Sowing Peace, Reaping Harmony_ The Role of Religious Figures in Grounding Religious Moderation in Sulawesi (A Socio-Legal Study)

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Sowing Peace, Reaping Harmony: The Role of Religious Figures in Grounding Religious Moderation in Sulawesi (A Socio-Legal Study)

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Article Info	Abstract
	This study critically inquires *the* role *of* religious figures *within the framework of* instilling the concept of religious moderation in *Indonesia. The main reason for* this study is *that social facts in Indonesia today, indicate that there are certain people who interpret religion in extreme ways. This is the background behind the issuance of Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020 which places religious moderation as a fundamental social capital for nation building. In line with that, this paper maps out the strategies run by religious leaders in carrying out their roles in grounding the concept of religious moderation. This article is based on socio-legal research. The data were* collected through observation, *in-depth* interviews, and documentation. The *result* of *this* study *shows* that religious leaders *play an important role in instilling religious moderation by acting as inspirations in inter-religious interactions, motivators in understanding religious moderation, role models in moderation behavior, initiators of moderate religious perspectives, promoters of internal and external dialogue, mediators, catalysts, in carrying out Islam as* rahmatan li al-alamin, *and is at the forefront (spearhead) in socializing the concept of religious moderation.*

I.   Introduction

Religious radicalism poses a serious threat to religious life. This, in turn, impacts the unity of society, the nation, and the state. Current social facts in Indonesia demonstrate that some people interpret religion in extreme ways, showing no tolerance for those who differ from them. They believe they are right, and they are not afraid to blame, mislead, and even shed blood (Ruth, 2020). They easily consider people who are different from them as enemies and therefore must be fought ideologically and politically.

The study of religious moderation is urgently needed in Indonesia today. The series of studies conducted so far can be categorized into three categories. First, studies that examine religious moderation from various perspectives (Abdul Aziz, 2021; Hefni, 2020; Heriyanti, 2020; Juli, 2022). Second, research that examines religious moderation in relation to education (Edy Sutrisno, 2019; Faisal, 2020; Gunawan et al., 2021; Rohmah, 2022). These studies frame religious moderation as a concept of how to live religiously in a pluralistic society, a social reality in Indonesian society. Third, studies that discuss the relationship between religious leaders and religious moderation (Nurbaiti, 2023; Sakdan, 2017; Supartini, 2018), which positions religious figures as central figures in instilling the values of religious moderation in society. In summary, these three trends are represented in the following previous studies.

Juli, et al. (2022) wrote about "Religious Moderation in Indonesia: A Study of Tolerance and Plurality in Indonesia". Using the perspective of religionum theology and qualitative methods, the author examines various literatures related to tolerance and plurality as an attempt to offer thoughts on religious moderation in Indonesia. This research concludes that the reality of plurality, which is actually the wealth of the nation, has been misinterpreted by religious groups that divide the nation. Religion has become a commodity that exploits a "bottomless" morality that is substandard like barbarism. Religious leaders should not utilize the congregation as a commodity for self-popularity and hedonistic living, instead church leaders should make God's people truly have an attachment to God, not to the world. Religious moderation is minimizing violence against different beliefs (Juli, 2022).

Abdul Aziz (2021) conducted research on "Religious Moderation in the Perspective of the Qur'an (A Contextual Interpretation in Indonesia)". He used the library research method. The literature data was analyzed descriptively by referring and examining the thoughts of *mufassirs*, both classical and modern, as well as referring to books, journals, and several articles. This study concludes that the Qur'an does not at all justify the practice of violence or extreme attitudes in the name of religion. On the contrary, the Qur'an encourages a balanced

religious attitude between the practice of one's own religion (exclusive) and the religious practices of others who have different beliefs (inclusive) (Abdul Aziz, 2021).

Mhd. Abror (2020), "Religious Moderation in the Frame of Tolerance: A Study of Islam and Diversity". This research examines religious moderation in terms of tolerance. This is intended to get a clear picture of the nature of religious moderation and tolerance and its limits. The method used is library research. The data comes from the literature related to the object of research, then analyzed the content. The results of the study reveal that moderation in religious harmony must be done, because then it will create harmony between religions or beliefs. To manage the religious situation in Indonesia which is very diverse, a vision and solution are needed that can create harmony and peace in carrying out religious life, namely by prioritizing religious moderation, respecting diversity, and not being trapped in intolerance, extremism and radicalism. Religious tolerance is not to melt into each other's beliefs. Nor is it to exchange beliefs with different religious groups. Tolerance here is in the sense of *muamalah* (social interaction), so that there are common boundaries that may and may not be violated. This is the essence of moderation in the frame of tolerance, which each party is expected to control themselves and provide a space of tolerance so that they can appreciate and respect each other's strengths and uniqueness without fear of their rights and beliefs (Abror, 2020).

Although the three studies above carry the theme of religious moderation, they have a number of differences with this research. First, in terms of research focus. The former focuses on tolerance and plurality, while the latter focuses on the role of figures. Secondly, in terms of methods; the previous studies used library research that relied on texts, while the research is socio-legal research that relies on phenomena. Third, the scope of the previous research was Indonesia, while this research only covers Sulawesi. Fourth, in terms of the type of research; the previous research was socio-religious research, while this research is legal research. Furthermore, these studies do not address the role of religious figures in grounding the concept of religious moderation, nor do they discuss the strategies religious figures employ in carrying out this role. Furthermore, they do not discuss it in a legal context.

The novelty of this research lies in the approach used, which highlights the construction of religious moderation in social space, with a socio-legal approach to the role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation. In fact, religious moderation is not enough only at the level of discourse (moderation in idea), no less important than that is the implementation of religious moderation in society (moderation in action), which one of the pillars

is religious leaders as social agents of moderation. It is at this level that the urgency of the study of the role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation in society in a socio-legal perspective lies. This research can be used as the latest reference in the study of religious moderation, considering that there has been no study like this before.

This article aims to explore the roles played by religious leaders as social agents, maintaining morals and pluralistic values in modern Indonesian society. This study seeks to understand how religious leaders implement exemplary behavior that is not only rooted in religious doctrine but also capable of meeting the social needs of Indonesian society with its diversity.

As part of this exploration, this article seeks to answer two questions. First, what is the role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation? The answer to this question is important for policymakers and implementers to consider when responding to the pluralistic and religiously sensitive atmosphere of Indonesian society. Second, what strategies do religious leaders employ to ground the values of religious moderation on a massive scale so that they can penetrate the daily lives of Muslims? These questions are closely related to the condition of the Indonesian nation, particularly in maintaining the integrity of this highly diverse nation. More specifically, safeguarding the integrity of society from radicalism, which often hides behind the cloak of religion—something that is actually very contrary to religious values themselves.

This article is based on three assumptions. First, religious leaders currently face greater challenges due to the emergence of religious groups that have begun to promote various intolerant ideologies. These groups have specific missions and programs and therefore must be countered by religious leaders by strengthening Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020, which positions religious moderation as a fundamental social capital for national development. Second, the penetration of new values into Indonesian society presents challenges for religious leaders. Third, given their difficult and important mission, religious leaders must be innovative in socializing and conveying the values of religious moderation.

This research was conducted in the cities of Palu, Central Sulawesi, and Makassar, South Sulawesi, considering that these two cities have distinct characteristics that could be considered representative of the Sulawesi region, in accordance with the research focus.

Palu was chosen because, as the capital and representative of Central Sulawesi, it was the site of an inter-religious conflict that lasted for approximately three years, resulting in 577 deaths, 384 injured, and 7,932 houses

and 510 public facilities destroyed or burned (*Kebebasan Agama*, n.d.). The study of religious moderation is very urgent in conflict areas like this so that dark history is not repeated in the future. Makassar was chosen because it was one of the cities affected by the conflict, which, among other things, became the main destination for refugees from the conflict area. The atmosphere of conflict had also seeped into this city although it was eventually suppressed.

Table 1. Incidents with a Religious Dimension in Indonesia (2021-2023)

Year	Total	Southeast Sulawesi	South Sulawesi	%
2023	109	12	-	11.0
2022	118	-	18	15.3
2021	102	15	-	14.7

Secondary data: https://setara-institute.org/kebebasan-beragama

This data shows that Sulawesi (particularly Central Sulawesi and South Sulawesi) consistently accounts for around 11-15% of the total national religiously motivated intolerance/conflict incidents, making it one of the most vulnerable structural tensions in regions outside Java. Conflicts in Sulawesi, particularly Central Sulawesi, are complex conflicts with a long history (post 1998-2000) where religious factors are intertwined with issues of economic inequality, local politics and collective trauma. Annual incident data only reflects the "surface turmoil" of deeper structural tensions.

2. Research Method

This research is qualitative empirical legal research. (Yuspin, Fauziyyah, & Budiono, 2023) Legal research is a scientific activity, based on specific methods, systematics, and thinking, aimed at studying one or more specific legal phenomena through analysis (Soekanto, 2012). The qualitative approach examines socially constructed facts, a research procedure that produces descriptive data, namely various things stated by informants in writing or orally, and real behavior (Fajar & Achmad, 2015). In this case, researchers observe, study, understand, and construct the reality and practice of religious moderation in the field through observation, interviews, and documentation.

As a socio-legal study, which is closely related to the existence of a legal society, the approach used in this research is; first, an interdisciplinary approach (Ahimsa-Putra, 2012). In this context, the existence of religious moderation in the social sphere is highlighted using various approaches. The existence of religious moderation is analyzed using theo-juridical, psycho-social, and anthropological perspectives. Second, a legal and societal approach examines

Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020, which positions religious moderation as fundamental social capital for national development, in relation to societal practices.

The research design and approach, as stated, were chosen because the object of study in this study is more suitable for research with that design and approach. The data used in this study are primary and secondary. (Wardiono, 2019) Primary data were obtained through observation and in-depth interviews with 10 informants, ranging from national to local religious leaders. In-depth interviews were chosen to obtain detailed data and meaningful information.

Observations were conducted both directly and indirectly. Observations involved directly attending religious leaders' activities and observing them. The results were then recorded and documented as a research report. Indirect observations were also conducted by reading news from various sources, particularly social media and the internet.

Meanwhile, secondary data consisted of relevant literature to support the primary data. Data obtained through the approaches were analyzed descriptively and phenomenologically. The data were first classified and then interpreted according to the researcher's needs. This descriptive-phenomenological approach views the activities of religious leaders in religious studies and lectures as a series of texts that can be explained and interpreted. To complement and strengthen this analysis, previous research findings were also used as text. All of these procedures were undertaken to explore the role played by religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation.

3. Results and Discussion

The Role of Religious Figures in Grounding the Concept of Religious Moderation

Before delving into the main unit of analysis in this study, the first thing to determine is the extent of the legal awareness of the religious leaders who served as informants regarding religious moderation itself. A minimal indicator of legal awareness is knowledge of existing regulations. With legal knowledge, a person has a legal awareness of what is prohibited and what is permitted. Therefore, the informants were asked about their knowledge of the concept of religious moderation.

The head of the Palu City Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB) stated that religious moderation is a way of practicing religion. It's about applying religious teachings in a diverse society. So, it's not an interpretation of the Quran, the Bible, or any interpretation of other religions. Rather, it's a way to ensure that religious communities remain calm, peaceful, and harmonious,

preventing anything that could disrupt stability, whether in the social, cultural, economic, legal, or other fields (Ismail Pangeran, Chairman of the Palu City Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB), interviewed by the Research Team in Palu, March 9, 2023).

In line with this, according to the Secretary of the Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB) of Central Sulawesi Province, religious moderation is a person's attitude in understanding the existence and diversity of religions on earth by upholding mutual respect, appreciation, and appreciation for the differences between each religious belief. He stated that, perhaps in very simple terms, moderation is a person's breadth of understanding in viewing and evaluating something (M. Munif A. Godal, Secretary of the Central Sulawesi Province Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB), interviewed by the Research Team in Palu, March 31, 2023).

For this member of the Expert Council of the Alkhairaat Executive Board, religious moderation is an implementation of the concept of *tasamuh* (balanced) in Islamic teachings. According to him, the normative foundation of religious moderation is *La Ikraha fi al-Din* (there is no compulsion in religion) and *Lakum Dinukum Wa Liyadin* (to you your religion, to me my religion) (Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, Executive Board of Alkhairaat Palu City (Expert Council), interviewed by the Research Team in Palu, May 8, 2023).

Religious moderation is part of religion itself, as Islam embraces a vision of moderation, a vision of moderation that is in the middle, meaning it's not extreme, and that's the true essence of religion (Islam). Even if there are extremist adherents, it's solely due to an inaccurate interpretation of the religion and even a departure from its true spirit. Islam teaches peace and love, and those are moderate teachings (Istnan Hidayatullah, Deputy Secretary of the Palu City Nahdlatul Ulama Branch (PCNU), interviewed by the Research Team in Palu, May 15, 2023).

Religious moderation is a cultural strategy for maintaining a peaceful, tolerant, and respectful Indonesia. Moderation is a way of life that fosters harmony, respect, and tolerance without creating conflict due to differences. It is a way of life that fosters harmony, respects differences, and maintains and preserves the conditions of community life, without creating conflict due to differences. A similar spirit was expressed by Muhammadiyah's Yunus, a national preacher and host of the religious program "*Mata Air*" on the national television station *Surya Citra Televisi* (SCTV), who defined religious moderation as a way of living in harmony, respecting, protecting, and tolerating each other without creating conflict due to differences. It is not overly fanatical about one's religion (Muhammadiyah Yunus, national preacher, host of the religious program

"Mata Air" on the national television station Surya Citra Televisi (SCTV), interviewed by researchers in Makassar, April 17, 2023).

The head of the Aisyiyah "*Ummul Mukminin*" Islamic Boarding School in Makassar, M. Aziz Ilyas, on the other hand, sees religious moderation as strengthening the tolerance that has long existed in society. This affirmation is necessary considering the frequent occurrence of social friction in the name of religion, so that moderation within the framework of mutual respect and appreciation needs to be continuously strengthened. Religious moderation is a kind of effort to live together, live in harmony, in diversity. This is a manifestation of the growing spirit among the community, especially policymakers and religious leaders, in order to reaffirm the nation to live together, live in harmony, tolerate each other, and understand each other in various differences. A similar sentiment was also conveyed by the Supervisor of the IMMIM Makassar Boys' Islamic Boarding School, Firdaus Syukri, who emphasized the concept of religious moderation in an attitude of mutual respect, so that a person adheres to religion without feeling pressured by any party (M. Firdaus Syukri, preacher/senior mentor at the IMMIM Makassar Islamic Boarding School, interviewed by researchers in Makassar, April 27, 2023).

Table 2. Religious Figures' Views on Religious Moderation

No	Name	Domicile	Character	The Essence of Religious Moderation
1	Ismail Prince	Palu	Chairman of the Palu City FKUB	How to apply religious teachings in a diverse society
2	M. Munif Godal	Palu	Secretary of the Central Sulawesi FKUB	A person's attitude in understanding the existence or diversity of religions on the surface of the earth
3	Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi	Palu	Expert Council of the Central Board of Alkhairaat Palu City	A way of assimilating without having to mix the teachings of one religion with another religion
5	Hidayatullah Palace	Palu	Deputy Secretary of the PCNU Palu City	Religious moderation is in the middle, meaning it is not extreme, which teaches what peace and love are.

4	Abd. Hafid	Palu	Regional Leadership of Muhammadiyah City of Palu	Religious moderation is in the middle, meaning it is not extreme, which teaches what peace and love are.
6	Mr. Taufik	Makassar	Muhammadiyah missionary	A way of life that creates a sense of harmony, respecting differences without causing conflict.
7	Muhammadiyah Yunus	Makassar	National preacher/host of SCTV's religious program "Mata Air"	How to live in harmony, respect each other, care for each other and tolerate each other without conflict due to differences and not being too fanatical about the religion you practice.
8	M. Aziz Ilyas	Makassar	The leadership of the Central Executive Board of Asisyiyah "Ummul Mukminin" Makassar	Moderation is the strengthening of tolerance
9	Saidin Mansyur	Makassar	Missionary/Lecturer at Unismuh Makassar	An effort to live together, live in harmony, even in diversity, even in plurality.
10	Firdaus Syukri	Makassar	Senior preacher/mentor of PP. IMMIM, Makassar	Mutual respect, so that someone embraces religion without feeling pressured by any party

Source: Primary data, processed from interview results, 2023.

The results of these interviews with religious leaders reveal their level of legal awareness regarding religious moderation. This is based on the legal awareness indicators proposed by Soerjono Soekanto (Rosana, 2014; Soekanto, 2002).

Table 3. Legal Awareness of Religious Figures Regarding Religious Moderation

No	Character	Knowledge	Understanding	Aflitude	Behavior

1	Chairman of the Palu City FKUB	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
2	Secretary of the Central Sulawesi FKUB	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
3	Expert Council of the Central Board of Alkhairaat Palu City	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
4	Regional Leadership of Muhammadiyah City of Palu	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
5	Deputy Secretary of the PCNU Palu City	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
6	Muhammadiyah Preacher in Makassar	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
7	National preacher/host of SCTV's religious program "Mata Air"	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
8	The leadership of the Central Executive Board of Aisyiyah "Ummul Mukminin" Makassar	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
9	Preacher/Lecturer at Muhammadiyah University	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
10	Preacher/Instructor of PP. IMMIM Makassar	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive

Source: Primary data, processed from interview results, 2023.

Furthermore, based on field findings, it can be concluded that the role of religious leaders is crucial in grounding the concept of religious moderation. This was expressed, among other things, by the Chairman of the Palu City Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB), Ismail Pangeran:

"...this figure is crucial. Therefore, this figure is central to our role model

for practicing good religion. Let me give you one example: in Palu City, there are traditional and community leaders who are role models and sources of inspiration for the community in fostering interfaith relations. The local government, both provincial and city, never neglects the role of religious, traditional, and community leaders in contributing to creating a conducive, safe, and peaceful atmosphere (Ismail Pangeran, *interview*...)."

The above statement was also confirmed by the Secretary of the Interfaith Harmony Forum (FKUB) of Central Sulawesi Province, M. Munif A. Godal:

"...religious figures have many roles in increasing understanding of religious moderation, including through the existence of a forum for interfaith harmony, where this organization is an association of interfaith leaders whose goal is to raise awareness that unity is beautiful (M. Munif A. Godal, *interview* ...)."

Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, a member of the Alkhairaat Palu Expert Council, emphasized the role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of moderation in terms of encouraging the formation of cooperation between religious communities to reduce conflicts caused by religious differences:

"...they come to us...we welcome them, ahlan wa sahlan, sometimes they bring us help...we work together, work together well, never...harass each other, look after each other (Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, *interview* ...)."

Furthermore, Al-Habsyi pointed out that Alkhairaat has, from the outset, recognized the vital role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation, and furthermore, Alkhairaat has put this concept into practice. Evidently, Alkhairaat leaders have exemplified religious moderation. This is evident, among other things, in the number of non-Muslim lecturers who serve at the institution. In fact, according to Al-Habsyi, in Kulawi, a non-Muslim served as an administrator of this institution. There was also a priest who taught at the Alkhairaat school. This is why some people claim to be Abna al-Khairaat, even though they are Buddhists and Hindus. In fact, quite a few of them hold Alkhairaat diplomas. For Al-Habsyi, the role of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation is to provide a sense of comfort, security, and protection to those who do not share their faith Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, *interview* ...).

Abdul Hafid, a member of the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Palu City, explained that religious leaders play a role in fostering dialogue, both internally and externally. Internally, dialogue is fostered between Islamic organizations, while externally, the door to dialogue is opened between religious communities. For the Muhammadiyah Regional Leadership of Palu City, religious moderation is one manifestation of opening the door to dialogue,

allowing all obstacles in interfaith relations to be communicated through dialogue. Religious leaders, at this point, can play a role as a driving force in opening the door to dialogue (Abd. Hafid, *interview*...).

Istnan Hidayatullah, Deputy Secretary of the Palu City Nahdlatul Ulama (PCNU) Branch, acknowledged the role of religious leaders, particularly in promoting moderate religious views. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) religious leaders continue to encourage their followers to be tolerant (*tasamuh*), not extreme in their religious practices. Furthermore, M. Taufik emphasized that religious leaders' role in grounding the concept of religious moderation is as mediators, catalysts, and role models in practicing Islam, a mercy for the universe (M. Taufik, *interview*...).

For this reason, nearly every religious activity, especially those conducted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, always includes content on religious moderation. Religious leaders have made this issue a topic for preaching. Some mosques have even scheduled lectures on religious moderation in Friday sermons, tarawih sermons, and dawn lectures. Religious leaders have a real and crucial role in grounding the concept of religious moderation because they are the spearheads in this regard, both through preaching and education. They are the ones who spread information about religious moderation to the public, while also ensuring that the concept is not misunderstood. In addition to preaching and education, religious leaders also serve as role models in practicing the concept of religious moderation in real life. Their views on sensitive religious issues, for example, must at least be calming, provide solutions, and not be extreme, in order to achieve a harmonious religious life (Saidin Mansyur, *interview*...).

Table 3. The Role of Religious Figures in Grounding Religious Moderation

No	Name	Domicile	Character	The Role of Religious Figures
1	Ismail Prince	Palu	Chairman of the Palu City FKUB	As an inspiration in interfaith interaction
2	M. Munif Godal	Palu	Secretary of the Central Sulawesi FKUB	Promote understanding of religious moderation
3	Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi	Palu	Expert Council of the Central Board of Alkhairaat Palu City	As a role model in moderate behavior

5	Hidayatullah Palace	Palu	Regional Leadership of Muhammadiyah City of Palu	Introducing moderate religious views
4	Abd. Hafid	Palu	Deputy Secretary of the PCNU Palu City	Encourage internal and external dialogue
6	Mr. Taufik	Makassar	Muhammadiyah Preacher in Makassar	Mediator, catalyst, and role model in practicing Islamic teachings, namely rahmatan li al-alamin
7	Muhammadiyah Yunus	Makassar	National preacher/host of SCTV's religious program "Mata Air"	The vanguard in socializing the concept of religious moderation
8	Saidin Mansyur	Makassar	The leadership of the Central Executive Board of Aisyiyah "Ummul Mukminin" Makassar	The spearhead in socializing the concept of religious moderation

Source: Primary data, processed from interview results, 2023.

Strategies of Religious Figures in Grounding the Concept of Religious Moderation

Strategy is a set of critical choices for planning and implementing a series of action plans and resource allocations essential to achieving basic goals and objectives. In this regard, researchers interviewed several religious figures who have been influential in grounding the concept of religious moderation.

Firdaus, a preacher and mentor at the IMMIM Makassar Islamic boarding school, stated that to ground the concept of religious moderation, IMMIM, as a missionary and social institution, holds regular discussions, both weekly and monthly. These discussions address topics related to religious moderation. These discussions are attended by interfaith leaders (M. Firdaus Syukri, *interview...*).

Socialization as a strategy in grounding the concept of religious moderation was also put forward by Saidin Mansyur, who further stated:

"To ground the concept of religious moderation, we have undertaken several initiatives. We recently conducted a public awareness campaign, featuring the Chair of Commission 8 as a keynote speaker. The event featured clerics, religious figures, and several government officials.

Muhammadiyah preachers and other elements, including community leaders, were also present. The public awareness campaign addressed important issues, including the urgency, strategies, and potential obstacles faced in efforts to ground the concept of religious moderation. Several other activities also focused on the issue of religious moderation (Saidin Mansur, *interview...*)."

Saidin further explained that many clerics have actually spoken about religious moderation in religious forums, both in their sermons and in discussions, but he believes this hasn't been optimal. In line with this, several mosque administrators have scheduled lectures on religious moderation, both in Friday sermons and during tarawih and dawn lectures (Saidin Mansur, *interview...*)."

The strategy of Abdul Aziz, the Head of the Aisyiyah Ummul Mukminin Islamic Boarding School, Makassar, is to instill the values of moderation from an early age to the students, while IMMIM as an organization of mosques and preachers socializes religious moderation, among other things, during the briefing of preachers who will be deployed to the field when entering the holy month of Ramadan.

In this regard, the Palu City Nahdatul Ulama Branch Management (PCNU) detailed the strategies they use to ground the concept of religious moderation:

"Going forward, our program will operate at three levels. First, al-Fiqro, how our history of thought is truly moderate. Al-Fiqro, moving the mind, how to change religious perspectives from extreme to moderate. Second, charity. Charity is implementation and application. So, how do we set an example of moderate religion? NU people, NU cadres must set an example in society. How to be inclusive in the context of how we set an example, how to live tolerantly, tolerance with followers of other religions. Then third is haroqah, namely the movement of how we build a long epistemic movement in building a moderate civilization, a civilization full of peace. So, there are three levels: Al-Fiqro, Al-Amal, and Haroqah (Saidin Mansur, *interview...*)."

It was further explained that in establishing religious moderation, in addition to the strategies mentioned above, other strategies employed by Nahdlatul Ulama include structural and cultural strategies. The structural strategy is intended to involve elements of the bureaucracy from the central to the regional levels to contribute to the religious moderation movement. The cultural strategy involves the involvement of various groups, including community leaders, religious figures, artists, and intellectuals, in supporting

and ensuring the success of religious moderation. At the same time, education and training are being implemented that instill the values of religious moderation in the curriculum, so that the younger generation can understand and appreciate religious diversity (Saidin Mansur, *interview*...).

Alkhairaat Palu has made collaboration with various religious organizations a strategy, starting with simple initiatives. For example, communities of various faiths are always involved in mosque cleaning activities. Conversely, Alkhairaat Palu always invites Abnaa' Al-Khairaat to help clean other religions' houses of worship. Likewise, Abnaa' Al-Khairaat is always involved in maintaining security during Christmas. Non-Muslims also do the same during Eid al-Fitr (Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, *interview*...).

Table 4. Strategies of Religious Figures in Grounding Religious Moderation

No.	Religious Figures/Organizations	Strategy
1	Firdaus Syukri, preacher from the Association of Indonesian Mosques and Muttahidah Preachers (IMMIM)	Conduct regular discussions within the organization on relevant themes.
2	Saidin Mansyur, preacher/lecturer at Unismuh Makassar	Socialization involving clerics, religious figures, government officials, Muhammadiyah preachers and other elements including community leaders.
3	Abd. Aziz, Chairman of the Central Executive Board of Aisyiyah "Ummul Mukminin".	Implementing religious values such as the values of togetherness, mutual respect and appreciation between religious communities from an early age.
4	Muhammadiyah Yunus, Host of the religious program "Mata Air" on SCTV.	Organizing lectures on the theme of religious moderation in various religious activities.
5	Abd. Hafid, Regional Leader of Muhammadiyah, Palu.	Facilitate dialogue, meetings involving religious leaders, traditional leaders and youth leaders.
6	Istnan Hidayatullah, Deputy Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Branch Management (PCNU) of Palu.	⚜ *Al-Fiqro*: changing the perspective of diversity from extreme to moderate. ⚜ Charity: being a role model of moderate and inclusive religion. ⚜ *Haroqah*: building a moderate civilization, a civilization full of peace.
7	Hasan Idrus Al-Habsyi, Alkhairaat Expert Council, Palu.	Cooperation between religious leaders through real and positive actions.

Source: Primary data, processed from interview results, 2023.

Based on the data obtained in the field, this study found that religious leaders play

a number of roles, namely as an inspiration in interactions between religious communities, a motivator of understanding religious moderation, a role model in moderate behavior, an initiator of a moderate religious perspective, a driver of internal and external dialogue, a mediator, a catalyst, in promoting Islam as rahmatan li al-alamin, and the vanguard (spearhead) in socializing the concept of religious moderation.

As inspirators, religious leaders are able to inspire community members to continue developing religious moderation as a social potential of Indonesia's diverse society. As motivators, religious leaders are expected to be able to foster a spirit of religious moderation among community members. As role models, religious leaders in social life have the potential to change behavior through the process and modeling of behavior by religious figures who are liked and admired. As initiators, religious leaders have the ability to encourage community members towards achieving goals with wisdom, patience, dexterity, intelligence, and upholding spirituality. As mediators, religious leaders play a role in providing mediation services in cases of conflict between religious adherents.

Thus, religious leaders play a real role (an acted role), a role that is carried out in real terms, and an active role (an active role), a role that is measured by the contribution made. Furthermore, religious leaders also play a participatory role. A participatory role is defined as a role carried out because of a need or only at certain times, while a role model is a role carried out by someone whose behavior is worthy of emulation, imitation, and imitation. Linked to role theory, this study found that religious leaders are individuals who take part in social interactions, including as a means of resolving disputes. In this case, this role is used as a way to reduce or mitigate conflict.

Furthermore, this study also provides an indication that by carrying out these roles, it also confirms that the legal awareness of religious leaders, especially regarding indicators of religious moderation, is quite high, because only religious leaders who have high legal awareness are able to implement the indicators of religious moderation (national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local culture) which are a follow-up to Presidential Regulation No. 18 of 2020 and all its derivatives.

The strategy of grounding the concept of religious moderation by religious leaders as described implicitly suggests that legal awareness of religious moderation can be achieved through effective communication to the entire community. This communication is carried out in various forms of activities such as socialization and religious dialogue by presenting several religious figures, traditional figures, community leaders, women's figures, youth leaders, religious instructors, religious forums and the government, then in substance or content the communication built is about religious issues that have the potential to divide the nation, issues relevant to religious moderation, to then provide a middle way as a solution that can be accepted

by all parties, with the aim of educating the community in understanding religion well.

Overall, this research shows that the role of religious leaders is crucial in implementing the concept of religious moderation in Sulawesi. Religious leaders serve as spiritual leaders and mediators in resolving interfaith conflicts. Furthermore, religious leaders play a crucial role in educating the public about the importance of maintaining interfaith tolerance.

The concept of religious moderation is highly relevant to the current state of the nation. Religious moderation is urgently needed due to the prevalence of extreme religious attitudes that are inconsistent with the essence of religious teachings. Such behavior often triggers conflict, a lack of mutual respect, intolerance, and even wars that destroy civilization. Therefore, it is these attitudes that need to be moderated. Through religious moderation, we can restore the understanding and practice of religion to its true essence, namely, to safeguard the dignity of humanity and civilization.

Religious moderation is also part of the nation's strategy to maintain the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As a diverse nation, the founding fathers successfully inherited a form of agreement in the nation and state, namely the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which has effectively united all religious, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. Indonesia is agreed not to be a religious state or a country that implements a pattern of integration where the teachings or provisions of "certain" religions are fully accommodated within the state, but Indonesia is a country that implements a pattern of symbiosis, where state life cannot separate religious provisions from daily life; this is called a pattern of symbiosis. Religious values are maintained and then combined with the values of local customs and wisdom that live in the midst of society. This is the identity of the Indonesian nation, which is deeply religious, has a polite, tolerant character, and is able to dialogue while accepting its diversity. Therefore, religious moderation is also a strategy to maintain the identity of the Indonesian nation.

Grounding the concept of religious moderation requires collective oversight, both by individuals and by institutions organized within community groups and established by the state. Religious groups must prioritize religious moderation, given that violence in the name of religion can be perpetrated anytime and anywhere. Every component of the state must share the belief that the Indonesian nation possesses substantial social capital to strengthen religious moderation. (Zuhdi & Nasir, 2024) This social capital includes local cultural values, rich diversity and customs, traditions of deliberation, and the culture of mutual cooperation inherited from the Indonesian people through generations.

This social capital must be maintained to create a harmonious life within cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. If upheld collectively, Indonesia can inspire the world to implement the concept of religious moderation. To realize a moderate society in religion, the state must be truly present to facilitate the creation of public spaces that

enable interaction between religious communities. (Basri, Kurniati & Krisnan 2021)

Religious moderation will continue to be advocated for the sake of creating true brotherhood in the multicultural Republic of Indonesia. All parties are expected to become agents of Religious Moderation so that national and state life runs in accordance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. The pattern of religious moderation, as when the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) implemented the Medina Charter, would certainly be a beautiful influence on national and religious life in Indonesia.

4. Conclusion

This study has constructed the role and strategy of religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation in the Sulawesi region and concluded that religious leaders act as legal trumpet blowers (*bouche de la loi*) and social agents in grounding the concept of religious moderation. Religious leaders play an important role in implementing the concept of religious moderation for the social structure of society in the Sulawesi region. The strategy used by religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation in the Sulawesi region is to build social relations through collaboration with community members in the form of socialization.

As a culturally recognized institution, religious leaders must continue to receive reinforcement from various aspects to more optimally carry out their functions as legal mouthpieces and agents of religious moderation, considering that they de facto have a dual role in grounding the values of religious moderation. The strategies used by religious leaders in grounding the concept of religious moderation are generally still conventional (sermons, discussions, and meetings). Therefore, a more varied and quantum strategy is needed, so that a more in-depth study of the various possible strategies will be needed. Furthermore, intensive study of the concept of religious moderation from a legal aspect is needed so that it can create a separate study in the field of law called the Law of Religious Moderation, which will become the main scientific pattern of scientific integration belonging to the Sharia faculty in all State. At the same time, given the complex plurality of Indonesian society, religious moderation should be regulated in the form of legislation.

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