

VALUES OF MODERATION AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICES IN THE PANDEMIC ERA: A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Biyanto

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
E-mail: mrbiyanto@gmail.com

Abstract: This article discusses moderation and religious practices in the pandemic era. The discussion in this article uses a philosophical perspective. This discussion is vital because the pandemic era has changed people's religious frame of mind, attitudes, and behaviour. It is not only the religion of Muslims who have changed, but also non-Muslims. Therefore, this article seeks to elaborate on the religious model of the people during the pandemic and the arguments put forward by religious figures who are members of religious organizations. The conclusion from the discussion in this article is that religious moderation in the pandemic era has been reflected in various religious activities, such as worshipping at home, working and studying from home, awareness of taking part in vaccination, mutual social help (*al-ta'āwun*), and worshipping virtually. These religious practices refer to the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth, views of ulama, and scientific and health considerations. In essence, religious people understand that maintaining personal health and safety must be prioritized.

Keywords: Religious moderation; pandemic; historical context; characteristic.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic in this country has entered into the third year. Although it has shown a slopping sign, it has not really ended. That is why we should keep being careful so that we may avoid it. Up to now, various efforts to control this pandemic have been made. This can be seen from the programs launched by the government in a number of religious organizations. The policy of limiting community activities, for instance, is a part of the efforts.

However, a disagreement occurs among religious leaders in responding to the policy. The differences in opinions are harder in terms of the limitation of the use of worship places. Some relate the policy to God's wrath, while some others even view that the closure of the places of worship has been in accordance with the fiqh rules and *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*.¹

The pros and cons happen when the government imposes the restriction of the community activities.² The view that relates the closure of mosques to God's anger does not represent the opinions all religious figures. The majority of ulama in various religious organizations such as the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (the Council of Indonesian Ulama/MUI), Muhammadiyah, and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), even support the policy of controlling the pandemic. They see that the policy is a part of efforts to practice religious teachings about the importance of keeping the soul safe (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*).³ Therefore, the ulama asked religious people to reduce religious activities with full awareness. During the pandemic, the ummah is requested to reduce religious activities outside the house. Even, they are asked to forebear not to worship together in the mosques, in the churches, and other places of worship. Since the pandemic era, the ummah has been asked to reduce religious activities outside the house. Even, they are expected to refrain not to worship together in the mosques, the churches, and other houses of worship. Due to the pandemic, for the time being, they are requested to pray at home together with family.

This appeal is in line with the rules in *uṣūl al-fiqh*; "*dar' al-mafāsīd muqaddam 'alā jalb al-maṣāliḥ*" (avoiding any danger should be accentuated than realizing goodness). Protecting oneself to avoid a harmful plague is a rational effort. In this pandemic situation, there should be no believers who challenge the fate since they think in a fatalistic way. They are groups who always state that life, death, health, sickness and fortune are God's fate. Those with fatalistic views also criticize the fatwas of ulama and religious organizations that call the ummah to worship at home, and those who follow a

¹ Tjipto Subadi, "Pro-Kontra Penutupan Masjid," *Suara Merdeka* (July 10, 2021).

² Instruction of the Minister of Domestic Affairs No. 15 of 2021 concerning "Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat (PPKM) Darurat Corona Virus Disease 2019 di Wilayah Jawa dan Bali."

³ Al-Baqarah [2]: 195.

fatwa that the mosques should be closed during the pandemic period even they are said to be paranoid. This view is greatly dangerous because on the base of the *sunnat Allah*, one will be ill if one does not protect oneself and does not live healthily. It means that a healthy condition is not only given by God, but also the results of one's the best effort.

As the people of faith and knowledge, we should not be a stammer to respond to this pandemic situation. Even this should not occur among the religious figures. In responding to the condition of the religious life in this pandemic era, it is the thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that show that moderate characters that should be put forward. The question is as follows: how are the values of religious moderation practiced by the ummah during the pandemic era? The issue of religious moderation is very important because it is fundamental teaching in Islam.⁴ It must be admitted several previous studies have been carried out, for example: Masdar Hilmy and Khoirun Niam⁵ and Ahmad Zain Sarnoto, et.al.⁶ The two articles mentioned discussed religious issues in general in the pandemic era. The approach in this article is also different.

Besides journal articles, there are also several books that discuss the relationship between religion and the pandemic, as written Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim and Zubair⁷ and Adriansyah Syihabuddin, et.al.⁸ But these two books contain a collection of writings from many authors on various themes. While this article specifically discusses the values of religious moderation and their practice in the pandemic era. The author also uses a philosophical approach. Philosophy in general is understood as really and

⁴ Al-Nisā' [4]: 171 and al-Mā'idah [5]: 77.

⁵ Masdar Hilmy and Khoirun Niam, "Winning the Battle of Authorities: The Muslim Dispute Over the Covid-19 Pandemic Plague in Contemporary Indonesia," *QIJS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2020), 293-326.

⁶ Ahmad Zain Sarnoto et al., "Community Lifestyle and Religious Practices in Post Covid-19 Pandemic," *European Alliance for Innovation*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2022), 10-15.

⁷ Sudarnoto Abdul Hakim and Zubai (eds.), *Tafsir Musibah: Essai Agama, Lingkungan, Sosial-Politik, dan Covid-19* (Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2020).

⁸ Adriansyah Syihabuddin et al., *Puasa Sunyi Masa Pandemi* (Jakarta: JIB and Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2020).

radically intellectual thoughts and activities to look for the truth of problem.⁹ This understanding then becomes one's or a group's basic concept in solving all life problems. The systematic discussion of this article includes: the historical context of religious moderation, characteristics of religious moderation, religious practices during the pandemic, and conclusions.

Historical Context of Religious Moderation

The term moderation comes from the Latin *moderatio*, which means moderate (no excess and no shortage). Moderation also means self-mastery of the attitude of the very advantages and disadvantages. The word moderation contains the meaning: reduction of violence and avoidance of extremes. While in English, the word moderation is often used in the sense of average, core, standard, or non-aligned. In general, moderate means promoting balance in terms of beliefs, morals, and character, both when treating others as individuals, and when dealing with state institutions.¹⁰ Terminologically, moderation means a middle path or middle way, something existing between two bad characteristics. For instance, being brave is considered to be good because it is located between being careless and being afraid. This is also the case for being generous which is a good manner since it is between being lavish and stingy.

In the context of religious practices, moderation means religious thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors taking a position in the middle (*wasatīyah*).¹¹ The opposite of *wasatīyah* is *taṭarruf* or extremism, which denotes a tendency towards the periphery and is known as extremism, radicalism, and excessiveness. In Arabic usage, *wasatīyah* also means the best choice. Meanwhile, extremism (*taṭarruf*) in a religious perspective means views, attitudes, and behaviors that go beyond the limits of sharia provisions, and violate the limits of moderation and the views of the majority.

⁹ Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), ix-x.

¹⁰ Team of Compilation, *Tanya Jawab Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang and Diklat Kementerian RI, 2019), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 3.

People who behave in extremes are usually considered strange.¹² Religious moderation may make its followers to avoid from its extreme and excessive attitudes in doing the religious teachings. The Qur'ān explicitly forbids excessive attitudes in religion.¹³ The Prophet Muḥammad also said: “Keep you away from excessive attitudes in religion, since the attitudes have really annihilated those before you.”¹⁴ The normative base may be understood as an order for the ummah to take a middle position.

In the historical perspective, among the ulama giving attention to the religious moderation is Syaikhul Islam Ibn Taymīyah (1236-1328). Through his work *al-'Aqīdah al-Wasatīyah* (the Creed of *al-Wasatīyah*), Ibn Taymīyah describes a moderate creed or theology as an ism believed by the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* circle. Ibn Taymīyah means *al-Sunnah* as *al-ṭarīqah*, namely a way followed by the Prophet Muḥammad, his companions, and also those following his trace until the doomsday. Meanwhile, *al-Jamā'ah* means a number of people in groups, namely the *salaf* (predecessors) from the companions and those following their goodness. According to Ibn Taymīyah, the *Ahl al-Sunnah* circle possesses the character of *al-Nājiyah* (the safe) and *al-Manṣūrah* (those getting help).¹⁵ Therefore, the ummah should become a part of the *wasatīyah* Islamic groups.

Dealing with the view given by Ibn Taimiyah on the *wasatīyah* belief, Syaifiq Mughni (born, 1954) stated that a moderate theology is a position between two extreme points, namely: *tamthil* (comparing God's and human's characteristics) believed by the *Mushabbibah* people and *ta'thil* (negating the God's characteristics) adhered by the *Jahmīyah* group. The moderate position may also be seen in a view of human actions. For instance, it is between the *Jabariyah* and *Qadariyah* and the *Murji'ah* and *Mu'tazilah* circles. Even it is said that *wasatīyah* has become the character of the

¹² Haedar Nashir, “Moderasi Indonesia dan Keindonesiaan: Perspektif Sosiologi,” given in a speech of the Inauguration of the Professor in the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta (December 12, 2019), 7.

¹³ Al-Nisā' [4]: 171 and al-Mā'idah [5]: 77.

¹⁴ The above Ḥadīth is narrated by Aḥmad (I/215, 347), al-Nasā'ī (V/268), Ibn Mājah (No. 3029), Ibn Khuzaymah (Number 2867) and others from Ibn 'Abbās.

¹⁵ Sa'īd b. 'Alī b. Wahfi al-Qaḥṭānī, *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Wasatīyah* (Solo: al-Ṭibyan, 2000), 17.

Islamic teachings as a moderate religion than other religions in the world.¹⁶ It is clearly shown that the *wasatīyah* Islam promoted by Ibn Taymīyah is greatly relevant in the midst of religious conditions colored with the polarization of the binary views of the people: inside and outside, ingroup and outgroup, we and you (*minnā wa minkum*), and true-false. The effect is that each group tends to claim its own truth.

In the context of the Islamic study in the contemporary era, the concept of religious moderation is much related to *wasatīyah Islam*. Mohammad Hashim Kamali (born, 1944), for example, stated the concept of wasathiyah in the Qurʾān as the spirit of the religious moderation, either the one dealing with thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Wasathiyah is an Arabic synonym with *tawassuṭ*, *iʿtidāl*, *tawāzun*, and *iqtiṣād*, very consistent with the concept of justice. Kamali also used the term *wasatīyah* Islam to mention a moderate position between two extreme points.¹⁷ John L. Esposito (born, 1940) means a moderate Muslim as a progressive or liberal Muslim. The concept of a moderate Muslim is distinguished from a conservative, traditional, and fundamentalist one.¹⁸ Esposito then asked, “Who and where are the moderate Muslims?” Not only for Muslims, the same question is also addressed to Christians and Jews. To answer the question, Esposito explained about moderate Muslim character. Esposito said, “Minimally, I would argue that moderate Muslims are those who live and work within society, seek change from below, and reject religious extremism, illegitimate violence, and terrorism. And as in other faiths, in Islam such moderates constitute the majority of the mainstream.”¹⁹

Meanwhile, Haedar Nashir (born, 1958) explained moderation as a middle way to encounter all problems, especially religious ones. Moderation is related to the characteristics of development

¹⁶ Syafiq A. Mughni, *Makna di Balik Peristiwa* (Surabaya: Hikmah Press, 2020), 141.

¹⁷ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qurʾanic Principle of Wasatīyah* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2015), 49 and 203.

¹⁸ John L. Esposito, *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from One of America's Leading Experts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, 148.

and modernity.²⁰ In this term, moderation gets an additional meaning namely attitudes and views showing the characters of advancement, being progressive, and the use of healthy reasoning. It should be noted that what is moderated is not the religion, but the ummah's perspective of the religious teachings. Therefore, the views, attitudes, and actions of the religious ummah may be adjusted to the context of life which is advanced, modern, friendly to differences. According to Haedar, moderation is specifically to counter radicalism and extremism. By quoting the views of Ibrahim, Haedar said, "the issue of moderation has been chosen in order to counter the pressing issue today, which is extremism. This is crucial since at present, religion and tradition have been accused for hosting the idea of extremism and held responsible for infusing its idea to the extremist followers."²¹

In the summit conference attended by the ulama and the Muslim scholars from all over the world held in Bogor on May 1-3, 2018 it was emphasized the importance of "Wasathiyah Islam." Wasathiyah is considered as a good strategy to fight against radicalism and to realize a global civilization.²² The discourse of religious moderation is getting stronger along with the criticism of the deradicalization programs undergone by the government to counter extremism. That is why religious moderation is important to become a movement so that the efforts to tackle extremism will not be counterproductive, even it will bear a new extremism.²³ The government through the Department of Religion also included the policy of the religious moderation into the National Mid-Term Development Plan (2020-2024).²⁴ The religious moderation program is the legacy of Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the ex-Minister of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2014-2019).

²⁰ Nashir, *Moderasi Indonesia*, 8.

²¹ Ibid, 69. See also Haslina Ibrahim, "The Principle of Wasathiyah (Moderation) and The Social Concept of Islam: Countering Extremism in Religion," *Al-Itqan: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2018), 39-48.

²² Office of Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Indonesia for Interfaith and Intercivilization Dialogue and Cooperation, "Wasathiyah Islam: For Global Civilization: Conception and Implementation," Bogor, Indonesia, 1-3 May 2018.

²³ Nashir, *Moderasi Indonesia*, 70.

²⁴ Team of Compilation, *Tanya Jawab*, 1.

From the explanations above, it can be stated that the concept of religious moderation does not emerge from a vacuum, but it has a context behind it. Moderation is intentionally presented to become an alternative choice to handle extremism problem in the world, including Indonesia. The Indonesian government at first chose an approach to empowering the moderates to carry out counter-terrorism. Whereas Pakistan applied the term “Enlightening the Moderates.” Malaysia also established the “Movement of the Moderates.” Although using different terminologies, the countries emphasized the importance of the moderation approach. Considering the development of the radicalism incidences of radicalism in a number of areas, the government at last chose the deradicalization program. But in its development, criticism to the program is loudly voiced by various groups of civil society, with the expectation that there will be some changes in the approach to handling the extremism from deradicalization into moderation.²⁵ The choice of moderation has been justified by many scientific studies, such as Angel Rabasa,²⁶ Paul Sutliff,²⁷ Mohammad Hasyim Kamali, and Rosemary R. Corbett.²⁸ Some of these scientific works emphasize the importance of religious moderation in the midst of strengthening radicalism.

Moderation is considered more appropriate as an approach in dealing with radicalism and extremism. This is because moderation puts forward the principles of dialogue and humanity. Religious moderation is very much in line with the history of Muslims in Indonesia. The Muslim population or Muslims in this country since their arrival until they are embraced by the majority of the community have a moderate nature in the sense of being accustomed to living in peace, middle, tolerant, in the midst of religious, ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity. In the context of Indonesian Muslims who are often exposed to radical or extremist labeling, this can actually be stated as ahistorical if it is considered from the majority of their followers who are moderate and have a

²⁵ Biyanto, “Dari Deradikalisasi ke Moderasi,” *Kompas* (February 11, 2021), 7.

²⁶ Angel Rabasa et al., *Building Moderate Muslim Networks* (Santa Monica, Arlington, Pittsburgh: RAND Cooperation, 2007).

²⁷ Paul Sutliff, *Civilization Jihad and the Myth of Moderate Islam* (N.p.: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2015).

²⁸ Rosemary R. Corbett, *Making Moderate Islam* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017).

moderating role in this archipelagic country. A number of findings and social facts confirm how Islam and Indonesian Muslims have been the adhesive and moderating force in this country since its presence as an immigrant religion which was later embraced by the majority of Indonesians until the struggle for independence, the founding of the Republic of Indonesia, and post-independence until now and in the future.

Characteristics of Religious Moderation

Recently, the discourse of religious moderation is getting stronger and is viewed as an alternative way to deal with religion-nuanced extremism problems. But the term moderation is also criticized. It is considered to be too reductionistic in nature so that it experiences a narrowing of meaning. Moderation is also thought not to adequately represent the concept of Wasathiyah Islam. But as a term in the socio-religious studies, the word moderation has much been used. The characters of the religious moderation may be referred to among others in the results of the Big Deliberation of MUI in 2015. It is mentioned that there are 12 principles of Wasathiyah Islam namely moderate (*tawassuť*), balanced (*tawāzun*), just (*i'tidāl*), tolerant (*tasāmuħ*), equality (*musāwā*), deliberation (*shūrā*), modernity (*islāħ*), thinking priority (*awlawīyah*), dynamic and innovative (*taťamwur wa ibtikar*), civilized (*taħađđur*), loving the homeland (*waťanīyah wa muwāťanah*), and becoming pioneers (*quđwatīyah*).²⁹

Meanwhile, the results of the Summit Conference of the Ulama and Muslim scholars in Bogor produced more concise characters of Wasathiyah Islam. The one attended the meeting was the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, Aħmad Muħammad Aħmad al-Ťayyib (born, 1946). The conference produced the "Bogor Message", describing the concept of wasathiyah Islam with seven main characters namely: *tawāzun* (positioning in the middle and straight path), *i'tidāl* (behaving proportionally and justly accompanied with responsibility), *tasāmuħ* (recognizing and respecting differences in all aspects of life), *shūrā* (solving problems through deliberation to reach consensus), *islāħ* (being involved in

²⁹ Bogor Message in High level Consultation of World Muslim Scholars on Wasatīyyat Islam, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia (May, 1-3, 2018), 1-2.

reformative and constructive actions for common good), *qudwah* (having noble initiatives and leading to human welfare), and *muwāṭanah* (recognizing the nation state and respecting citizenship).³⁰ The seven characters are always being socialized by the Muslim scholars and religious figures in the country.

It seems that there have been many publications and scientific forums discussed religious moderation. Inter-faith organizations also more intensively voice the importance of religious moderation. It is expected that all of them may change the ummah's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors into more moderate ones. Religious moderation also becomes a part of strategies to counter religious-nuanced radicalism. The expressions of radicalism are mostly made in the form of violence to others who do not have the same understanding with his and his group. The radicalist group with negative characters always thinks "He who is not with me is against me."³¹ This view is very dangerous since it may result in terrors to others. The impact is they who are terrorized will experience great fear and horror. The negative dimension of radicalism may bear "neo-khawarij," looking down the suffering and even death of others. As a socio-religious phenomenon, radicalism is also realized in many forms.

A famous ulama, Yusuf al-Qaradhawi (born, 1926), divides radical groups into "New Zāhiriyyah" with six main characters namely; understanding the religion with literal, hard and troublesome understanding, being arrogant with their opinions, being not accept to different opinions, disgracing others out of its group, and being not matter with slanders.³² These characters are definitely incompatible with the pluralistic nature of life. Whereas plurality is a necessity, even part of God's decree (*sunnat Allāh*).³³ In facing the challenges of religious plurality in the contemporary era, it is necessary for religious adherents to have moderate, inclusive, and tolerant characteristics. Although the discourse of

³⁰ Ibid, 10.

³¹ Ahmad Syafii Maarif, *Islam dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan dan Kemanusiaan: Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah* (Bandung: Mizan, 2009), 183.

³² Yusuf Al-Qaradhawi, *Fiqh Maqashid Syariah: Moderasi Islam antara Aliran Tekstual dan Aliran Liberal*, trans. Arif Munandar Riswanto (Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2007), 49-55.

³³ Al-Ḥujurāt [49]: 13.

moderation continues to strengthen, John Esposito reminded that the word moderation is actually still inviting debates. According to Esposito the term moderate is problematic, continues to be a hotly debated question.³⁴ Esposito's statement is reasonable because the notion of moderation is highly dependent on the individual and in what context the word is used. Everyone has a human tendency to define what is moderate. To decide who is a moderate Muslim often depends on politics or religion of those making the judgment.³⁵

Regarding the character of moderate Muslims, Esposito's view is important to note for the developers of the idea of religious moderation. Despite the debate among thinkers, it must be admitted that the term religious moderation has become a discourse not only among the religious elite. Even in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, there is a strong sense of pressure from the government, elite religious organizations, and the ulama who call on people to practice the values of moderation. It is important to prioritize religious moderation so that people are not trapped at two extreme poles in responding to the challenges of religious life during the pandemic era. By emphasizing the importance of moderation in views, attitudes, and behavior, the people will be saved from the dangers of the Covid-19.

Religious Moderation Practices in the Pandemic

There are three schools in the literature on the science of kalam (Islamic theology). The three schools are Jabariyah (Fatalism), Qadariyah (Free Will or Free Act), and *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (Middleism). The Jabariyah school teaches that all human actions are basically predetermined by God. Humans have no choice in doing.³⁶ While the flow of Qadariyah emphasizes the importance of human freedom to choose good or bad deeds. On this basis, humans are held accountable for their actions in the Hereafter.³⁷ In the midst of the extreme views of the Jabariyah and Qadariyah schools, a middle school (*wasatiyah*) emerged, namely

³⁴ Esposito, *What Everyone*, 147.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Yusuf Karam, Murad Wahbah, and Yusuf Shalalah, *al-Mu'jam al-Falsafi* (Kairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1433), 24.

³⁷ Ibid, 128.

Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah. The main characters are Abū Ḥasan al-Ash'ārī (873-935) and Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturidī (853-944). Although these two figures differ in several ways, they have almost the same view in positioning human actions before the power of God. The two founders of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah* sect stated that with the power and strength given by God, humans have a choice in determining their actions. In this context, we know the theory of human endeavor or effort (*kasb*).³⁸

The theological perspective is important to observe the response of religious leaders to various efforts in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. Ironically, there are disagreements between religious leaders in responding to the pandemic. Differences of opinion harden if the policy relates to restrictions on the use of places of worship. Some religious leaders, in fact, have linked the policy with God's wrath.³⁹ This view does not represent all religious figures. A number of religious leaders who gathered at MUI, Muhammadiyah, and NU actually supported the government's policies in controlling the pandemic. They are of the view that the policy is part of an effort to carry out a very fundamental religious teaching, namely maintaining the safety of the soul (*ḥifẓ al-naḥs*). That is why people are encouraged to obey government policies with full awareness.

People need to put the safety of their souls and health above all else. In the Covid-19 emergency conditions, people must think with the rule: "Everyone is basically sick, except for those who have been proven healthy."⁴⁰ This mindset is important to keep yourself from contracting the corona virus. Because, physically it cannot be distinguished who is infected with the virus and who is not. For this reason, protecting yourself from dangerous epidemics is a rational endeavor. In a pandemic epidemic situation, there should be no clergy who challenge destiny while thinking fatalistically. As a people of faith and knowledge, we must not stutter in responding to the pandemic season. Especially if those who stutter are religious figures. This awareness is important so

³⁸ Syafiq A .Mughni, *Nilai-Nilai Islam: Perumusan Ajaran dan Upaya Aktualisasi* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001), 70-71.

³⁹ Biyanto, "Memilih Takdir Baik di Era Pandemi," *Kompas* (July 15, 2021), 6.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

that it raises the character of religious moderation during the pandemic era.

During the pandemic era, there are many religious expressions showing the character of religious moderation. Religious moderation in the midst of this pandemic is a rational choice as emphasized in philosophy. The expression of religious moderation during the pandemic era also has a strong basis in religious teachings. Besides, religious moderation is also carried out by the people with consideration of scientific knowledge, especially reviews in medical science. The goal is for ummah to stay healthy and save their souls while being able to carry out worship properly with their families amidst the limitations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Here are some expressions of views, attitudes, and behaviors that show the character of religious moderation and the religious practices in the midst of a pandemic.

Worshipping at Home

During the pandemic era, scholars from various religious organizations, such as MUI, Muhammadiyah, and NU had almost the same view. These organizations call on people living in dangerous areas (red zones) to worship at home. Because changes in the green, yellow, orange, and red zones occur very dynamically, these religious organizations also urge people to worship together in their respective homes with their beloved families. This appeal applies to all categories of worship, whether they are sunnah or obligatory, which are usually carried out together in the mosque. Thus, the teraweh prayers, obligatory prayers five times a day, Friday prayers, and other worship conducted together are advised not to be performed in mosques. For the time being, activities at mosques are limited, even if necessary, they are closed or their functions are transferred as places to deal with Covid-19.

Even Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers, which are usually held lively in mosques or fields, are also not allowed. Prayers for these two holidays are recommended to be carried out together at home with family. This decision was strengthened by the government through official decisions issued by the Ministry of Religion and local governments. All these decisions are aimed at keeping people away from the dangers of the Covid-19. This is in line with a very fundamental commandment of religion, namely to

take care of oneself (*hifẓ al-nafs*).⁴¹ In this regard, the word of God expressly forbids His servants to fall into destruction.⁴² In line with that, the Prophet Muhammad also said, “*Lā ẓarar wa lā ẓirar.*” This Ḥadīth means, “Do not harm yourself and others” (historical Ḥadīth by Ḥākim and Ibn Mājah). Some of these theological-normative foundations are important as references for scholars in determining the procedures for worship in the midst of a pandemic.

Not only prayers carried out together that must be done at home, the government also takes a firm policy of not sending prospective pilgrims for Hajj. This policy was decided during the Hajj season in the first and second years of the pandemic, namely 2020 and 2021. This firm decision was conveyed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and was supported by a number of religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU. Although this decision initially resulted in pros and cons, in the end the Saudi Arabian government also decided not to accept pilgrims from other countries. The government of Saudi Arabia has decided that the Hajj pilgrimage will be limited. In the last two years, the pilgrimage has only been allowed for Saudis and expatriates living in the holy land.

The number of pilgrims is deliberately limited so as not to trigger a crowd. Whereas under normal conditions, the number of pilgrims usually reaches millions of people from all over the world. However, the pandemic era has forced the implementation of the pilgrimage to be limited and regulated according to strict health protocols. In its development, the hajj pilgrimage has been carried out more broadly in 2022. The Indonesian government has also obtained a quota to dispatch pilgrims. Although it must be admitted that the quota given by the government of the kingdom of Saudi Arabia has not returned to the normal amount as before the pandemic era. Hajj in the third year of the pandemic is also carried out with health protocols.

⁴¹ Team of Authorship, *Buku Panduan Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih XXXI* (Yogyakarta: Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2020), 118.

⁴² Al-Baqarah [2]: 195.

Working and Studying from Home

Along with the government's policy on social restrictions during the pandemic era, everyone should also limit activities outside the home. It is for this reason that the government and private agencies regulate work activities in a different way of working from home (WFH). The pandemic condition has started showing signs of sloping then a scheme is arranged in a blended system, which is a combination of the WFH and WFO (work from office). Not only for work, in the world of education, policies are also set namely study from home. The Study from Home policy started from the beginning of the Covid-19 case in March 2020 until July 2021, right at the time of entering the new academic year 2021-2022. This policy shows the importance of placing the safety of educators and students as a priority. For this reason, educational units starting from the early childhood, elementary and secondary levels, to higher education in areas that are not safe from transmission of the corona virus are asked to continue to carry out distance learning. In other words, for areas with red zone status, face-to-face learning activities are not allowed.

The implementation of distance learning is in line with the government's decision to prohibit face-to-face learning activities, especially during the Covid-19 emergency in July 2020. Whereas previously many parties expected that face-to-face learning activities would begin in the new academic year 2021-2022. Face-to-face learning is expected to be a solution to the problem of boredom experienced by parents and students during distance learning. Parents who are not well educated certainly have difficulty in assisting children's learning at home. Meanwhile, students as shown through the results of the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) survey (2020) also feel uncomfortable with distance learning.⁴³ Moreover, distance learning is very dependent on the digital technology so that it is not optimal. But since the pandemic still shows signs of being dangerous, the government has several times extended the policy of imposing restrictions on community activities. This

⁴³ Read the results of the UNICEF survey in <https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/id/press-releases/indonesia-survei-terbaru-menunjukkan-bagaimana-siswa-belajar-dari-rumah> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

means that there are still many educational units that carry out distance learning.

In that context, education services in the pandemic era are very important to ensure children to grow and develop properly (child wellbeing). In general, the child well-being concept is understood as a condition in which individuals have a positive attitude towards themselves and others, make their own decisions and regulate their behavior, create and manage an environment that is compatible with their needs, have a purpose in life, make life more meaningful, and try to explore and develop themselves. To ensure the child well-being in the pandemic era, educators should really partner well with parents. The partnership between the educators and the parents is important to minimize the occurrence of lost learning and lost generation. The phenomenon of lost learning occurs when the teachers and the parents fail to provide the best educational services for children. The lost generation phenomenon is marked by the emergence of a lost generation due to lost learning. That is why all parties should pay attention to educational services during the pandemic era. Although in its current development, face-to-face learning has begun on a limited basis, all parties should remain careful so that the peak wave of the pandemic does not happen again. Even in 2022, there are still many primary, secondary, and higher education institutions that implement online learning. This policy was carried out because the government did not want educational institutions to become clusters for the spread of Covid-19. In addition, many parents also do not allow their children to study offline. They are very worried about the health and safety of their children.

Awareness of Taking Part in Vaccination

As part of controlling the Covid-19 pandemic, the government has launched a vaccination program. Vaccination is an effort to create immunity to certain diseases, like Covid-19, so that it can prevent disability or death. The vaccination program is supported by various parties, including religious organizations. From a religious perspective, Azyumardi Azra (born, 1955) states that vaccination is a part of the character of religious moderation.⁴⁴ The

⁴⁴ Azyumardi Azra, "Vaksinasi dan Moderasi Beragama," *Republika*, (February 25, 2021), 7.

acceptance of religious people to the vaccination program because it considers personal and life safety (*hifẓ al-nafs*). Through the vaccine, a person is expected to have immunity so that he is not easily exposed to the corona virus. As a basis for the importance of the vaccination program, people can refer to the views of MUI that once issued the Fatwa Number 4 year of 2016. This fatwa answers the concern the ummah of Islam with vaccines and vaccinations. MUI issued a fatwa that vaccination is allowed (*ibāḥah*).

However, MUI emphasizes that the vaccines used must be pure and halal; does not contain any haram elements such as gelatin from pork. Such an element may be merely used in a 'real emergency' situation, that is, as long as a holy and halal vaccine element has not been found yet.⁴⁵ Support for vaccination also came from various religious organizations. The NU leaders, for example, called on the ummah to take part in the Covid-19 vaccination. It is even emphasized that vaccination is an obligation for every individual (*farḍ 'ayn*). In line with this view, Muhammadiyah also supports the implementation of vaccination as part of efforts to deal with the pandemic. Muhammadiyah's support was given after all the safety, effectiveness, and halal rules of the vaccine were met according to the standards of the Food and Drug Supervisory Agency and MUI.

The key points of Muhammadiyah's official statement regarding the vaccination program are: *First*, Muhammadiyah supports the agency to remain independent and transparent in determining vaccine safety and neutralization tests. *Second*, Muhammadiyah supports the independence of MUI in carrying out its role in determining whether vaccines are halal or not, and it is ready to be part of the process. *Third*, handling the pandemic is not solely solved with vaccines. Therefore, it is important for the government to implement appropriate communication, education and campaign strategies regarding the function of vaccines. The government should ensure the post-vaccination monitoring and evaluation process. *Fourth*, Muhammadiyah with its own health infrastructure participated in the success of the vaccination program to overcome the pandemic. *Fifth*, even though vaccina-

⁴⁵ Ibid.

tion has been carried out, it is expected that the community will continue to apply the health protocol.⁴⁶ In time this vaccination is expected to realize *herd community*. Thus, the Covid-19 pandemic can be controlled until it becomes endemic. The views of religious organizations are important because they can encourage members to participate in vaccination programs. Even through *da'wah* and education activities, leaders of religious organizations can invite the public to participate in vaccination activities organized by the government.

Social Ta'āwun

The difficult conditions due to the pandemic have moved the spirit of fellow nation's children to help each other (*ta'āwun*). Even the spirit of mutual help not only emerged among the citizens of the nation, but also from the figure of Sarah Gilbert, a professor and developer of the Astra Zeneca vaccine from Oxford University, England. Sarah Gilbert (born, 1962) has taught us the importance of commitment to human values in the midst of difficulties due to the pandemic that has hit the world. Without any interest, he donated all royalties from the sale of the Astra Zeneca vaccine for the benefit of humanity.⁴⁷ Apart from individuals, the practice of philanthropy and volunteerism is also present through a number of religious organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and NU. Through the Muhammadiyah Covid-19 Command Center (MCCC), Muhammadiyah has donated trillions of rupiah during the pandemic season. The MCCC also helps Covid-19 patients regardless of social, religious and ethnic backgrounds. This country is fortunate to have assets in the form of religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and NU. Both of them are always present to help countries that are facing pandemic problems.

This shows that the values of generosity citizens have been entrenched in our beloved country. The practice of this philanthropic teaching has also been appreciated worldwide. This can be seen from the results of a survey conducted by the Charity

⁴⁶ “Rekomendasi dan Pandangan Muhammadiyah terkait Vaksin Covid-19,” in *Muhammadiyah.or.id* (accessed September 23, 2021).

⁴⁷ Agustinus Simanjuntak, “Sarah Gilbert dan Nilai Kemanusiaan Vaksin,” *Jawa Pos*, July 21, 2021, 4.

Aid Foundation (CAF) published in mid-June 2021. In a survey entitled *World Giving Index* (WGI) 2021, CAF places Indonesia as the most generous country in the world. This achievement is a repetition of the results of a similar survey conducted by CAF in 2018. At that time, Indonesia also ranked first as the most generous country. What is proud, this achievement was reached in the midst of a pandemic. That means that the pandemic era has actually become an encouragement for fellow nation's children to help each other (*al-ta'āwun*). In the WGI survey, which was followed by 114 countries, Indonesia's generosity index is positioned better than that of developed countries such as the United States, Britain, Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand. CAF bases its WGI assessment on three indicators, namely; (1) helping a stranger, or someone who is unknown and needs help; (2) donating money to charity; (3) volunteering time for social organization.⁴⁸ The results of the CAF survey are certainly very proud for Indonesia. That is because this achievement was achieved in the middle of a country facing a pandemic with all its impacts.

The commitment of fellow nation's children to help each other is the actualization of the enforcement of human values. Selflessly, various elements of society donated some of their wealth to ease the burden on their brother struck by the disaster. Not only logistics, assistance is also provided in the form of treatment, children's education, and psychological assistance to disaster victims. In turn, a number of socio-religious institutions, campuses, and hospitals send volunteers to help the victims. Because disasters always result in humanitarian disasters, concrete actions are needed to help victims. The commitment of fellow Indonesians to help others selflessly regardless of social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds should be preserved. This is in line with the teachings of the Qur'ān which commands to save others on the basis of human values.⁴⁹ We should believe that generosity is the actualization of religious teachings that emphasize the importance of giving (religious gifts). Through the generosity of

⁴⁸ More can be read in <https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2021/03/09/153000665/indonesia-masuk-10-besar-negara-paling-dermawan-sedunia?page=all> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

⁴⁹ Al-Mā'idah [5]: 32.

fellow nation's children, this country remains resilient and strong during the pandemic. It is inconceivable what the fate of this country will be if the citizens of the nation do not help each other. This country will surely face very serious problems, it could even be threatened to become a failed state.

Worshipping Virtually

During the pandemic era, there were also unique and interesting religious phenomena observed. The religious phenomenon is virtual worship. Virtual worship is carried out by people in various forms, such as *tahlilan*, *takziyah*, recitation and *tadarus* the Qur'an, Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha gathering, and together prayers. Virtual *tahlilan* and virtual *takziyah* activities seem to be routine worship because almost every time there are families, friends, and colleagues who die in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Even when this country experienced a Covid-19 emergency, in June and July 2021, the number of victims who died either from exposure to the corona virus or other diseases was very high. Because the pandemic is still very dangerous, people cannot go directly to the funeral home to pay their last respects to the deceased. Moreover, the government is still enforcing a policy of restricting community activities. Instead, some offices or communities hold prayers together in memory of the deceased. Even then the joint prayer is done virtually so that the activity is known as virtual *tahlilan* or virtual *takziyah*. This phenomenon is a trend in the use of digital media for worship activities during the pandemic era.

Virtual worship activities have also penetrated into various types of religious rituals. Among them are Eid prayers, Eid al-Adha, Tarawih prayers, and even Friday prayers. Since the beginning of the pandemic era hitting this country, virtual Friday prayer activities have begun to be carried out by a number of groups. Even though the current pandemic era is starting to show signs of slowing down, the practice of virtual Friday prayers is still being carried out. What is interesting is the virtual implementation of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers during the pandemic era. Amazingly, the implementation of the virtual Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha prayers was attended by thousands of worshippers. For example, the virtual Eid prayer led by Wawan Gunawan Abdul

Wahid.⁵⁰ The ulama of Muhammadiyah regularly holds virtual worship.

Even at the Virtual Eid prayer in 2021, this activity was attended by thousands of people, reaching the maximum *Zoom* capacity limit. Even then, there were still a lot of worshipers attending the Virtual Eid prayer in groups in their respective homes. The phenomenon of ritual worship is called Najib Burhani as a new tradition that has not been known to past generations.⁵¹ At first, virtual worship activities did present controversy, especially in terms of normative and historical references. But over time, various types of virtual worship held by some people during the pandemic era can be categorized as part of the efforts to translate the teachings of religious moderation. Virtual worship seems to be an alternative way for some people in the midst of limitations and emergencies due to the Covid-19 emergency. In the third year of this pandemic, the practice of virtual worship is almost non-existent. Religious people are now also allowed to carry out congregational worship in mosques and other places of worship. However, it is ordered that in worshipping religious people, they must maintain the health protocol.

Conclusion

Based on the descriptions stated earlier, this paper concludes that during the pandemic era there were various efforts made by the scholars who gathered in various religious organizations to respond to the Covid-19 outbreak. In the midst of the pros and cons of the ulama's fatwa in responding to the challenges of the pandemic, the values of religious moderation are considered to be an alternative way for the people. By carrying out the teachings of religious moderation, people can carry out various worship activities solemnly with their families at home so that they are protected from the dangers of the Covid-19. Religious moderation in the pandemic era is important to apply as part of translating religious teachings about the importance of protecting oneself from danger (*hifẓ al-nafs*). Besides, religious moderation is also in line with the teachings of using rational thoughts and scientific approaches to responding to the challenges of religious life during

⁵⁰ Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Ibadah Virtual," *Kompas* (August 7, 2021), 1 and 15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

the pandemic era. This argument is in line with religious teachings that instruct religious people to maintain the health and safety of the soul. Moreover, the fact is that the conditions in the country and the world are experiencing a pandemic that is very dangerous for themselves, their families, and the community. This message is important because the pandemic has not completely disappeared from this country. Moreover, in some areas there are still new cases of Covid-19. Everyone certainly does not want to be a victim in the pandemic era. Especially if it is caused by careless behavior while hiding behind a fatalistic view. The rational choice, of course, is that we try to choose the best destiny in the pandemic era by practicing the teachings of religious moderation.

Bibliography

- Al-Qaradhawi, Yusuf. *Fiqih Maqashid Syariah: Moderasi Islam antara Aliran Tekstual dan Aliran Liberal*, trans. Arif Munandar Riswanto. Jakarta: Pustaka al-Kautsar, 2007.
- Azra, Azyumardi. "Vaksinasi dan Moderasi Beragama." *Republika*, February 25, 2021.
- Biyanto. "Dari Deradikalisasi ke Moderasi." *Kompas*, February 11, 2021.
- , "Memilih Takdir Baik di Era Pandemi." *Kompas*, July 15, 2021.
- Bogor Message in High level Consultation of World Muslim Scholars on Wasatiyyat Islam, Bogor, West Java, Indonesia, May 1st-3rd, 2018.
- Burhani, Ahmad Najib. "Tbadah Virtual." *Kompas*, August 7, 2021.
- Esposito, John L. *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions from One of America's Leading Experts*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Hakim, Sudarnoto Abdul and Zubai (eds.). *Tafsir Musibah: Essai Agama, Lingkungan, Sosial-Politik, dan Covid-19*. Yogyakarta: Suara Muhammadiyah, 2020.
- Hilmy, Masdar and Khoirun Niam. "Winning the Battle of Authorities: The Muslim Dispute Over the Covid-19 Pandemic Plague in Contemporary Indonesia." *QIJS: Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2020), 293-326.

<https://www.kompas.com/tren/read/2021/03/09/153000665/in-donesia-masuk-10-besar-negara-paling-dermawan-sedunia?page=all> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

<https://www.unicef.org/indonesia/id/press-releases/indonesia-survei-terbaru-menunjukkan-bagaimana-siswa-belajar-dari-rumah> (Accessed September 26, 2021).

Ibrahim, Haslina. "The Principle of Wasatīyyah (Moderation) and The Social Concept of Islam: Countering Extremism in Religion." *Al-Itqan: Journal of Islamic Sciences and Comparative Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2018), 39-48.

Instruction of the Minister of Domestic Affairs No. 15 of 2021 concerning "Pemberlakuan Pembatasan Kegiatan Masyarakat (PPKM) Darurat Corona Virus Disease 2019 di Wilayah Jawa dan Bali."

Kamali, Mohammad Hashim. *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatīyyah*. USA: Oxford University Press, 2015.

Karam, Yusuf, Murad Wahbah, and Yusuf Shalalah. *Al-Mu'jam al-Falsafī*. Kairo: Dār al-Fikr, 1433.

Maarif, Ahmad Syafii. *Islam dalam Bingkai Keindonesiaan dan Kemanusiaan: Sebuah Refleksi Sejarah*. Bandung: Mizan, 2009.

Mughni, Syafiq A. *Makna di Balik Peristiwa*. Surabaya: Hikmah Press, 2020.

Mughni, Syafiq A. *Nilai-Nilai Islam: Perumusan Ajaran dan Upaya Aktualisasi*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2001.

Nashir, Haedar. "Moderasi Indonesia dan Keindonesiaan: Perspektif Sosiologi." The Inauguration of the Professor in the University of Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, December 12, 2019.

Office of Special Envoy of the President of the Republic of Indonesia for Interfaith and Intercivilization Dialogue and Cooperation. "Wasatīyyah Islam: For Global Civilization: Conception and Implementation," Bogor, Indonesia, 1-3 May 2018.

Popkin, Richard H. and Avrum Stroll. *Philosophy Made Simple*. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

Qaḥṭānī (al), Sa'īd b. 'Alī b. Wahfī. *Sharḥ al-'Aqīdah al-Wasatīyyah*. Solo: al-Ṭibyān, 2000.

- Rabasa, Angel et al. *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*. Santa Monica, Arlington, Pittsburgh: RAND Cooperation, 2007.
- “Rekomendasi dan Pandangan Muhammadiyah terkait Vaksin Covid-19.” *Muhammadiyah.or.id* (accessed September 23, 2021).
- Robert, Rosemary R. *Making Moderate Islam*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2017.
- Sarnoto, Ahmad Zain et al. “Community Lifestyle and Religious Practices in Post Covid-19 Pandemic,” *European Alliance for Innovation*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2022), 10-15.
- Simanjuntak, Agustinus. “Sarah Gilbert dan Nilai kemanusiaan Vaksin,” *Jawa Pos*, July 21, 2021, 4.
- Subadi, Tjipto. “Pro-Kontra Penutupan Masjid.” *Suara Merdeka* (July 10, 2021).
- Sutliff, Paul. *Civilization Jihad and the Myth of Moderate Islam*. N.p.: Tate Publishing & Enterprises, 2015.
- Syihabuddin, Adriansyah et al. *Puasa Sunyi Masa Pandemi*. Jakarta: JIB and Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan Republik Indonesia, 2020.
- Team of Authorship. *Buku Panduan Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih XXXI*. Yogyakarta: Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2020.
- Team of Compilation. *Tanya Jawab Moderasi Beragama*. Jakarta: Badan Litbang and Diklat Kementerian RI, 2019.