

Religious Moderation and Tolerance in the Quran: A Living Quran Approach to Everyday Islamic Practices

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Abstract

Religious moderation and tolerance are fundamental principles that play a vital role in sustaining social harmony in contemporary societies characterized by the rapid circulation of diverse information and religious interpretations. In this context, revisiting the Quran as a primary source of ethical guidance is essential to understanding how moderation and tolerance are conceptualized and practiced in daily life. This study aims to examine Quranic teachings on religious moderation and tolerance and to analyze their implementation in everyday Islamic practices. Employing a qualitative research design, this study adopts the Living Quran and Hadith approach, drawing data from Quranic verses, Hadith, classical and contemporary ijtihad, as well as expert opinions. The analytical framework is based on Engkizar's Living Quran theory and is applied through thematic analysis supported by relevant studies published in reputable international journals. The findings reveal that everyday practices, such as visiting and hosting guests, are not merely cultural traditions but reflect deeply embedded values of etiquette, social responsibility, mutual respect, and religious tolerance. Furthermore, the study identifies several key Quranic verses that serve as foundational principles of moderation and tolerance in daily life, including Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):143 on balance, Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):256 on freedom of belief, Q.S. Al-Hujurat (49):13 on human equality, and Q.S. Al-Kafirun on respect for religious differences. This study contributes to contemporary Quranic studies by demonstrating how religious moderation and tolerance are actively lived and practiced within Muslim communities.

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INTRODUCTION

The Quran, as the primary source of Islamic teachings, functions not only as spiritual guidance but also as a normative reference for shaping social, political, economic, and cultural life within Muslim societies. It contains principles of moderation (*wasathiyyah*) and tolerance that contribute to maintaining harmony in pluralistic communities (Anwar, 2009). Religious moderation is generally understood as a balanced attitude that avoids extremism and emphasizes proportionality in religious belief and practice. Tolerance, as an outcome of moderation, is reflected in

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religious belief and practice. Tolerance, as an outcome of moderation, is reflected in respect for religious, cultural, and customary differences arising from intensive social interactions (Arief & Humaidi, 2025; Yusriyah & Khaerunnisa, 2024). In the Indonesian context home to the world's largest Muslim population and characterized by significant ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity these values remain highly relevant as ethical foundations for national life.

Despite these normative teachings, instances of religious intolerance continue to occur in Indonesia. These include interreligious conflicts, resistance to the construction of minority houses of worship, and increasing social polarization in digital spaces, all of which pose challenges to social cohesion in a multicultural society. This situation contrasts with Quranic principles that emphasize freedom of belief and balance, as articulated in Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):256, which rejects coercion in religion, and Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):143, which characterizes Muslims as a *wasathiyah* (moderate) community. The persistence of extremist attitudes suggests a gap between normative religious teachings and their practical application in everyday interactions, potentially contributing to discrimination and weakening national unity.

The urgency of this study is underscored by Indonesia's strategic position as a pluralistic society with the potential to serve as a reference for religious moderation. Without sustained efforts to strengthen moderation and tolerance, diversity may become a source of social, political, and economic tension rather than a collective asset. The Quran, particularly in Q.S. Al-Kafirun, emphasizes mutual respect for differing beliefs without coercion, offering an ethical basis for peaceful and inclusive coexistence.

The originality of this research lies in its integrative approach, which combines a *maudhu'i* (thematic) interpretation of *wasathiyah* in the Quran with an analysis of contemporary practices of religious moderation in Indonesia's multicultural setting. Previous studies have tended to focus primarily on theoretical or historical dimensions, whereas this study highlights the practical application of Islamic moderation in everyday life, including challenges related to digital interaction in the post-pandemic period. Existing literature also indicates limited integration between primary Quranic sources and recent sociological data, resulting in a lack of practical models for fostering interreligious tolerance within Muslim-majority societies.

Accordingly, this study aims to analyze the concepts of religious moderation and tolerance in the Quran and to develop a contextual and practical framework applicable to Indonesian society. More specifically, it seeks to formulate a model of Islamic moderation grounded in key Quranic verses, such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):143 and (2):256, to support efforts toward strengthening social harmony and informing national policies on religious tolerance.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative method using a phenomenological approach within the framework of Living Quran and Hadith studies. This approach is adopted to understand how the values of religious moderation and tolerance derived from the Quran and Hadith are understood, internalized, and manifested in the daily lives of Muslim communities. Living Quran and Hadith studies are considered appropriate because they do not treat religious texts merely as normative sources, but also examine the interaction between textual teachings and social realities within the community (Adi et al., 2025; Nabel, 2021).

In its implementation, this research follows the procedural framework of Living Quran and Hadith research as formulated by Engkizar et al (2025), which consists of five stages. First, the research topic is determined based on theoretical considerations and observations of phenomena related to religious moderation and tolerance occurring in society. Second, a theoretical analysis is conducted on Quranic

verses and Hadith relevant to the concepts of moderation (*wasathiyah*) and religious tolerance. Third, a comparative analysis is carried out between social phenomena observed in everyday life and the normative principles regulated in the Quran and Hadith. Fourth, the results of the analysis are discussed systematically to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of religious moderation and tolerance. Fifth, the study formulates preventive, curative, and educational implications that are aligned with the objectives and scope of the research (Jaafar et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data are derived from the Quran and Hadith, with particular attention to verses related to religious moderation and tolerance, such as Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2):143 and (2):256, Q.S. Al-Hujurat (49):13, and Q.S. Al-Kafirun. Secondary data include classical and contemporary Quranic commentaries, such as *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir Al-Azhar* by Buya Hamka, and *Tafsir Al-Mishbab* by Quraish Shihab, as well as articles from reputable international journals and other academic literature relevant to the research topic.

Data collection is conducted through documentation and literature review by identifying, classifying, and recording data related to the research theme. The collected data are then analyzed using thematic analysis, which is recognized as a flexible qualitative method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns of meaning within data (Allsop et al., 2022; Engkizar et al., 2024; Malhas & Elsayed, 2022; Mortelmans, 2019). The analysis process involves organizing the data into themes that correspond to the research objectives, drawing from both religious texts and the analyzed social context. To support systematic data management and coding, the analysis is conducted in a structured manner, following established practices of thematic analysis commonly applied in qualitative Living Quran and Hadith research (Az-Zahra et al., 2025; Busral et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2023; Kalsum et al., 2025).

Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a contextual and practical understanding of the concepts of religious moderation and tolerance in the Quran and their relevance to contemporary Muslim societies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Religious Moderation

Etymologically, moderation originates from the Latin word *moderatio*, which means temperance, self-control, as well as avoiding excess or deficiency. According to the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), moderation is defined as the reduction of violence and avoidance of extremism. The term is derived from the word *moderate*, which refers to a tendency to take the middle path and avoid extreme attitudes and behaviors. Thus, moderation is closely related to wisdom, self-restraint, and the rejection of violence and radicalization that may disrupt social relationships.

Religion represents belief and commitment to religious teachings, reflected in daily practices of worship, ethics, and morality (Alfazri, 2023). Religious life is not limited to ritual dimensions but also regulates social, legal, and moral aspects that shape how individuals interact, interpret life, and respond to social challenges. Moreover, religion serves to strengthen both vertical relationships between humans and God and horizontal relationships among humans. In the traditions of major religions, religion is oriented not only toward individual spirituality but also toward the social welfare of humanity (Nasr, 2002).

The integration of moderation and religiosity gives rise to the concept of religious moderation, understood as a perspective and attitude that emphasizes respect for differences in religion, race, ethnicity, culture, and customs in a pluralistic society. Religious moderation encourages avoidance of extreme attitudes and excessive fanaticism, while promoting justice, tolerance, and mutual respect among

followers of different religions. In this context, religious moderation functions to maintain harmony and peace in communal life (Alfazri, 2023).

Religious moderation is not intended to weaken personal beliefs but rather to regulate the expression of those beliefs so as not to harm or intimidate others. Therefore, religious moderation plays a critical role in preventing conflicts and violence arising from an inability to respect religious differences (Mubarak & Sunarto, 2024). In the context of Indonesia, which exhibits high religious and cultural diversity, the implementation of religious moderation is essential for maintaining social harmony. Although Indonesia has a relatively strong tradition of tolerance, challenges continue to emerge with the rise of extremist groups that reject differences. Therefore, the internalization of religious moderation values in daily life is a prerequisite for achieving a peaceful and inclusive society (Hanifatulloh, 2021).

Tolerance

The term *tolerance* originates from the Latin word *tolerare*, meaning to endure, be patient, open-minded, and to respect differences in opinions or beliefs. In the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, tolerance is defined as the attitude of respecting and acknowledging differences in opinions, beliefs, customs, and behaviors that contradict one's own (Yasir, 2014). This concept emphasizes the ability of individuals and groups to accept ideological, religious, and cultural differences openly and with mutual respect.

Religious tolerance involves recognizing the right of every individual to embrace and practice their religion according to their beliefs, as well as acknowledging diversity as a social reality. However, tolerance does not imply sacrificing or mixing religious beliefs. On the contrary, religious tolerance teaches peaceful coexistence without eliminating each group's religious identity (Rahman, 1997). In the Islamic perspective, tolerance is understood in the context of *muamalah* (social relations) while maintaining normative boundaries agreed upon collectively. The essence of tolerance lies in self-restraint and providing space for differences without feeling threatened in one's faith or basic rights (Alfazri, 2023).

Religious tolerance in Islam also embodies high ethical values, particularly respect for the rights of individuals and groups. This principle is emphasized in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 256, which rejects compulsion in religion and guarantees individual freedom in choosing and practicing beliefs consciously. This verse demonstrates that Islam provides a normative foundation for respecting religious freedom and protecting rights of belief (Katsir, 2004).

Furthermore, religious tolerance requires mutual respect in practicing worship. Muslims are not permitted to force others to perform religious rituals, just as non-Muslims are obliged to respect Muslim worship practices without interference (S. H. Nasr, 1994). Islam also teaches that every religion has a positive orientation toward humanity, so denigrating or insulting other religions is not justified. This principle applies to interfaith relations as well as broader social interactions, emphasizing respect for human dignity (Rahman, 1997).

Conflict resolution due to differences in belief in Islam emphasizes constructive dialogue and mutual respect. The practice of tolerance is exemplified by Prophet Muhammad SAW in his interactions with non-Muslims, as recorded in the events of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah, which demonstrated respect for the rights and needs of others despite differences in faith (Al-Mubarakfuri, 2012). Overall, religious tolerance in Islam underscores the importance of peaceful coexistence without compromising one's own beliefs, making respect for differences a cornerstone of building a just and harmonious society (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Daulay & Azmi, 2022; Saputra et al., 2024).

Religious Moderation and Tolerance in the Quran

The concept of moderation in Islam is emphasized in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 143:

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ﴾ (143)

Meaning: “*And thus We have made you a just and balanced nation (ummatan wasatan) that you may be witnesses over the people and that the Messenger may be a witness over you... Indeed, Allah is Most Kind and Most Merciful to mankind.*” (Al-Baqarah: 143)

In this verse, Muslims are referred to as a *wasath* or moderate community (Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, 2019). Scholars have interpreted *al-wasath* in various ways: Ibn Kathir emphasizes it as the “best choice,” since the Quraysh were a chosen people in terms of lineage and residence (Kathir, 2004). Ath-Thabari highlights the meaning of justice, as the chosen ones are considered the most just (Ath-Thabari, 2000). Ats-Tsa’labi cites Al-Kalbi, interpreting *wasath* as a middle path between excess and negligence. Ibn Ashur adds that *al-wasath* reflects moderation in various qualities, such as courage, generosity, compassion, and avoidance of extremes (Ibn Ashur, 1973). Therefore, *al-wasath* can be understood as the best choice, justice, the middle path, and a moderate attitude.

In addition to moderation, the Quran emphasizes religious tolerance in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 256:

﴿لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ قَدْ تَبَيَّنَ الرُّشْدُ مِنَ الْغَيِّ فَمَنْ يَكْفُرْ بِالطَّاغُوتِ وَيُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدِ اسْتَمْسَكَ بِالْعُرْوَةِ الْوُثْقَىٰ لَا انْفِصَامَ لَهَا وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ﴾ (256)

Meaning: “*There is no compulsion in religion; truly, the right path has become distinct from the wrong path...*” (Al-Baqarah: 256)

Buya Hamka explains that this verse was revealed in response to a complaint from an Ansar companion whose child had been raised by a Jewish family before embracing Islam. The father requested that his child be forced into Islam, but the verse emphasizes that religion should not be imposed (Hamka, n.d.). Quraish Shihab adds that the verse applies to faith (*aqidah*), meaning every individual is free to choose their belief and is bound by the consequences of their religious guidance (Quraish, 2002a). Thus, moderation and tolerance imply that every individual determines their beliefs consciously, without coercion or violence.

Q.S. Al-Hujurat verse 13 highlights the importance of respecting human diversity:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ﴾ (13)

Meaning: “*O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and a female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another... Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous.*” (Al-Hujurat: 13)

Ibn Kathir emphasizes that Allah created humans from Adam and Eve and then divided them into nations to foster social interaction (Ibn Kathir, 1999). Al-Maraghi adds that this verse prevents arrogance based on lineage, wealth, or social status, stressing that true merit lies in piety (Al-Maraghi, 1993). This verse illustrates the application of moderation and tolerance in appreciating ethnic, national, and cultural diversity, and the importance of building harmonious relationships based on mutual understanding.

Another example of religious tolerance is found in Q.S. Al-Kafirun:

﴿قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ (1) لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ (2) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (3) وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ (4) وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ (5) لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ﴾ (6)

Meaning: “Say (Prophet Muhammad), “O disbelievers (1) I will not worship what you worship (2) Nor are you worshippers of what I worship (3) Nor have I ever been a worshipper of what you worship (4) Nor have you ever been worshippers of what I worship (5) To you your religion, and to me my religion (6)” (Al-Kafirun: 1-6)

Ath-Thabari explains that the Quraysh non-believers proposed a compromise to Prophet Muhammad SAW, including alternating worship of Allah and idols, to achieve peace. The Prophet refused, and Surah Al-Kafirun was revealed (Ath-Thabari, 2000). Al-Qurthubi adds that if the Prophet had accepted some of their gods, they would have approved, but this verse asserts the truth of religious teachings and a firm stance in matters of faith (Al-Qurthubi, 1384). The lesson from this verse is the importance of moderation and tolerance without merging beliefs, while remaining committed to one’s religious teachings, respecting differences, but not compromising the integrity of one’s faith.

Therefore, the Quran emphasizes that religious moderation and tolerance are reflected in justice, appreciation of differences, and harmonious coexistence without coercion or imposition of beliefs. This attitude creates a balance between firmness in faith and respect for the rights of others, fostering a peaceful, inclusive, and pluralistic society.

Implementation of Moderation and Tolerance in Daily Life

Justice

Moderation in Islam is always associated with the principle of justice. This is emphasized in Q.S. An-Nahl verse 90:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ وَإِيتَاءِ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾ (90)

Meaning: “Indeed, Allah commands you to act justly and to do good, to give to relatives, and He forbids indecency, wrongdoing, and aggression. He instructs you so that you may take heed.” (An-Nahl: 90)

The term *justice* (*adl*) originates from the Arabic word *al-‘adl*, which means honest, balanced, equal, and appropriate (Munawir, 2007). Technically, justice means making something equal to another in terms of value or measure, ensuring fairness and alignment with truth (Habibullah, 2018). According to Bazith (2019), this concept is also known as *al-musawah*, emphasizing equality and placing everything in its proper place without bias or disparity. Classical and modern scholars agree that the meaning of being moderate or *wasath* is closely related to justice and goodness; moderation cannot exist without justice, and justice cannot exist without moderation. The more moderate a person is, the fairer and better their behavior. Conversely, attitudes or thoughts that provoke controversy, slander, or injustice are considered non-moderate (Arif, 2020).

Istiqomah (Consistency)

Consistency, or *istiqomah*, is also an essential aspect of moderation. Q.S. At-Taubah verse 7 states:

﴿كَيْفَ يَكُونُ لِلْمُشْرِكِينَ عَهْدٌ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَعِنْدَ رَسُولِهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ عَاهَدْتُمْ عِنْدَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ فَمَا اسْتَقَامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ﴾ (7)

Meaning: “How can there be a covenant from Allah and His Messenger with the polytheists, except for those with whom you made a covenant near the Sacred Mosque? So as long as they remain upright toward you, be upright toward them as well. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous.” (At-Taubah: 7)

Linguistically, *istiqamah* comes from the verbal noun (*isim madsar*) of the root (قام - يقوم), which means upright or straight (Az-Zuhaili, 2001). According to Quraish Shihab, the term signifies steadfastness, accomplishment, and consistency (Quraish, 2002b). Technically, *istiqamah* refers to following the straight path, in both religious practice and inner obedience, while avoiding prohibitions (Hanafi, 2013). In other words, religious moderation is reflected in a consistent attitude of maintaining a

middle position, not easily swayed by extreme or liberal currents, and always following the straight path (*istiqamah*) (Alfazri, 2023).

Maintaining Balance

The principle of balance is fundamental to religious moderation. Balance is achieved when various tendencies and lifestyles are proportionally regulated and neutralized. In a religious context, balance encompasses reason and revelation, physical and spiritual aspects, rights and obligations, individual interests and communal welfare, religious texts and scholarly interpretation, ideal concepts and reality, as well as past and future. Moderation requires the ability to maintain this balance so that behavior and decisions remain fair and wise.

Tolerance

Tolerance is the attitude of giving space and respecting the rights of others to hold beliefs, express their faith, and convey opinions, even if they differ from one's own. This attitude requires openness, acceptance, respect for differences, and the ability to understand others' perspectives. Through tolerance, social life becomes more harmonious, and interactions among individuals are healthier.

Equality

Equality emphasizes respect for all humans as Allah's creations, with equal dignity and worth, regardless of gender, race, or ethnicity. This attitude rejects any party claiming superiority or imposing their will (Alfazri, 2023). Islam teaches human equality, both between men and women and among nations, tribes, and lineages; differences are only recognized in terms of one's devotion and piety toward Allah (Sujana et al., 2024). Applying the principle of equality in daily life promotes moderation, as every individual behaves reasonably, refrains from arrogance, and shows mutual respect.

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation emphasizes a middle ground that avoids extremism, violence, and injustice in practicing religion, while respecting differences, maintaining good communication, and building harmony in a pluralistic society such as Indonesia, which is rich in religious and cultural diversity. This principle, which requires a shared commitment from the government, religious leaders, and individuals, gives rise to tolerance in the form of recognition of freedom of belief without coercion, not mixing of teachings as taught in the Quran in Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 143 (umat wasathiyah or the middle path), verse 256 (no compulsion in religion), Al-Hujurat: 13 (diversity to get to know and respect one another), and Al-Kafirun (firm in belief without belittling other religions). In daily practice, this is realized through justice, consistency in worship without forcing others, a balance between individual and group rights, and mutual respect to strengthen social relations, creating an inclusive, peaceful, safe, and understanding society.

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