

## Religious Moderation in Indonesia: An Appraisal for Its Implementation in Nigeria

### Kesederhanaan Agama di Indonesia: Satu Penilaian untuk Pelaksanaannya di Nigeria

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#### ABSTRACT

*It is believed that the Abrahamic religions unanimously preach love, peace, tolerance, acceptance, respect, and compromise, as well as peaceful coexistence among their adherents, regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, culture, skin colour, and race, among others. This collectively forms what is known today as "Religious Moderation." Extremism was discouraged and condemned by these monotheistic religions. How did the Republic of Indonesia successfully implement religious moderation despite its pluralistic nature, while Nigeria, with a similar diversity, has not yet achieved this? This research aims to evaluate the practice of religious moderation and its implementation in Indonesia, to provide insights that may assist the Nigerian government in making informed decisions. The qualitative method was used in this research to achieve the desired target. The analytical method is also used to analyse the achievements and challenges facing the implementation of religious moderation in Nigeria. The findings indicate that Indonesia is a key player in promoting religious moderation globally, and it has effectively integrated this concept into its government policies, resulting in the country's peaceful coexistence. This research, therefore, recommended that insofar as Islam and Muslims progress, most of the Muslim countries, including Nigeria, should follow the footsteps of Indonesia.*

*Keywords: Indonesia; moderation; Muslim countries; Nigeria; religious*

#### ABSTRAK

*Adalah dipercayai bahawa agama-agama Abrahamik sebulat suara mengkhabarkan cinta, keamanan, toleransi, penerimaan, penghormatan, dan kompromi serta kedamaian hidup bersama di kalangan penganutnya tanpa mengira perbezaan agama, budaya etnik, warna kulit, dan bangsa antara lain. Ini secara kolektif membentuk apa yang dikenali hari ini sebagai "Kesederhanaan Agama." Semua yang menyebabkan ekstremisme tidak digalakkan dan dikutuk oleh agama-agama monoteistik ini. Bagaimanakah Republik Indonesia melaksanakan sepenuhnya kesederhanaan agama walaupun sifatnya yang pluralistik dan Nigeria dengan sifat yang serupa belum tercapai? Penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk menilai amalan kesederhanaan agama dan bagaimana ia dilaksanakan di Indonesia bagi kerajaan Nigeria untuk membuat susulan kepada kesimpulan logiknya. Kaedah Kualitatif telah digunakan dalam penyelidikan ini untuk mencapai sasaran yang dikehendaki. Analisis juga digunakan untuk menganalisis pencapaian dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh pelaksanaan kesederhanaan agama di Nigeria. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa Indonesia adalah tulang belakang kesederhanaan agama di dunia, dan ia telah melaksanakan sepenuhnya konsep itu dalam dasar kerajaan, di mana kewujudan bersama secara aman dicapai sepenuhnya di negara ini. Oleh itu, kajian ini mengesyorkan bahawa sejauh Islam dan umat Islam berkembang, kebanyakan negara Islam, termasuk Nigeria, harus mengikut jejak langkah negara Indonesia.*

*Kata kunci: Indonesia; kesederhanaan; negara Islam; Nigeria; beragama*

## INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, Muslim societies are pluralistic across the globe and tolerance, as well as peaceful coexistence, is not stable in some cases. This is because of the diverse phenomena in their environmental settings. Such diversity might be translated to almost all aspects of life. What can solve and balance such diversity is moderation, but it has been neglected as Kamali (2015) asserted that it is an important but somewhat neglected aspect of Islamic teachings that has wide-ranging ramifications in almost all areas of concern to Islam. Despite this, it is maintained that the content of moderation and its effects on democracy as one aspect of human life varies across countries depending on its domestic and international context (Somer 2014). However, the major question that needs to be solved and answered in this regard is why Muslims are considered radicals, particularly those living as minorities in their countries. Or even as the majority if they are fully practicing their religious teachings. With these bedeviling issues, some researchers attempted to highlight the reason why such things happen. For example, Van Es, Laan, and Meinema (2021) call for the development of new pathways of thinking about Islam and Muslims in the contemporary world, they argue that violent extremism among Muslims has become a key security issue across the world, especially since the 9/11 attacks in 2001. Subsequent atrocities committed by jihadist groups such as Al Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, and ISIS have further contributed to this development, and more so Boko Haram in Nigeria (Umar 2013). This poses a threat to international security in particular the entire Muslim nations (Mujani, Ismail, and Salahuddin 2020). More than ever before, Muslims are conceived through a binary frame of 'radical' versus 'moderate'—not only in counter-terrorism policy programs but also in Western news media and academia. 'Radical' Muslims are construed as dogmatic, intolerant, and prone to violence, while 'moderate' Muslims are seen as open-minded, tolerant, and non-violent (Van Es, Laan, and Meinema 2021). In other words, the Industrial Revolution with its disruptive power brings any kind of problems that shocked people generally and Muslims specifically, such as the decadence of religious values and moral decadence of Muslims. The disruption era with all the activities has a strong ability to decrease the religious quality of people which means Muslims do not use religion anymore as a principle and guide of life (Ali 2020).

Therefore, religious moderation is implemented successfully in some Muslim countries, and Indonesia is the achiever of this goal in this regard. To what extent has the country achieved this milestone concept? The question needs to be analysed to serve as remedies for other Muslim countries, especially Nigeria. To appreciate the role of the Republic of Indonesia, Kawangung (2019) argues that, the implementation of National Development cannot be separated from the role of all Indonesian people and recognized religions, which it is provided a moral foundation for national development. Hence, humans are basically social beings and political. Social characteristics refer to life together with others, communicating and exchanging experiences, ideas sharing emotions, and so on. With this, Indonesian Muslims rank well ahead of their sisters and brothers in other Muslim-majority nations (Pohl 2011). Therefore, this without doubt or fear of exaggeration laid the foundation of peaceful coexistence in the country today.

On the other hand, looking at what hinders the Nigerian government from achieving full implementation of religious moderation in the country, some Nigerians pointed out that it was the inability of the government to tackle religious conflict that led yet the issues not being solved. In this regard, Fahm (2017) in his perspective argues that Nigeria is a big, and most complicated country that is still battling with the issues of religious conflict with multifarious ethnic groups and devotees of various religious affiliations. While there have been stints of ethnic and religious violence among different groups in the country, none have posed the kind of threat that Boko Haram currently processes. This, as has been mentioned earlier, was the major root cause that truncated the implementation of religious moderation in the country. Fahm suggested that the Nigerian government must take the path of moderation, justice, and balance in dealing with the situation.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned sects are no doubt categorized as the enemies of peace and peaceful coexistence globally. However, Islamic movements rejected most of the ideas introduced or rather believed by these sects. To understand this despite all the conventional allegations labelled against Muslim Brotherhood (Ikhwan al-Muslimin), it is finally considered moderate for rejecting global *Jihad* and embracing democracy (Leiken and Brooke 2007).

In contrast to the various studies conducted, this study focuses on efforts to appraise religious moderation and the steps followed by the Republic of Indonesia for its successful implementation at the government level so that the Nigerian government might look at the steps for its implementation in the country. It is on this note that descriptive research was employed to enable the researchers to analyse the procedures comprehensively. Hence, this research is based on a qualitative approach.

### METHODOLOGY

The type of method used in this research is a Qualitative method with a descriptive approach by in-depth analysis of what religious moderation is all about in Islam and the steps followed by the Republic of Indonesia to achieve full implementation of religious moderation in the country. This is for the Nigerian government to follow the steps for full implementation. The sources of data used in this research are from the literature review. The research is proceeded by describing religious moderation as an approach to religious life in Indonesia. The descriptive approach was employed in this research because it is a suitable approach that data can be analysed documentarily. Therefore, data collected for this research were primarily on the available related documents, not any quantitative data. This is because data collection of qualitative descriptive research focuses on discovering the nature of the specific events under study. Also, data collection may include observations, and examination of records, reports, photographs, and documents (Lambert and Lambert 2012). In analysing the collected data for this research, the researchers analysed the data simultaneously with the results. Like how? Whenever the results are mentioned, analysis comes immediately with a supplementary explanation from other sources. This is how the entire research was carried out in this article. The result of this research reveals that practicing religious teachings with moderation is the best understanding and attitude in human life. In Islam, moderation is the understanding and attitude of the middle or fair, balanced, and proportionate in religion. This really made the acts of extremism extinguished in the Republic of Indonesia. It is discovered that why Nigeria did not yet achieve religious moderation is because of the inadequate emphasis that the Nigerian government supposed to put in place which gave a vacuum to the terrorist in the country whenever

their demands not answered is to attack personal or government properties. Hence, the findings of this study show that the Nigerian government needs to investigate the rigorous steps followed by the Indonesian government to succeed in extinguishing religious and other bedeviling crises in the country.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presented the entire findings discovered from the review of relevant literature. It is worthy of note that the findings in this article are presented sequentially to answer and achieve the objective of the desired target. That is to say, having extracted the results from the consulted relevant documents, the researchers were able to present the data based on sub-headings. This has been done from what the concept of religious moderation is from the Islamic perspective, in which the Qur'anic verses and Hadith of the Prophet (Pbuh) talking about religious moderation were mentioned to support the linguistic and technical meaning of the concept. Since the discussion in this research is based on examining the Indonesian and Nigerian perspectives on religious moderation, hence their perspectives were mentioned and analysed comprehensively to the extent that it is understood in the Indonesian context that its citizens supported the program that finally paved the way for the implementation of religious moderation in the country while on the other hand, in Nigeria various researchers called the attention of the government to do whatever possible to see that religious moderation exists in the country. This has been specifically done by the religious leaders of two major religions in the country that is Islam and Christianity as the details discussion can be seen in the following analysis based on sub-headings.

#### CONCEPTUAL MEANING OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN ISLAM

Religious moderation is a concept in a mixture of 'religious' and 'moderation'. Therefore, religion is understood clearly, but moderation linguistically means "moderate" which is the reverse of the word extreme (Ali 2019) or excessive in addressing differences and diversity. In Arabic, the term moderation is commonly known from the term *al-Wasatiyyah*. The term *al-Wasatiyyah* appears in Surat al Baqarah, verse 143 of the Qur'an. In this verse, the word *al-Wasat* means "best and most perfect." It should be worthy of note that the term

*Wasat* with its various derivations is repeated 5 times in the Glorious Qur'an, namely in *Surat al-Baqarah* verse 143, *al-Adiyat* verse 5, *al Maidah* verse 89, *al -Qalam* verse 28 and *al-Baqarah* 238 (Muvid and Taufik 2022).

According to a hadith, the best way to deal with a problem is to take a position in the middle (Hanapi 2014). The term *al-Wasatiyyah* originates from the term *Wasat* as can be seen in the above-mentioned verse which Prof. Kamal Hassan translated to justice, excellence, and balance. It is argued that the need for *al-Wasatiyyah* was catapulted because of the 9/11 era that attempted to tarnish the image of Islam and Muslims, hence moderation is compulsory to stop the spread of extremism among Muslims of the world (Hassan 2014). In Islam, where there is a complex issue, it is critical to emphasise a moderate (*Wasatiyyah*) approach in understanding and interpreting the Quran and Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) (Senin, Wan Ramli, and Amat Misra 2022). This signifies the application of moderation (*Wasatiyyah*) on religious matters to extinguish allegorical explanation that influences extremism.

Terminologically, religious moderation, as defined by the team of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, has the meaning of pluralism and is significantly necessary for various conditions of a pluralistic nation by providing comprehensive religious teaching that can represent everyone towards flexible teachings without leaving the texts (al-Quran and Hadith) (Hanapi 2014). Religious moderation is generally understood as the tolerance of a religious group toward different faiths while simultaneously refraining from liberalism. Thus, the concept of religious moderation, particularly among Indonesian Muslims, is defined using the ideas of the concept and the policy of religious moderation by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. The Ministry of Religion describes the characteristics of individuals who apply religious moderation, namely if they show religious tolerance and national commitment and accommodate local culture (Subchi et al. 2022). Religious moderation also means creating a constructive relationship between religions externally, but it is also important internally to create harmony between various streams within one religion (Arifinsyah, Andy, and Damanik 2020). In other words, religious moderation means to guarantee social stability against unwanted ideological forces and even physical collisions in society. Social and religious lives are not isolated but must be integrated into one another (Viktorahadi 2022).

#### RELIGIOUS MODERATION FROM THE INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE

Contextually, Religion in Indonesian plurality implies two sides namely, the positive side is unifying wealth while the negative side makes fanaticism exclusive and primordial radicalism that finally makes social conflict among religious communities in the harmony of the plurality of the nation (Kawangung 2019). Allah says, "God forbids you not, concerning those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for God loveth those who are just" (Qur'an 60: 08). This verse finally suggests that so long as Muslims are living with others from other religion, in a pluralistic society, and they did not sabotage them or persecute them in practicing their religion, Muslims should treat them fairly and justly. This verse indicates how people should live with one another in a secular country. This shows that Islamic teachings do not in any way support acts of extremism.

Indonesia is not only formed from thousands of islands, but also ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. Pluralism as a state reality cannot be ignored because pluralism that exists is precisely a beauty that is not possessed by other nations. Many countries have come to learn how Indonesia, which is large and full of diversity, can bind itself as a united and nationalized nation to this day. Ethnic, racial, and religious diversity and culture have coloured the history of the Indonesian people, and this has been going on for a long time; at least when it was still in the form of kingdoms, until the period of colonization, until finally it was formed as a unitary state that was fully sovereign (Jura 2021). It is highlighted that the formation of moderate individual character can be realized through the manifestation of noble educational values in the life of Indonesian society (Azis et al. 2021). In another sense, religious moderation in contemporary Indonesia can be fully understood in the context of Indonesian Islamic education which provides that strengthening religious moderation must be delivered through epistemic rationality as basic reasoning in understanding religious text and digging into the diversity phenomenon to avoid radicalism and blind fanaticism (Senata et al. 2021). Therefore, religious moderation addressed peace in the Republic of Indonesia (Setia and Rahman 2022). More so, in education, religious moderation can be proven from the ideas, thoughts, and attitudes of the academic community in accepting the differences



and heterogeneity of various religious discourses in Indonesia (Kasdi, Farida, and Mahfud 2020). In contemporary Indonesia, religious moderation contributes to the realisation of tolerance through the application of values and local wisdom that the world needs today (Pajariantio, Pribadi, and Sari 2022).

Given the above, it is understood that the Indonesian perspective on religious moderation is entirely based on uniting and understanding one another (Awang, Ramli, and Rahman 2022). This is because people in Indonesia not only support the relation of religious moderation in the country but also suggest various ways for the government to implement religious moderation as can be seen later. This signifies that the perspective of Indonesian people on religious moderation is positive and excellent based on the reviewed literature nothing shows negative and neither opposition nor critics of what religious moderation stands in the country today.

#### RELIGIOUS MODERATION FROM THE NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE

Nigeria is the biggest and largest country in Africa. It is a multilingual country with diverse languages and cultures to the extent that the total number of languages spoken right now in Nigeria is about 500 (Ayeomoni 2012). More so, Nigeria is a diverse society with a population of approximately 200 million people. It is the most diverse religious country, and religion is an important phenomenon in the country that affects every segment of Nigerian society (Somefun 2019). Perhaps, this is the reason that religious moderation is facing serious challenges in the country today. However, it is indicated that Christian and Muslim religious leaders more openly encouraged religious tolerance in religiously diverse and integrated settings than in religiously homogenous settings (Dowd 2016). Nigeria has witnessed an unmatched increase in religious dogma in the past 30 years compared to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Although major religious groups are limited to two, Christianity and Islam (Somefun 2019). With the long history of religious conflict in Nigeria, the most virulent conflicts have been between Christians and Muslims in the Northern part of the country (Ogbogu 2016). Despite that, religion in Nigeria has become the source of identity (Green 2011).

In view of the various opinions pointed out by various Nigerian researchers on the setting of the country and its religious diversity, it is understood that religious conflicts, more especially between Muslims and Christians are the root cause that abdicated the actualization of religious moderation in the country. However, the reason was attributed to the Nigerian government which offers the most fertile environment for terrorist recruitment and radicalization. In such an environment, one aggrieved would unleash terror as a way to drive their demand (Ottoh 2015). Additionally, it is argued that leadership and institutional failures have exacerbated religious conflicts in Nigeria, and hence the state totters in the face of tension (Njoku and Hamid 2014). While finding a solution to this issue, it is suggested to the Nigerian government that the promotion of religious moderation will be among the basis that guarantees peace and stability in Nigeria (Ottoh 2015). Similarly, to ensure diligence in the discharge of responsibilities with full consideration to both dominant religions in Nigeria is asserted that public leaders are expected to be prudent and honest by exhibiting higher moral reasoning in the discharge of their responsibilities (Lee et al. 2023). All these are to ensure religious moderation exists in the country. This indicates that leaders should have the utmost ability to support religious moderation for the betterment of citizens and the economic development of the nations at large.

Furthermore, to see that peaceful co-existence should be maintained in a religiously diverse country, Christian leaders in Nigeria have appealed to the government for greater protection and engaged with sympathetic Muslim religious leaders in their efforts to end the persecution against the Christians and create conditions for more mutually respectful Christian-Muslim relations in the areas of the country most affected by the persecution (Dowd 2017).

Looking at the abovementioned discussion, it is noted that Nigerians both Muslims and Christians are in support of religious moderation in the country since it is part of the teaching of both religions. However, a clear loophole has been discovered in which leaders are directly or indirectly causing the ineffectiveness of the program. Therefore, more research should be conducted to suggest possible ways that Nigeria as a secular country can achieve religious moderation to rapidly extinguish the extremist activities in the country.

## INDONESIA: THE BACKBONE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE WORLD

Unarguably, the view that Indonesia is the best place to describe a plural society is not an exaggeration considering the diversity of the nation. Esposito and Voll (2000) asserted that Wahid, the one-time famous leader of the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia and probably in the world, has been a champion of liberal Islam, and his cosmopolitan Islam is inclusive rather than exclusive. It promotes Islamic faith and identity within the Muslim community, but also religious and political pluralism in domestic politics and a vision of international relations that is based upon cooperation and mutual interests rather than conflict. This indicates his openness about tolerance and peaceful coexistence, which are guaranteed by religious moderation. This signifies that religious leaders in Indonesia have supported and preached religious moderation long before the government implemented it.

Indonesia consists of so many clans, religions, and races, that conflict will easily rise if it is not well overcome. One of the ways to overcome the conflict is by applying religious moderation in many sectors, including education (Isnaniah and Islahuddin 2022). Research on Indonesian diversity has evolved to be a multicultural concept, which refers to the concept of harmony that is nurtured in cultural differences wherein everyone has to value and respect the diversity of other people's cultures in a community (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023). Religious moderation is the most appropriate content and practice that prevents radicalism and preserves harmony in Indonesian earth, which is knitted with Pancasila values. A mental attitude that is moderate, fair, and balanced is the key to managing diversity (Arifinsyah, Andy, and Damanik 2020). To appreciate and salute the efforts made by the Republic of Indonesia in maintaining religious moderation, it is argued that conservative attitudes among Indonesian Muslims were declining rather than increasing in which a quarter of Indonesian Muslims do support an Islamic socio-political agenda (Mietzner and Muhtadi 2018). More than two decades after the reformation era in Indonesia, the Phenomenon of the rise Muslim middle class toward structural formation was divided into two parts, namely the culture of modern Muslims and practical activities. The first side forms the Muslim order to progress in aspects of tolerance, education, economy, and global civilization, while the second side, strengthens the concern and participation

of Muslims in political change, democracy, and political parties (Syawaludin 2021). Therefore, without fear of doubt or exaggeration, the Indonesian government has advocated for moderate Islam on a regional, national, and even global scale (Safei 2021).

## FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA

Having seen how the Republic of Indonesia achieved a rigorous application of religious moderation in almost every aspect of its administration, it is worthy of note to extract the factors responsible for the successful implementation of religious moderation in the country. This would have served as a mechanism or rather a tool for other countries, more especially Muslim countries to emulate the Republic of Indonesia in this regard. Hence, Nigeria is the main target in the context of this paper. The Republic of Indonesia is mainstreaming the strengthening of religious moderation (MB), which is one of the national priority programs. Religious moderation is a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion in common life, embodying the essence of religious teachings that protect human dignity and build the common good, based on the principles of fairness, balance, and obeying the constitution as a national agreement. People need to know that religious moderation is a way together, religious people, to protect Indonesia (Sulaiman et al. 2022).

To appreciate the major factors that are responsible for the actualization of the religious moderation program in Indonesia, it is of great importance to note that moderation in Islam continues to be voiced in Indonesia as a relevant concept for religious and national discourse. Religious moderation is noticeably appropriate in modern multicultural political conditions (Kadi 2022).

In addition, in implementing the program of religious moderation, the Indonesian government conducted religious moderation in the institutions, namely the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Culture as a printer. Through education and BNPT as a locomotive, the nation's generation prevented radicalism in Indonesia, including the deradicalization program. Hopefully, with the mainstreaming of religious moderation of this kind, the Indonesian nation will become the world's mecca in the practice of religion in moderation (Ardiansyah and Erihadiana 2022).

In addition, these institutions serve as a place for Muslim scholars to be involved in various fields of life. The inculcation of Islamic moderation values enables scholars to be flexible in applying Islamic teachings in line with their field of study, without departing from the basic religious principles (Kadi 2022).

With this, the Republic of Indonesia really achieved its target placing the country at the top of all countries in the world that successfully achieved peaceful coexistence. To sum up, the following are the areas that the Republic of Indonesian used in the successful implementation of the Religious Moderation Program:

1. The Ministry of Religious Affairs
2. The Ministry of Education and Culture

#### 1. The Ministry of Religious Affairs

it is earlier briefly noted that the reason why the Indonesian government used the Ministry of Religious Affairs to achieve the implementation of religious moderation was that only through that scholars would be guided as well as discuss their opinions collectively and impart their knowledge accordingly without deviating from the mainstream teachings of religion and what government agreed upon. The Ministry of Religious Affairs was established on 3 January 1946, as a result of the insistence of Muslim political parties (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023). For the formal implementation of the program, the Ministry of Religious Affairs sets limits on guaranteeing religious freedom by defining religion. From this point of view, Indonesia provides a valuable lesson in the matter of religious freedom the definitions of what can be called “religion” differ in various traditions of faith and ethical views (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023). This led the Ministry to establish a special body in 1952 to control and stop the unexpected emergence of religious movements in the country to this day, the agency is still working as a state-specific bureau to oversee and suppress religious groups that are deemed to deviate from the office teachings of religion (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023).

#### 2. Ministry of Education and Culture

Institutionalization of religious moderation means translating religious moderation into institutions, institutions, structures, or units that specifically think of strategies to implement this concept in

order to translate into measurable and sustainable programs and activities (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023). In this regard, education plays a crucial part in the process of internalizing moderate Islamic values. Instilling Islamic moderation values must occur not only in religious subjects but also in other subjects such as English (Octavianus, Sugiyarto, and Parluhutan 2021). The implementation of religious moderation can be done through several things, such as internalizing the essential values of religious teachings, strengthening the commitment to the state, affirming tolerance, and rejecting all types of violence in the name of religion (Afwadzi and Rohmana 2023) that implementing religious moderation values is carried out through exemplary examples by teachers in schools and the community (Idris et al. 2021). that higher education institutions play a critical role in inculcating religious moderation values through Pesantren institutions (Kadi 2022). It is asserted that Indonesian higher education institutions with their resources have the opportunity to support the implementation program of religious moderation in the country (Sudrajat, Supiana, and Zakiah 2021). It is reported that Muhammadiyah universities in Papua and West Papua made a gigantic effort to strengthen religious moderation in Indonesia, especially through digital media, in which the narrative of religious moderation from the Muhammadiyah Papua University gave birth to a substantive and essential religious framing that is moderate and tolerant (Al Mubarak et al. 2023).

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION: LESSONS TO THE NIGERIANS AND NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT

For Nigeria to implement the program of religious moderation, lots of things need to be done. Thus, by looking at the previous discussion on how the republic of Indonesia achieved full implementation of the program, Nigeria must copy from Indonesia to save the country from the religious conflict that still engulfs all the time across all geopolitical regions of the country, particularly the Northeast of the country where the crisis of Boko haram emanates. Some of the things that the Nigerian government and its citizens should do include self-determination that guarantees each other's respect and tolerance. This can be inculcated through practicing the teachings of religions, Islam, and Christianity, which at length saw earlier that religious scholars from the two religions made their efforts to motivate their

adherents to respect the teachings of religions and maintain peaceful coexistence. In summary, two things must be considered:

1. Roles of Youth in Supporting Religious Moderation
2. Establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

Above are the two areas that the Nigerian government needs to pay attention to actualize full implementation of religious moderation in the country.

1. The Roles of Youth in Supporting Religious Moderation

As has been said before, various Nigerians called governments to ensure full control of people in their settings, particularly the youth. This can only be achieved if the government provides adequate opportunities to the people which can keep them busy doing their activities. Jobless in this regard can be the main source that allows people to engage in unwanted discussion that finally leads to quarrels or disputes that cause crises because of misunderstanding. Atran (2015) suggests that any government that wants to see its citizens in particular the youth doing what benefits them must “offer them something that makes them dream, of a life of significance through struggle and sacrifice in comradeship.” He added that the key is to offer disillusioned youth something just as exciting (but significantly less destructive and terrible than becoming a terrorist) (Malik and Kepli 2018). In so far as the government provides adequate opportunities to its citizens, such causes of radicalism or extremism among the youth can be extinguished. Therefore, youth can serve as a tool that maintains peace and moderate activities in their daily lives. Despite the religious diversity in Nigeria, various calls have been made to the religious leaders of Islam and Christianity to teach their adherents to understand the essence of peace and to know that it is part and parcel of the teachings of their religions. Where youth supported this in good faith, religious moderation can be achieved. This is because everybody would respect one another regardless of their differences in religion, culture, and ethnicity.

2. Establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs

In Nigeria, the country does not have a Ministry of Religious Affairs like Indonesia. This can only

be found in some states in Nigeria, particularly the Northern States of the country where they established a Ministry of Religious Affairs and Agency (Hisbah) that coordinates civil matters and religious misunderstanding. However, at the Centre, that is to say, the capital city, Abuja, Nigeria does not have a Ministry of Religious Affairs. Hence, if Nigeria can copy from Indonesia and establish a Ministry of Religious Affairs that serves as a vacuum for religious scholars to sit down together and interpret what is all about religion and regulate religious matters that can excite extremism. This will be much better but should be in line with regulating freedom of religion. All these should be emulated in the procedures followed by the Republic of Indonesia toward implementing a religious moderation program. The panacea to religious conflict is religious moderation. Nigeria is now in the dilemma of religious, social, political, and economic crisis. If the Nigerian government can look into all these areas and establish a Ministry of Religious Affairs with various departments that deal with a specific issue, a such crisis would be rapidly eliminated in the country and people would live in peace and sustainable development would be ensured. Similarly, both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria should understand as part of the task that can be mandated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs is that the diversity of thoughts within Muslim communities in the West or in Muslim-majority countries can in fact be viewed as a positive contribution, helping to understand that no one particular person among any of the communities ought to claim that s/he has the absolute, finite answer or power over the other. Through his book, Hashim Kamali encourages that diversity and interpretation are simply a way to implement the very meaning, the essence of that verse from the Quran “Thus we have made of you a community justly balanced”, a community of the Middle Path. This is exactly the kind of discourse that our communities need today (Kamali 2015).

## CONCLUSION

The previously mentioned discussion played a significant role in examining the perspectives of Indonesians and Nigerians on religious moderation. It is noted that both countries are multireligious and ethnic, in which various religious movements emerged. Although, Nigeria is still facing challenges of religious, ethnic, economic, and political crises.



This might have happened because of the multi-languages and cultural diversities to the extent that the total number of languages spoken right now in Nigeria is about 500. Therefore, this really truncated the rapid unification of the Nigerian citizens under one umbrella. However, the discussion has pointed out that religious leaders in the country are yet doing whatever possible to show their people understand and respect one another because sustainable development cannot be achieved without religious moderation. On the other hand, it is understood based on the review of relevant literature that Indonesia has become the backbone of religious moderation in the world despite it is pluralistic nature. The discussion further highlighted the rigorous steps taken by the Indonesian government up to where it successfully achieved full implementation of religious moderation in the country, in which apart from the establishment of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Ministry of Education and Culture, youths also supported and gave maximum cooperation toward the realization of the religious moderation program. The discussion finally ends by extracting important lessons for the Nigerian government and its citizens on what they must have on the ground to achieve implementation of religious moderation in the country to successfully stop the incessant religious and political crisis that without doubt sabotage the rapid development of the country on various dimensions. Collectively, this article recommends that research on religious moderation in majority Muslim countries around the globe be conducted to strengthen the unity of Muslims. Finally, this article recommends that research on the impacts of implementing religious moderation in majority Muslim countries around the globe should be conducted to strengthen the unity of Muslims worldwide.

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#### AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

In writing this article, Mohd Roslan Mohd Nor has proposed the title and the method used to write the article. Shuaibu Umar Gokaru carried out the writing and compilation of the article. The discussion and analysis were done by Youcef Bensala and Ahmad Faisal bin Abdulhamid. In addition, cross-checking, and suggestions for further research by Mustaffa Abdullah. That was how the article was finally arranged and submitted to *Islamiyyat: The International Journal of Islamic Studies* for consideration and publication.

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