
**THE RELIGIOUS MODERATION FOR INDONESIA
MUSLIM MIDDLE CLASS:
CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS**

**MODERASI BERAGAMA BAGI KELAS MENENGAH
MUSLIM INDONESIA:
TANTANGAN DAN SOLUSINYA**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v36i1.647>

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Received: 30 January 2023
Revised: 27 May 2023
Published: 26 June 2023

Abstract

This research would like to investigate further religious moderation discourse and its counter-discourse challenges in Indonesia. By taking example of Indonesian muslim middle class, the purpose of this study to reveal why religious moderation still faces obstacles, particularly Indonesian Muslim middle class. This study employs critical discourse analysis by collecting data from relevant literatures. The results of this study are 1) Indonesian Muslim middle class still uncertain to adopt religious moderation discourse 2) there are three main contra narrations to mention here like religious narcissism, blasphemy, and hate speech that hinder the implementation of religious moderation

Keywords: *religious moderation; Indonesian Muslim middle class; religious narcissism*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini ingin mengkaji lebih jauh wacana moderasi keagamaan dan tantangan kontra-wacananya di Indonesia. Dengan mengambil contoh kelas menengah muslim Indonesia, tujuan penelitian ini untuk mengungkap mengapa moderasi beragama masih menghadapi kendala, khususnya kelas menengah Muslim Indonesia. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian analisa wacana kritis dengan mengumpulkan data dari literatur yang relevan. Hasil penelitian ini adalah 1) kelas menengah Muslim Indonesia masih ragu-ragu untuk mengadopsi wacana moderasi beragama 2) ada tiga kontra narasi utama yang disebutkan di sini seperti narsisme agama, penistaan agama, dan ujaran kebencian yang menghambat penerapan moderasi agama.

Kata Kunci: moderasi beragama; kelas menengah muslim Indonesia; narsisme beragama

INTRODUCTION

The meaning of religious moderation in this paper is how people can be open-minded and tolerate diversity in society. It relates to the current situation showing the increasing religiosity and chauvinistic attitudes. In line with recent circumstances, it is important to see the link and match how people still hold religious moderation views to overcome intolerant problems.

This above definition practically counted on the existence of a Muslim middle class as a social group that has made Islam not just a religion but also a norm of life. In general, the Muslim middle class is the group of Muslim people who adhere to Islamic teachings in daily life (Hadiz, 2018; W. Jati, 2017; White et al., 2008). They would like to implement religious values in a broader context. The rise of the current Muslim middle classes has attracted many scholars to investigate it further. More especially, the main focus of study is religious orientation and expressions that have close relation with the Islamization wave. As this group occupies the large percentage in society, it has influential impact on religious life especially how Muslim can able to mingle with non-Muslim.

But then it turns out that Islamization paths arise in the public sphere, namely 1) commercialization of Islam and 2) peripheral Islamic narratives (Jati, 2017). These two paths of Islamization then have an impact on how Islamic expression is carried out by the Muslim middle class. These two paths then developed into the mainstream of Islam in

the public space which manifested itself in three things that need to be underlined, namely religious narcissism, religious blasphemy, as well as expressions of religious hatred. These three discourses are a form of development of Islamic discourse which originally led to existence and then developed into domination in the public space.

This desire to put Islam at the forefront creates room for further discussion. Indonesia's multicultural condition, where all existing elements of identity must be placed within the equality framework. The strong element of strengthening identity by using religion is a challenge for the implementation of revitalized religious moderation to make Islam the majority religion remain inclusive in fostering peace with minorities and adherents of other religions. The challenge faced in upholding and implementing religious moderation then is to convince the middle-class Muslim group to become new, tolerant and inclusive Muslims.

However, separate efforts are needed to change Islamic preferences in everyday life. This effort to change the Islamic preferences of the middle-class Muslim then becomes a new challenge for religious moderation in Indonesia. It is mainly because religious moderation tends to be challenged by other groups who seek to promote religious purity by placing Islam as the main narrative of social policies and norms. This condition has the potential to lead to deeper intolerance if

this religious moderation does not immediately become the mainstream in the public space. In addition to the opportunities for intolerance to emerge, another important thing to note from the expression of religious narcissism is the strengthening of polarization, especially Muslim-non-Muslim identities (Raharjo Jati, 2022). It is these two potential problems that could reduce the quality of religious moderation in Indonesia.

The two potential problems of religious moderation actually stem from the increasingly expressive piety in the public space. This condition gradually develops into the phenomenon of religious narcissism. Broadly speaking, this narcissistic behaviour is also related to the increasing use of social media so that the need for religion is now no longer a private need, but rather a public need. It makes these narcissistic behaviours even greater, especially for the middle-class Muslim who want their identity to be recognized as a Muslim both personally and socially.

The strengthening of the influence of this identity seems to be quite significant, especially in the current pandemic era. This has an impact on issues, one of which is the debate on halal status in vaccinations in the pandemic era. Even so, other expressions of religious narcissism are interesting to be further elaborated on. Following up on this, the research question that I want to ask in this article is: What are the challenges and opportunities faced in the implementation of the policy of religious moderation in

Indonesia?

The purpose of this research is to discuss the extent to which the three forms of religious moderation challenge the middle-class Muslim are religious narcissism, religious blasphemy, as well as hate speech. All three will be discussed comprehensively both conceptually and empirically, especially in relation to religious moderation. The orientation of the things to be targeted in this research is to discuss the potential extent of the challenges and opportunities for religious moderation of the Muslim middle class can reduce the impact of expressions of religious narcissism, religious blasphemy, as well as hate speech.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses qualitative research methods, more precisely, critical discourse analysis. This method enables to understand the true meaning behind discourse. Therefore, it works closely with hermeneutics that focuses on the meaning of the literature particularly in journals and books (Mahoney, 2000).

In line with the above explanation, the discourse itself more specifically focuses on how the production of religious moderation knowledge is made and its relation to counter discourses such as expressions of religious narcissism, blasphemy, as well as hate speech.

This is used to connect between the pro and contra narratives on the ground. This debate process between the main discourse and

counter-discourse will be an important point in this paper. This is because the main discourse always uses aspects of idealism, while the consistent use pragmatic analysis.

The steps in this research are 1) collecting various relevant materials regarding religious moderation and its challenges, then proceed with step 2) making a mapping of the main and counter-narratives and then followed by step 3) conducting an in-depth analysis of the challenges and expectations of moderation religious.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The existence of "justification" for personal and collective versions of religious teachings is the biggest challenge in realizing religious moderation. Broadly speaking, religious moderation is a form of invitation to be able to build harmony by recognizing differences in society. Furthermore, the emergence of the idea and discourse of religious moderation is a form of response to the hardening of the use of identity in the public space. This then triggers the labelling of community members giving birth to majority and minority sentiments. The actors behind the hardening of the use of this identity are dominated by the Muslim middle class who are trying to build a new Islamic identity.

The emergence of moderation in the midst of strong currents of identity use and also the Islamization of public spaces is important for further elaboration. Moreover, the use of religion is inevitable in the expression of

identity today. This condition that leads that religious moderation should not only become a discourse without empirical action, but also become a kind of public policy that binds the people. With policy moderation as a policy, it is hoped that it will become an important discourse in directing religious narcissism so that it does not cross the normal limits of religious expression. The urgency of the emergence of religious moderation is indeed related to the emergence of three important phenomena that hurt the sense of nationality and diversity, namely 1) the development of individuals and collectives who have perspectives and worship that exceed the limits that lead to violent practices, 2) unilateral claims of truth on religious interpretations of the Al-Qur'an 'an and hadiths which are then forced on those who have different views from the conservative camp, 3) a perspective that uses religious argumentation which harms a sense of nationality and love for the motherland because they see that religious sovereignty must be higher than that of the state (Saifudin, 2019). The three forms of this phenomenon generally indicate an extreme left that occurs.

However, religious moderation also seeks to overcome the challenges posed by the extreme right, for example new religious movements that seek to build new religious sects by tolerating things considered taboo in religion because that is part of modernization. In other words, the extreme right movement through this movement seeks to review God's relationship with

humans, which places more on humans as the centre/supports anthropism.

Referring to the challenge, religious moderation means religious attitudes and expressions that tend to take a middle stance which does not lead to extreme left attitudes (conservatism) or extreme right attitudes (liberalism).

Furthermore, religious moderation is encouraged to overcome the middle-class narcissism so that it can be controlled. There are three main points that need to be noted in discussing religious moderation, namely: the principles of moderation (*tawassuth*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), balance (*tawazun*), and fairness (*i`tidal*) (Saifudin, 2019). As for the Indonesian context, these three values are then translated into three forms, namely thought moderation, movement moderation, and action moderation (Saifudin, 2019). These three forms of moderation are actually attempts to localize so that the expression of religious narcissism shown by the Muslim middle class itself does not lead to religious fanaticism and anarchism.

These three values explicitly try to show the existence of a spirit of tolerance that is upheld in Islam. This is related to efforts to revitalize Islam as a blessing for the universe (*rahmatal lil alamin*) whose image is now being eroded by a series of acts of intolerance. The position of the Indonesian the middle-class Muslim then tries to be revitalized as a tolerant people. Broadly speaking, the context of tolerance develops in two major domains, namely 1) passive

tolerance, namely a form of attitude and behavior that accepts differences and 2) passive tolerance, namely a form of attitude and behavior that is active in encouraging peace-building relations with adherents of other religions (Fitriani, 2020). Regarding these two types of tolerance, the public is directed to be religious in moderation and not to be extreme right or left regardless of the religion (Nurdin, 2021). For this reason, this religious moderation encourages the equality of religious perceptions that are tolerant of adherents of different religions. The definition of the state then directs that religion is sufficient to be in the middle without having to follow conservative or liberal currents.

Following up the discussion above, it needs three forms of moderation values that should be achieved by the two expressions of the principle of tolerance. It hoped that the Indonesian Muslim middle class will indeed become a middle class that is able to bridge the interests of the liberal right group with the conservative group. This is because the difference between the two groups is a necessity in the structure of Indonesian society. This then needs to encourage the Muslim middle class to become a group that campaigns for religious moderation in Indonesia. Especially now that religion is vulnerable to being the subject of identity politicization and the object of certain political interests. Related to the first point, the entry of religion into the political sphere as a form of replacing ideology has definitively caused disruption in the political

field.

This is related to the nature of religion which dogmatically binds the life preferences of its adherents. For this reason, when religion enters the realm of politics, what emerges next is a black and white perspective that contradict politics whose essence is unclear. As for the second principle, namely certain political objects, this is related to the manoeuvres of political elites who often use religion to legitimize their popularity as well as electability. This condition makes the Muslim middle class as part of the electorate segment in general elections vulnerable to being led to certain religious narratives which are actually more directed towards certain figures.

Referring back to the narrative of religious moderation that the Muslim middle class wants to realize, the important points of emphasis that need to be further elaborated are as follows.

Table 1
Directions and Purposes of Religious Moderation for the Indonesian Muslim Middle Class

No.	Principles of Religious Moderation	The Role of Muslim Middle Class	The Meaning
1	moderate (<i>tawassuth</i>)	Moderation agent	Mediating differences in society
2	tolerant (<i>tasamuh</i>)	Tolerance agent	Nurturing tolerance values
3	equal (<i>tawazun</i>)	Moderation agent	People's harmony
4	adil (<i>i`tidal</i>)	Tolerance agent	Accommodating the public need

source: (Sila, 2020; Jati, 2017)

In line with the discussion of religious moderation presented in the tabulation

above, the active role of the Muslim middle class is needed in an effort to foster this spirit of moderation and religious tolerance. The two forms of agency roles played, namely the moderation agency and the tolerance agency, actually have a special meaning. First, the Muslim middle class as an agent of tolerance refers more to efforts to make the Muslim middle class itself a catalyst for various existing debates to create an inclusive climate for interfaith life. Second, the Muslim middle class, as an agent of moderation, is more inclined to play the role of a mediator trying to manage these differences so that these differences do not lead to a larger conflict escalation. It is necessary to have this binding narrative of the two agency roles to be taken by the Muslim middle class.

The most important practice that needs to be underlined is the need for narrative questions to connect moderation and tolerance. This can be done by encouraging interfaith dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims. So far, various models of interfaith dialogue have often received various kinds of stigma, for example mass apostasy and religious conversions. Even though the basic essence of the dialogue is to build mutual trust as well as a sense of belonging because in essence moderation and tolerance are more about managing differences in their respective corridors.

Related to the development of narratives regarding inter-faith dialogue, various state Islamic campuses are producing narratives

of moderate Islam. The goal of Islamic narratives through this state Islamic campus is to produce Islamic discourse that is tolerant, inclusive, and collaborative with other religions (Abdurrohman, 2020).

The choice of various state campuses has something to do with showing moderate Indonesian Islam by combining modern and traditional sides, especially the pesantren tradition. This can be followed up by revitalizing the Islamic da'wah tradition as previously carried out by Walisongo. This da'wah model is very relevant and tolerant to the current condition of Indonesian Islam. The da'wah model by combining culture with the substance of Islam is very relevant as a basis for building inter-faith dialogue. Furthermore, interfaith dialogue becomes the next important keyword in the implementation of moderation and religious tolerance at the practical level.

In the chart below, interfaith dialogue becomes an important bridge in trying to then reattach the values of religious tolerance as well as moderation. The result will then bear fruit on the values of inter-faith dialogue that draws from both understandings. Furthermore, the chart below attempts to elaborate on the understanding of inter-faith dialogue

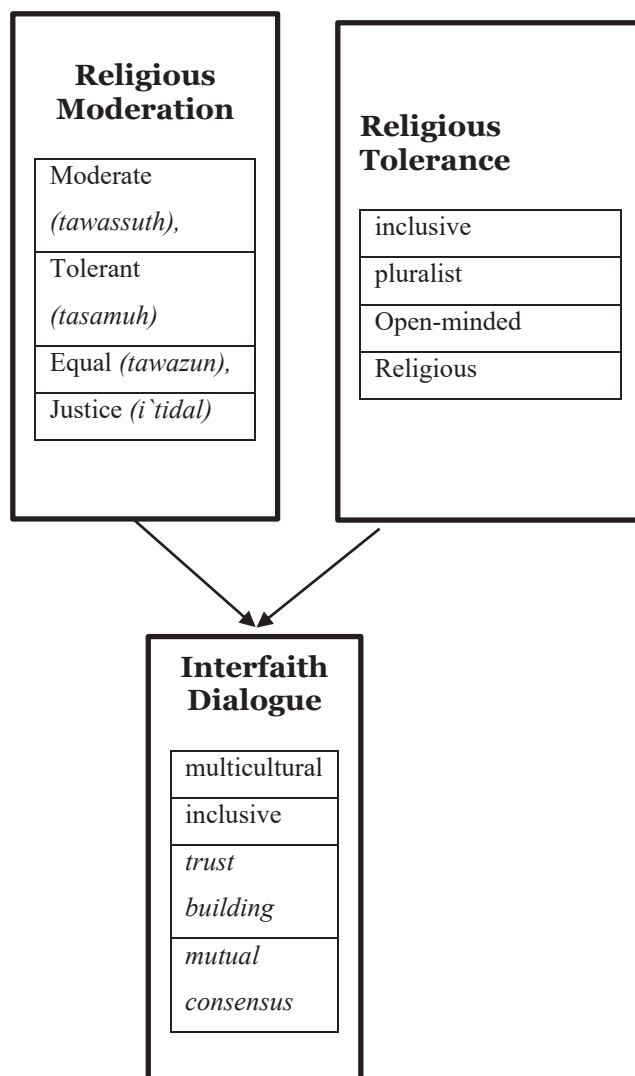


Figure 1. The Basic Understanding of Interfaith Dialogue (Source: elaborated from various data)

Taking into account of the discussion in chart 1, the empirical implementation of the values of interfaith dialogue actually takes the values of moderation with tolerance. The result that occurred then was more on the emphasis on the value of trust building and mutual consensus, especially for Muslim and non-Muslim relations. These two relations between people are often stigmatized into unequal majority and minority relations. Thus, the strengthening of the Islamization of public space has strengthened Islamic

orientation both personally and collectively for the Indonesian Muslim middle class. This emphasis on trust building and the mutual consensus is indeed relevant and important in awakening the role of the Indonesian Muslim middle class. In the current context of inter-religious relations, the context of maturity in religion is indeed a classic problem that has yet to be resolved. This is the fundamental problem in raising the Muslim middle class as the agent of change. The potential for inter-faith dialogue for the Muslim middle class actually exists, but then it depends on issues that develop in the public space. What is no less important is that the model of Islamic da'wah that is currently developing places more emphasis on the dichotomy of haram/halal and infidel/non-infidel.

Religious Narcissism for Indonesia Muslim Middle Class

The discussion of religious narcissism and religious moderation itself has two different perspectives. The first terminology tends to prioritize the freedom of individual religious expression in the public space. Meanwhile, the second terminology is more about the middle way to be able to connect various differences in identity, especially religion. Although these two theoretical concepts can be connected by looking at the way the positioning of Islam as a religion is carried out by the actors concerned. In this context, the crucial position lies in the position of the Indonesian Muslim middle class. In particular, is managing the narrative of

religious narcissism so that it is more inclusive and does not lead to the exclusivity of Islam as the majority religion in Indonesia. The point to be conveyed in this paper about religious narcissism is efforts to manage this narcissism so that it can be invited to become a moderate or inclusive movement rather than developing into an intolerant movement.

Recent studies discussing religious narratives are also related to the increasingly authoritative role of religion in society. This is what if forming excessive religious expression becomes mandatory because it is part of self-implementation as a Muslim. The authoritative dimension of religion can be seen in the form of institutions and norms so that these conditions make people closer to and influenced by religion. The condition of the closeness of the people represented by the middle class to this religion needs to be a separate note. This is because the understanding and implementation of religious activities requires deep understanding.

However, the emergence of religious narcissism is a form of instant and pragmatic understanding of religion. Thus, the reading of religion is more based on needs than on faith. The appearance of the behaviour and expressions of religious narcissism has something to do with the individual's excessive need to always be close to God (Vaknin, 2014). The emergence of this excessive need is also influenced by the shift in the role of religious preaching which is

now no longer institutionalized (organizational religion) but is now more of a personal religion (Mason & Brackman, 2014). The strengthening of personal-based religious da'wah is also inseparable from the characteristics of the Indonesian Muslim middle class who are "thirsty" for religious studies but are more contextual with the problems of everyday life. Thus, what happens is the definition of Islam which is carried out unilaterally and follows the mainstream.

This shift in religious da'wah is now more directed towards personal religion which is the seed for the formation of expressions of religious narcissism. This is because the model of personal da'wah broadcast by the Muslim or Muslimah preachers sometimes does not refer to a comprehensive understanding of religion. Moreover, currently there is an imbalance in the proportion of preaching in a balanced way between preachers based on modernist Islamic scholarship and preachers with traditionalist Islamic backgrounds. The dominance of modernist Islamic preachers who incidentally are still idealistic and realist in viewing Islam has marginalized the understanding of religious moderation. The implementation of *ijtihad* by the clergy as part of the practice of religious moderation was then marginalized. In this context, the *ijtihad* of the ulema seems to be marginalized by personal religious propagation because *ijtihad* of the ulema often only includes debates on classic books which middle-class Muslims are not very interested in following.

As a result, this personal religious preaching then gave rise to acts of justification (self-righteous) for the religious teachings that were believed. The justification that was originally personal then developed collectively as more and more elements of the Muslim middle class became followers. Thus, the behaviours and expression of religious narcissism then develops and becomes symptomatic. For this reason, it is not surprising that what emerges later is the emergence of general acceptance that the act of justification is an act of defending religion.

This unilateral justification of religious understanding has implications for the emergence of acts of religious narcissism in the public sphere. Narcissism, which previously directed more towards personal existence as a Muslim, has since developed into a collective movement that seeks to advocate for Islam to become an absolutely valid social value. The most common form of public expression of this religious narcissism is to feel oneself as God's representative in the world because only religious people feel close to God. The existence of narcissism as a representative of God legitimizes violence committed in the name of defending religion. This context is then strengthened by interpreting the arguments in religious texts to strengthen the argument that the choice of religion is the most correct. Both forms of expression are prevalent among the Muslim middle-class Indonesia.

One of the basic expressions of religious narcissism is being fanatical about the truth

of their religious doctrines and then looking down on differences (Hardiman, 2021). There are various kinds of social media. They are starting to provide free space for anyone to be able to express themselves. Related to this narcissism, a religious narcissist will try to fulfill his desire to always be noticed. In this condition, there is excessive belief because they feel what they will post on their respective social media as long as there is a religious narrative, it will get the support of many people who agree (Hardiman, 2021). So, what happens then is another consequence of this religious narration, namely the emergence of uniform opinions about religion by certain individuals or groups.

In the end, the expression of religious narcissism shown by the Indonesian Muslim middle class has various aspects and goals. The main thing to look for is actually a form of religious acknowledgment in the public sphere. This acknowledgment is important so that the majority narrative remains the main one in the public sphere. This is part of efforts to maintain a balance between the majority and the minority in majority control. However, in practice, it later develops into narcissistic behaviours. This development of narcissistic behaviours is an important note in the implementation and advocacy of religious moderation among the Muslim middle class. Then the following table tries to further elaborate on the typology of religious narcissism expressions in Indonesian Muslim middle classes.

Table 3.
The Typology of Religious Narcissism among Muslim middle classes

No.	Typology of Narcissism	Orientation of Narcissism	Interpretations of Narcissism
1	Symbolic Narcissism	- Self-Acknowledgement as pure Muslim - Creating same social circle	Narcissism is a way to combat identity crisis
2	Fanatic Narcissism	- Deepening understanding on certain Islamic school of thought - Refusing different views on Islam	Narcissism is a way to established self-stance.
3	Anarchist Narcissism	- Expanding of "jihad" term - The emergence of chauvinism	Narcissism is a preliminary way to purify Islam

source: elaborated from various sources

Referring to the understanding of table 3, expressions of religious narcissism among the Indonesian Muslim middle class have variations. The most important thing that should be underlined is that the more narcissistic the Muslim middle class is in religious expression, the tendency to become more fanatical becomes inevitable. The existence of a tendency to become fanatical within the framework of certain fanaticism is of particular note. The more fanatical about religious teachings, the more vulnerable a Muslim is to become intolerant. This condition is closely related to various kinds of da'wah channels which are increasingly intensive on various social media platforms. The various da'wah narratives that have developed generally call for an increase in faith and piety, but sometimes they are less contextual in a heterogeneous society. The popular media-based da'wah, commonly known as televangelism, emphasizes the

da'wah model that offers religion in empirically way rather than comprehensively. This condition has an impact on Islamic understanding among the Muslim middle class which does not fully accept the propositions of previous religious texts. Moreover, the da'wah that develops in social media encourages religion as a practical solution. Moreover, the Indonesian Muslim middle class themselves also tend to be idealistic Muslims in their own way. In the end, what happened then was the emergence of internal competition among the Muslim middle class to become true Muslims.

The existence of a mutual relationship between popular da'wah and the idealistic desires of the Muslim middle class makes the expression of narcissism an essential need. As shown in the previous table, the various expressions of middle-class narcissism also show the absence of an authoritative mechanism to be able to control these expressions of narcissism. The growing expression of religious narcissism that leads to anarchism shows a desire to make unilateral justification of one's understanding of religion and simply to get majority recognition. The growing expression of religious narcissism which was originally just a symbolic expression towards a fanatical expression also shows a strong desire for the Islamization of public space both in terms of norms and behaviours. This motivation makes expressions of religious narcissism more likely to find "justification" in the public sphere. This is coupled with seeking and strengthening various religious

arguments through religious text sources.

Blasphemy and Hate Speech as Challenges of Religious Moderation

The push to make the Indonesian Muslim middle class an agent of moderation and tolerance in today's context is not easy. Moreover, there is still stigmatization of the dichotomy between Muslims and non-Muslims, making the challenge of religious moderation a separate problem. Another problem is the internal Muslim relationship especially intra teachings contestation. Consequently, this resulted in the fractured Muslim condition. They compete for the leader in driving religious discourse in public space.

These two conditions are related to the increasingly strong religion as a public preference when interacting socially. In the end what happens then is a kind of social labelling and differentiation in society. Two recent studies show that the understanding of tolerance and moderation still exists among Muslims, especially the Muslim middle class, which has encountered internal debate. There are two important things that need to be underlined regarding this tolerance debate, namely 1) tolerance is limited to the recognition of religions recognized by the state, but does not involve social interaction between religions and 2) tolerance is an effort to form social control for the majority Muslim community against religious minorities other and Muslim minorities. The second value shows a status quo condition in which the norms, values

and principles of identity are mostly used in relations between people.

Based on these two explanations, tolerance is then placed within the framework of pluralism where each religious community, namely Muslims and non-Muslims, has its own space for expression. Even though it has gained its own space, conflicts in the name of religion are still prone to occur which now takes on three major themes, namely: 1) religious blasphemy 2) religious persecution as well as 3) the anti-religious apostasy movement. The three models actually show the intensity of religiosity expressions that are to be highlighted in the public space. Moreover, for the Muslim middle class, building self and collective image as devout Muslims. The emergence of religion-based violence also shows that inclusive da'wah seems to no longer be found in the public sphere. These conditions make violence which is in the name of defending religion be carried out in the public sphere

The existence of the three models above indicates that violence in the name of religion is actually the tip of the iceberg from various previous events. In a study conducted by CRCS UGM, it was shown that two main things that needed attention, namely 1) the emergence of anti-guidance perceptions by hardlines groups against those with different understandings and 2) the increase in the list of persecution of individuals and groups accused of heresy through campaigns collaborative activities carried out by various intolerant groups with

the local government (CRCS, 2012). The study conducted by CRCS a decade ago is still relevant for discussion in today's context where various kinds of intolerance are still encountered in society. These two kinds of actions actually show that the understanding of religion among Muslims themselves tends to be literal and not substantive. These conditions then encourage various kinds of normalization of violence in the name of religion. This normalization has led to the general perception that persecution and discrimination are "natural" and justified according to one-sided religious perceptions. This condition then prompted President Jokowi's government to push for religious moderation not just to become a discourse but to become a public policy under the umbrella of religious moderation (W. R. Jati et al., 2022). This is especially targeting new Muslim groups, especially the Muslim middle class. Apart from that, there are also other policies such as deradicalization which targets groups that are considered extremist by the government because they have the potential to disrupt national stability. This condition is vulnerable to impacting the Muslim middle class when it comes to choosing the desired model of da'wah and clerics.

Another challenge in realizing religious moderation for the Muslim middle class apart from violence in the name of religion is the politicization of accusations of heresy. This actually shows the existence of ambiguity in understanding the map of religious moderation. The government still

maintains biased rules regarding regulation of religion and beliefs that are considered "heretical". Another problem that arises later is that the definition of heretical / not heretical tends to be political matters. In general, it is carried out by the majority group with one-sided theological arguments and arguments. This condition that makes the projection of the policy of religious moderation ambiguous because once again it places the logic of the majority as a parameter. State entities then eventually develop into non-neutral agencies and tend to follow the mainstream. In the midst of the strong implementation of religious moderation by the state in the current conditions, at the same time there is also blasphemy of religion. This practice was strengthened by the revitalization of two important legal products namely Law No. 1/PNPS/1965 and Article 156A of the Criminal Code concerning blasphemy of religion. These two legal products often become shields for intolerant groups in "fighting" groups that do not agree with them (Bagir, 2017). Furthermore, the phrase "deviating" in the prohibition to engage in religious activities is a matter of debate because it depends on the dominant institutional/religious authority in society because this interpretation is carried out unilaterally. In other words, minority groups are still vulnerable to becoming victims of discrimination and persecution from the two legal products. Another impact that often and has the potential to continue to develop is the politics of scapegoating against

minorities who are "considered" as a problem.

The impact of the existence of various articles on blasphemy for the religious moderation of the Indonesian Muslim middle class is the loosening of the commitment to be moderate in an inclusive and tolerant manner. Thus, the definition of tolerance will not be cross-faith in nature, but only applies to those of the same faith. This is of course contradictory to the true essence of tolerance within the framework of interfaith dialogue where Muslims and non-Muslims must be embraced together. Another note that needs attention from the existence of the blasphemy article is the diminishing desire of each party, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to learn to understand the substance of their respective religions. This is actually important to avoid having a unilateral understanding from one's own religion to other religions so as to give rise to the stigma of infidels and non-believers. In the end, the Muslim middle class then avoids controversy and excessive resistance while maintaining an attitude of tolerance that only applies to themselves and their own groups, but not to other religious groups or other minorities.

By paying attention to these three challenges, there are two important things that need to be underlined in dealing with this challenge of moderation, namely 1) there is still not yet a strong understanding of religious moderation among middle-class Muslims, especially those who are interfaith and 2)

there is still ambiguity in state regulations regarding religious moderation for its citizens. because at the same time the article on blasphemy and blasphemy still applies. The existence of these two things also indicates that religious moderation is still encountering obstacles in terms of narrative and regulation. The tabulation below attempts to provide a simple overview of the challenges and dilemmas of religious moderation for the Muslim middle class in general. A more comprehensive description is as follows.

Table 4
The Dilemma of Religious Moderation for Indonesian Muslim Middle Classes

No	Challenges of Religious Moderation	The Solution	Implications for Muslim Middle Classes
1	Religious Blasphemy	Tolerance/Emancipation	Tolerant only with the recognized faith and religions
2	Religion Disrespect	Pluralism	Interfaith Dialogue
3	Anti-Conversion	<i>interfaith dialogue</i>	There is a debate regarding that dialogue
4	Majoritarian Mainstreaming	Equality	Playing Safe
5	Discrimination	Justice	Generalization of Mind

source: elaborated from various sources

Let's look at the discussion presented in the third table. It indicates that pressure on the implementation of religious moderation itself is more likely to be driven by internal circles. More specifically, this emphasis on Islam as the majority, both religiously and adherents, creates a social and religious

comfort zone for the Indonesian Muslim middle-class group. The main thing is that the mindset and self-image as a new Muslim can be maintained by following the logic of the majority. The problem that arises today is that the character of Islamic da'wah that is currently developing tends to be unbalanced between textual and contextual. This is what makes the substance of da'wah moderation of religion not get a place in this new Muslim group.

The table also shows the challenges and dilemmas faced in the socialization of religious moderation among the Muslim middle class. Furthermore, this community group is still ambiguous whether they still maintain conservative values or adopt the values of religious moderation.

There is still an imbalance between efforts to moderate religion and the persistence of blasphemy and blasphemy, of course, will have an impact on continuity in encouraging this moderation of religion at the grassroots. Instead, there is the potential for discontinuity because the Muslim middle class may not be interested in following the teachings of religious moderation. Instead, they have tried to maintain the status quo so far while still favouring the majority position as the key to stability in the public space. This potential is what makes the implementation of religious moderation discourse and policies in a state of stagnation.

The existence of the power of one-sided interpretation which in the end still shows

that the practice of hate spin is still valid to fight against pluralist groups. The hate spin phenomenon could be the culmination of the weak narrative of religious moderation at the grassroots. Hence, using mass mobilization to suppress the legal process, gives rise to an assessment that "blasphemy of religion" has occurred. There are two main things behind the strength of blasphemy, namely 1) offense-giving (inciting/popularizing hate speech with religious grounds and 2) offense-taking (feeling offended by non-Muslims commenting on Muslims) (Cherian, 2016). These two things make the grassroots public more familiar with narratives of blasphemy than religious moderation. Both of these are commonly used when coalitions of right-wing politicians or conservative parties use religion as a political tool. This clearly has an impact on the disruption of freedom of expression and religion for the community.

The strong influence of perceptions of religious blasphemy at the grassroots still shows that religious moderation is still not fully accepted. Moreover, the process of equalizing perceptions of being a moderate and middle religious person is still vulnerable and easily emotional when facing issues related to religious blasphemy. By scapegoating minorities, this shows that religious moderation through the process of equalizing perceptions is still not significant. Religious moderation tends to be accepted by the upper middle class, but there are minimal references when it comes to inter-faith dialogue. While blasphemy of religion

is more acceptable to all groups, there is little appreciation for reconciliation with parties with different views. Hate speech is the biggest homework in creating fair and balanced religious moderation in Indonesia. In general, hate speech is carried out by certain parties who use religion as a tool for mass mobilization. This then creates disparities and discrimination against minorities, especially non-Muslims.

CONCLUSION

In responding to the current circumstances, the ideal religious expression is keeping moderate attitude. Particularly the Muslim middle class itself has position to encourage their fellow Muslims to stay calm and tolerant. It is important to bear that attitude in order to preserve the unity among different believers. The challenge of religious moderation with the case of the Muslim middle class as the object of study still experiences its own opportunities and challenges. Broadly speaking, this opportunity lies more in opening a two-way understanding for the Muslim middle class who does not see religion as a doctrine but also how to react rationally. Nonetheless, the three challenges written in this study namely 1) religious narcissism, 2) religious blasphemy, and 3) hate speech still exist today.

The challenge in addressing narcissism for religious moderation is the effort to create an attitude of *tawadhu'* for the Indonesian Muslim middle class so that their understanding of religion does not lead too far to the extremist right. Besides that, it is also related to desecration and also the teachings of

religious hatred itself, religious moderation is necessary if it strengthens arguments and empirical narratives for the Muslim middle class. This is related to the polarization of identity that still exists with the Muslim-non-Muslim dichotomy. That's why it's good, prioritizing this ideal attitude needs to be grounded, especially for the Muslim middle class so that it maintains tolerance and pluralism, especially in its relations with minorities.

In the end, the answer is that the implementation and meaning of religious moderation for the Indonesian Muslim middle class itself cannot be said to be a short-term project, but a long-term one. The challenge of the current substance of religious moderation is that people are still not familiar with it. It is also good to answer social and global challenges so that the indigenization of religious moderation can take place quickly and significantly.

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