyss of differences that bring down each other. The State as the supervisor has duty to keep the religion in its moderate track and this duty need to be accessed equally by all citizens, without disparity. Gender equality for religious moderation mainstreaming must continue to be carried out to stem false news in the name of religion. Because in the digital era, it is difficult for people to avoid provocation and false information. Religious moderation without gender equality can cause one-sided understanding that may lead to the increase of radical view. Hence, the biggest challenge in religious moderation from a gender equality perspective is to give opportunity, understanding, equality and justice to get access to follow the transformation and development that happen continuously in human life. It means that religious moderation, from the perspective of gender equality, is a tool to read the community's religious culture, especially in the mentality characteristic of the community, either man or woman.

## Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that religious moderation is Indonesia's policy in bilateral, regional and multilateral level to create the world peace. It is proved that religious moderation in Indonesia had significant influence on the creation of constructive relations between religions, both externally and internally. Meanwhile, the gender equality in religious moderation aimed to embody the chance and access justice on the understanding of implementative religious moderation for men and women. Women awareness and potential in implementing religious moderation are needed to change the women's weak potential. There are three roles that can be played by women in once in actualize religious moderation, including; the role of mother, role of wife, and role of her own self as community members. These three roles need to be facilitated and supported to enhance the growth of religious moderation effectively. Religious moderation within the perspective of gender equality can become the tool to read the community's culture on religious practices, practices which are tolerant, respect differences, and recognize diversity. Moreover, this study indicated that women should be the main indicator in religious moderation mainstreaming to change the weakness of women and the nation. It is expected to become the power of religious culture that puts and fights for the interests of the nation if there is a religious conflict.

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