

## Nahdlatul Ulama's Dedication to Promoting Religious Moderation: A Virtual Ethnographic Study of the NU Online Website

Liya Nikmah Jazhila<sup>1\*</sup>, Imam Bonjol Juhari<sup>1</sup>, Kun Wazis<sup>1</sup>, Mohd Aashif bin Ismail<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>Sungai Merab Luar Secondary Islamic School, Malaysia

\*Correspondence: ✉ [zilaaszfa93@gmail.com](mailto:zilaaszfa93@gmail.com)

### Abstract

The rise of hate speech, extremism, radicalism, and the deterioration of interfaith relations has become a prevalent issue within communities, especially in online media. Given the potential for this to cause division, it is crucial to approach the issue with moderation. This research focuses on exploring how the Nahdlatul Ulama Organization presents religious moderation on the NU Online website to promote values of goodness and demonstrate tolerance. The study used qualitative research methods and a virtual ethnography approach to analyze virtual texts and online media records. Data collection centered on selecting content related to religious moderation on NU Online media, and the analysis involved data reduction, display, and drawing conclusions. The research revealed that NU Online's moderate da'wah entails: narrative of religious moderation as an option to gain Islamic insights, creating a virtual space to promote a calming religious spirit and present Islam as a universal religion '*rahmatan lil alamin*', and kindly promoting moderate Islam amidst the rapid influx of information in the media disruption era.

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## INTRODUCTION

The existence of cyber media has emerged various information spread through digital platforms created by several religious community (Ilham, 2022). Its sophistication has also allowed numerous intolerant groups to produce information and propaganda, which implies that access to information is open and accessible. These intolerant groups try to spread hate and attack fellow Muslims, which results in division. As retrieved from detik.com, The Ministry of Communications and Informatics has blocked access to 21.330 terrorism and radicalism content sites from 2017 to 2021 (Haryanto, 2021). The rapid development of technology and information has led to an explosion of information that is difficult to control and has resulted in the spread of disinformation. New media has facilitated the emergence of various online platforms related to religions, aiming to recruit new members and spread radical ideology (Lorch & Chakroun, 2020). However, these platforms also bring together diverse individuals with different interests. The rise of radicalism and anarchism is due to the aggressive spread of extremism by intolerant groups, which is increasingly dominating the digital space (Ghifari, 2017). It is necessary to strengthen peaceful Islamic narratives and insights to counter the ongoing development of radicalism in cyberspace. Social media can be used as a tool to counter the influence of extremist groups through online mobile devices. Some conservative groups are resistant to blending in with others and even oppose gender equality (Hafid, 2020). The unrestricted access and extensive production of content by conservative groups on certain social media platforms have led to chaos. As a result, conservative groups are now seeking to join religious communities to reduce the perception of their hardline stance (Jati et al., 2022).

The rise of cyber media has created a space that unites diverse interests. It has transformed the way the public communicates, drawing them into the digital realm through online devices. According to Rulli Nasrullah, cyber media serves as a platform for people to interact and employ

digital tools to convey messages (Nasrullah, 2014). Messages also contributed in forming public opinion through the narrative displayed which opened up opportunities to generate feedback (Syahputra, 2019). The emergence of new media has prompted various religious communities to actively promote the idea of moderate Islam as a representation of diversity, facilitated through online digital platforms. This content is crucial for dissemination in the face of overwhelming media exposure and the constant circulation of information, encompassing both positive and negative news, whether real or fake (Helmy & Ayuni, 2019). The essence of new media lies in its democratic and open nature, which allows for the formation of public opinion. This makes it crucial for spreading Islamic insights. According to a research conducted by Efa Rubawati, the *khatib* is no longer the sole determinant in delivering da'wah. Instead, community participation in interpreting Islamic content and sharing it on social media has become a prevalent phenomenon today (Rubawati, 2018).

According to the press release of Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association (APJII) in 2023, about 215 million Indonesians are connected online (APJII, 2023). The number of community activities connected to internet networks is quite extensive, encompassing casual use of social media, learning about religion, and accessing entertainment. The trend of the community switching to digital media has also increased access to information about Islam, whether disseminated by Muslims themselves or Islamic virtual-based communities. This technological advancement has also transformed the way the community receives religious news (Mazaya, 2022). This condition refers to the shift from traditional face-to-face communication to digital communication using online internet devices. This shift has led to the emergence of virtual communities that rely on social media for communication, information production, and consumption. Information now moves rapidly and dynamically due to the widespread use of digital technology. New media is crucial in promoting the development of a new social environment in cyberspace, where ethical standards are highly valued (Eickelman, 2003). The presence of this new media offers several advantages and resulting in an ever-more complex and sophisticated information (Jauhari, 2021). Goran Larsson stated that information technology such as internet and new media have emerged new opportunities as well as creating new problems in the contemporary Islamic discourse (Larsson, 2011). Subsequently, this platform has become a means of disseminating information about Islam to the community. The presence of new media has also had a significant impact, as the internet can reach a wider audience, spread content rapidly, and provide people with various Islamic insights. This phenomenon demonstrates that the religious landscape is being shaped in the Islamic cyber environment (Setia, 2022).

NU Online's Islamic content as an encouraging Islamic information provider is an effort to develop a moderate attitude and uphold the value of tolerance (Iqbal, 2020). This Islamic website serves as an alternative platform for the community to access Islamic content online and gain enlightenment. NU Online advocates for a moderate form of Islam in the digital space and promotes the concept of da'wah using polite language. As a result, it has encouraged the community to engage in socio-religious practices through internet networks. According to Muhammad Munir, digital da'wah makes religious content and innovations easily accessible. There is a lack of research examining religious moderation from the perspective of NU Online Islamic media, making this research significant in understanding moderate Islam in cyberspace. Religious moderation in cyber media has been extensively studied, as seen in the work of Robet Thadi. This moderation has the potential to unite various religions and should be promoted, especially in the digital space. Sefriyono has explained that NU Online serves as a platform for Islamic moderation while also facilitating discussions on Islam and nationalism. NU Online is guided by the principles of *ahl sunnah wal jamā'ah*, promoting moderation, tolerance, balance, and fairness in the information presented. This research has chosen NU Online as an example of a platform that aims to spread the concept of religious moderation. The study used virtual ethnographic methods to reveal the expressions of religious virtual communities through internet-mediated information technology.

The research is based on the moderation theory by Quraish Shihab, which defines moderation as the balance of life issues in both this world and the hereafter. Moderation adapts to changing times and is grounded in firmly held religious principles. It aims to include all believers, irrespective of their political views, and encourages mutual respect and the promotion of human values globally. Moderation involves balancing various aspects of life, such as body and soul, worldly life and the hereafter, nation and religion, idea and reality, individual and groups, and reason and revelation. It also entails harmonizing classical and modern values. Moderation is not a fixed concept but needs to be continuously explored, discovered, and applied based on the context and situation (Shihab, 2019).

Moderation plays a crucial role in addressing various global issues such as liberalism, extremism, radicalism, accusations of infidelity, and terrorism. When moderation is embraced, it reflects a culture rooted in principles of harmony, tolerance, and the harmonious coexistence of religious communities. This fosters a peaceful and respectful society that celebrates diversity and rejects fanaticism that leads to division. Embracing moderation helps in conflict prevention and creates a safer and more secure environment for all (Yildirim, 2015). Additionally, moderation encourages constructive and inclusive dialogue among different groups, ensuring that every individual feels valued and respected. According to Muhammad Quraish Shihab, there are three essential conditions for practicing moderation: having adequate knowledge and understanding of others' perspectives, controlling emotions to respond rationally, and being cautious and thoughtful when making decisions. Fulfilling these conditions enables individuals to approach social and religious matters with wisdom and fairness, effectively addressing differences and challenges (Romadanyl, 2019).

A study conducted by Mahyudin, Muhammad Alhada Fuadila Habib, and Sulvinajayanti has found that the promotion of religious moderation in online media is gaining momentum. The narrative of moderation has been observed across various digital platforms. Both individuals and government institutions have been promoting this narrative to encourage peace, harmony, and religious tolerance. However, religious moderation in online media still faces challenges such as conflicting ideas, extremism, and narratives of radicalism which contribute to division. In this context, it is important to use digital platforms more wisely to promote religious moderation and advocate for a more humanistic approach to religious discourse (Mahyudin et al., 2022). A study conducted by Abdullah Falahul Mubarak and Yoga Irama showed that models of religious mainstreaming in online media emphasize tolerance, proportionality, and the avoidance of violence. The aim is to promote a proper understanding of religion. Using media as a tool to promote the principles of religious moderation and the Islamic da'wah movement in online platforms plays a crucial role in conveying virtuous values (Mubarak & Irama, 2022).

The religious moderation campaign presents the image of Islam as a universal *rahmatan lil ālamīn*, humanist, and polite religion (Thadi, 2022). Obtaining religious knowledge through Islamic sites in this cyber era has encouraged public's participation in accessing Islamic news practically (G. R. Bunt, 2003). The same principle applies to cyberspace, which becomes a platform for inter-group competition for influence. Therefore, it is important to spread religious moderation using modern methods. The content of religious moderation should be relevant to the present in order to capture people's interest and promote a peaceful and respectful image of Islam (Elvinaro & Syarif, 2022). Social media networks that connect users have become a significant opportunity for the growth of the Islamic da'wah axis in the new era. Therefore, the spread of '*amr ma'rūf nahy munkar*' 'enjoining good and forbidding evil' is crucial (Fakhruji, 2017). The reality of information variation in cyberspace has motivated Nahdatul Ulama (NU) to spread the ideology of religious moderation on a massive scale through their own site called NU Online. Sefriyono stated that NU Online is one of the Islamic media website that consistently spreads the narrative of Moderate Islam, discussing both Islam and nationalism.

The production of a Moderate Islam narrative, in line with Pancasila, is an effort to neutralize the influence of radical content through various digital platforms. NU Online uses this method to

encourage society to combat any forms of intolerance (Sefriyono, 2020). A significant amount of radical content has been appearing on various social media platforms, which has been misused by irresponsible parties to create chaos. Social media can be seen as a double-edged sword, providing both calming content and misleading information. Research on NU Online regarding the mainstreaming of religious moderation has not yet been conducted. This study seeks to address this gap by offering new avenues for research. NU Online acts as a platform for providing information on religious moderation, prioritizing principles such as moderation '*tawāsuṭ*', tolerance '*tasāmuḥ*', balance '*tawāzun*', and fairness '*i'tidal*'. It visualizes religious moderation on its website, aiming to create a respectful and harmonious online religious environment. Therefore, this research aims to analyze the content of religious moderation presented on the NU Online website to provide a comprehensive description

## METHODS

This study utilizes a qualitative research method within a virtual ethnographic approach (Driscoll & Gregg, 2010). This approach relies on the content of religious moderation presented in the NU Online website. Christian Hine's virtual ethnographic study suggested the need for a specific approach when conducting ethnographic research. It emphasizes that the internet is a space where culture is both formed and reformed. The internet is a cultural and technological artifact that is influenced by various parties, and its development is shaped by how it is marketed, taught, and used (Hine, 2008). Virtual ethnographic study involves observing and understanding a phenomenon that is happening online, such as communication between virtual groups in cyberspace (Spagnoli et al., 2003). The researcher actively participates in online community activities to take note of discussions, collect narratives or recordings, and analyze the content displayed in cyber media (Szabzon et al., 2024). In this method, the focus is on religious moderation contents in the NU Online media site. The study aims to draw conclusions from an in-depth analysis of religious moderation contents on the website. The data for the study was collected by selecting religious moderation content from the NU Online website, and the analysis involved data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Nahdlatul Ulama's Efforts in Promoting Religious Moderation through NU Online Website

In some past studies, the concept of cyber media-based da'wah has been discussed as a way to spread Islamic messages using digital platforms. Sefriyono, who explored the idea of digital jihad, found that the widespread promotion of intolerance on cyber media has negative consequences for the unity of a nation and state. The emergence of NU Online with its moderate and tolerant values encourages society to uphold the unity of our nation and state, serving as a countermeasure to the influence of radical ideologies that can easily infiltrate virtual spaces created by intolerant groups. On the other hand, Puput Puji Lestari and Wibowo discussed how digital da'wah has influenced global culture and instant lifestyles. They also noted that technological advancements have led to the rapid development of strategies for da'wah, impacting the morals of younger generations (Ari, 2020). Moderate da'wah presented through Islamic content aligns with Jamal's emphasis on tolerance, harmony, and diversity in the da'wah framework, avoiding conflict between religious communities (Ghofir, 2017). This text reflects the content found on the NU website, where the da'wah promotes moderate attitudes and rejects extreme and liberal ideas in favor of tolerant goodwill. It embodies *Wasatiyah* Islam, which rejects extremism, including injustice. This perspective has become a reflection for Muslims (Ibnu`Asyur, 1984).

The figure 1 is one of the moderate da'wah displayed on the NU Online website. It provides an explanation of religious moderation and its importance (Idrus Ruslan et al., 2022). In his writing, Sauqi Futaqi elaborates that religious moderation is a correct method that offers a comprehensive approach to all religions, preventing people from getting involved in terrorism, radicalism, or any forms of intolerance (Musil, 2023). The promotion of religious moderation nowadays faces



significant challenges due to the need to interact with the public through various forms of information on cyber media. This includes positive and negative content, hoaxes, and sensational real news. As a result, practicing religious moderation requires a high level of competence in understanding the ever-changing landscape of new media (Bantekas, 2007). It is important to enhance literacy about religious moderation on cyber media in order to unite various virtual religious communities and promote the values of religious moderation (Futaqi & Mashuri, 2021).



Figure 1. Religious Moderation and Its Urgency Content Published by NU Online

The dissemination of moderate values on NU Online website is consistently cited as a form of counterattack on radical ideology and intolerant contents that can infiltrate through personal information (Iqbal, 2020). Religious moderation and its urgency are reminders for people to value Indonesian diversity so that harmony between communities can be created. The value of this religious moderation presents Islam as a landscape of Indonesia's pluralistic conditions that maintains the cultural heritage of the archipelago. Moderate da'wah is established as an effort to give opportunity for the diversity of Indonesian society that consists of race, religion, language, ethnicity, and tradition (Baidawi et al., 2023). The main characteristic of Islamic teachings is *wasatīyah* 'moderation'. The differences in religion is seen as a diversity which makes us able to respect fellow religions which is important in practicing religious life. This concept is the essence of *wasatīyah* inherent in Islam (Shihab, 2019). Quraish Shihab also interpreted moderation as an effort to maintain the balance of worldly and spiritual life practices, as well as to adapt to current conditions according to applicable religious rules. Living a religious life, respecting each other, and being guided by Islamic law is one form of internalizing the value of moderation (Shihab, 2019). Moderate da'wah study has become a widely studied topic. As stated by Alimul Muniroh, There are at least two important elements faced by moderate Islamic groups while dealing with millennials nowadays. The first is the rise of radical militant groups, and the second is the emergence of the disruption era. Thus, the two competent elements need to promote moderate Islam in this disruption era. This is in line with Azyumardi Azra's thoughts on Moderate Islam (Azra, 2015). The concept of moderation is related to the group integrity so that it is very helpful in realizing the peaceful life of the nation and state (Burhanuddin & Khumaini, 2021).



Figure 2. Innovative, Learn the Religious Moderation Practices from SiModerat site  
Content Published by NU Online

As the title above suggests, learn about the practice of religious moderation from the SiModerat website, which stands for *Sistem Pelayanan Informasi Moderasi Beragama* 'Religious Moderation Information Service System'. This site was initiated by the Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Southeast Sulawesi as a learning house on religious moderation and a reference for the local community to get information about religious moderation online. As is known, the dissemination of the value of religious moderation is widely carried out through the ministry of religion, da'wah practitioners, and government officials in order to care for the Indonesian nation so as to create harmony between religious communities. The Southeast Sulawesi Ministry of Religious Affairs also supports the socialization of religious moderation through intensive campaigns as an effort to respect differences (MR, 2022). Tracing the teachings of religious moderation in the Nahdlatul Ulama Organization as stated in the *muqaddima* of the articles of association in 2010 acts as an organization that is also a pioneer of moderate Islam as outlined in the values of justice, moderation, balance and tolerance. Moderate values through this era of massive moment disruption are played by various religious actors (Baidawi et al., 2023). The importance of spreading moderate Islam through various digital platforms is emphasized in light of the increasing prevalence of information technology. It is crucial to actively respond to the constant influx of both positive and negative information by utilizing the internet to facilitate a better understanding of religion. This allows for a meaningful, easy, and fast way to disseminate Islamic teachings, marking an era of disruption in the way religion is communicated.

The challenge for moderate Islamic activists is very serious due to the increasing number of internet usage and the tendency to consume instant things (Fatikh, 2020). Renald Kasali believes that the disruption era gave birth to a new world called the digital marketplace that presents goods and services virtually. Regarding doctrine, moderate Islamic activists or Islamic organizations in the digital world see this phenomenon as not just a product that is traded like goods, but an ideology that is marketed (Kasali, 2017). Doctrines that promote radicalism are very vulnerable and can cause unrest in cyberspace. Some of the impacts of the current era of disruption are the phenomenon of the sophistication of information technology, leading to the emergence of transnational ideologies that need to be monitored by the entire community. Technology is capable of penetrating geographical boundaries and breaking down space and time, making it a powerful tool for promoting ideologies through digital platforms connected via internet connections. The content can infiltrate user accounts connected to the internet and present dangerous ideas to the cyber community.



Figure 3. Mainstreaming Religious Moderation as the Demographic Bonus Arrives  
Content Published by NU Online

The essay of Ali Mursyid et al. titled "Mainstream Religious Moderation When the Demographic Bonus Arrives" presents three pillars of religious moderation that all Indonesian people are encouraged to uphold in order to create a harmonious life. These pillars include moderation in ideas and actions. Moderation through thought involves combining text and context. Moderation through movement is about respecting diversity in society (Ait-Aoudia & Benzenine, 2023). Finally, moderation through actions involves strengthening religious networks and the cultural values of the surrounding community. Religion aims to build open dialogue as a way of creating a new culture (Azisi & Syam, 2023). The use of moderation in the digital space has increased community engagement in accessing information efficiently and conveniently. Morten T. Hojsgaard proposes at least three concepts related to the dissemination of religious phenomena in the digital world. Digital communication has also altered traditional communication patterns, eliminating the necessity for physical religious institutions and reflecting a shift towards cyber culture and away from conventional religious traditions (Hojsgaard & Warburg, 2005). Durkheim argued that religion is believed to be a moral phenomenon. By spreading religious content, at least it respects the rules that are mutually agreed upon by all elements of digital society that interact in one network (Dawson & Cowan, 2004).

Winarto emphasized facing the disruption era through a disruption mindset strategy. Thinking before acting plays an important role as the initial capital in making decisions. Therefore, the way of thinking by campaigning is that Islam is a religion of mercy that emphasizes the values of tolerance, friendliness, open character, and action away from violence (Ijah Bahijah et al., 2022). Produce content that upholds the values of moderation, diversity through production, posting, reposting, sharing and broadcasting in the digital world (Burhanuddin & Khumaini, 2021). Moderation as a strategy to seize the digital stage from the efforts of intolerant groups to dominate cyberspace through the production of negatively charged content. The production of visual journalism content through the creation of info graphics attracts the attention of audiences as an effort to illustrate the identity of the moderate, polite and tolerant Indonesian nation (Esha, 2008).



Figure 4. Six Characteristics of a Moderate Attitude in Islam Content Published by NU Online

The identification of moderate content (Wahidi & Baidawi, 2023) in the post above begins with anxiety about the various Islamic realities that are divided into Islamic groups that claim to be extremist-terrorist groups, some are fundamentalist, moderate, and liberal. The conditions in Islam have been different since the time of the *Khulafā' al-Rāsyidīn*, when there were groups such as the Khawarij. In Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, Muslims are positioned as members of a just society. The Islamic model is fair and moderate, as taught by the Prophet Muhammad. It encompasses characteristics such as understanding reality, prioritizing fiqh, allowing freedom in religion, widely understanding religious books, being humble, and comprehending the *sunnatullah* for human creation. Islamic moderation is reflected in NU Online posts, as it promotes moderate values in both the physical and digital worlds. This is a way of countering extremist information and teachings that often spread through digital platforms. The messages conveyed through NU Online represent the moderate nuances of Islam, reflecting the characteristics of Indonesian society as a pluralistic nation. This reflects the traits of moderation, tolerance, and respect for diversity. Islam promotes gentleness and spreads messages of goodness to its people, and it is important to maintain this condition.

The study of moderate da'wah as part of religious expression is formed through virtual space and raises a variety of responses and religious discourses from a number of groups (Ropi, 2019). Specifically, this phenomenon is understood as the connection between religion and the internet that merges into one network as a medium to bring together doctrine, society, and internet networks. It also creates a new public space facilitated by internet connections and slowly impacts the digital space. Moderate Islamic posts on the NU Online website and efforts to access Islamic news as religious references create an Islamic cyber environment or cyber-religion. Garry Bunt observes this condition along with the development of information technology that leads humans to be connected in one network. In other words, his right hand is in the real world, while his left hand is connected to the internet network (G. R. Bunt, 2003). The identification of moderate values in the display of da'wah through the NU Online website reflects the reality of da'wah in cyberspace as an effort to spread moderate Islam along with the growth in the number of internet usage. The value of moderation is realized in Islamic posts through the title of mainstreaming religious moderation when the demographic bonus arrives. The spread of moderate Islam shows the character of courtesy and mutual respect between religious communities. This condition reflects the friendly identity of a moderate attitude in Indonesia that prioritizes tolerance, friendship and mutual respect (Dewi &



Triandika, 2020). The da'wah content above shows the expansion of da'wah towards cyberspace as a manifestation of advances in information technology that gave birth to the phenomenon of religion moving to a new virtual space. This is in line with Garry R Bunt's research, which explains the emergence of specific issues related to the representation of Islam through various posts on digital platforms (G. Bunt, 2005).

The phenomenon of da'wah in cyberspace through various displays of Islamic content spread across digital platforms. NU Online's da'wah content is understood as a manifestation of polite and moderate Islamic teachings. As a sign of moderation, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has popularized that religious moderation itself is oriented towards human benefit and glory so that this condition is relevant to the multicultural Indonesian nation (Amin, 2023). The religious phenomenon that occurs in the digital world and social media is the contestation of religious authority and the contestation for the hearts of the people. The internalization of Islam *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* displayed at NU Online represents moderate da'wah content and actively fills the spiritual space of the people. Advances in information technology have created a new reality that encourages public participation in accessing information, both positive and negative, and disrupts various aspects of human life, including religious life (Hew, 2019). The digital world has broken down geographical boundaries and penetrated the privacy of religious communities.

Various religious content from the far right to the far left, even extreme radicals, is easily accessible to anyone as long as they have an internet connection. The phenomenon of democratic access to religion in the digital space gives rise to a process of transmission of religious understanding from various parts of the world without filters that bring benefits, even this also offsets the moderate religious ideology that has been the social glue of the nation and state (Tabroni & Idham, 2023) When applied to efforts to deepen religious teachings, especially Islam. In this era of disruption, it's important for da'wah practitioners and religious organizations to adapt their products and services to be more accessible, affordable, and relevant to the younger generation. It's crucial to note that Islamic content shouldn't compromise on standards and principles, regardless of changing consumer preferences. NU Online, for example, is actively promoting moderate Islam through digital platforms. The era of disruption presents a valuable opportunity for da'wah, making it easier and more affordable for people to access moderate religious information through selective content. NU Online's vision is to provide respectful and moderate religious information and promote the value of tolerance (Online, 2023).

### **Significance of Religious Moderation Content on NU Online Website**

The NU Online website reflects the values of moderation, balance, uprightness, and tolerance in its content. This is evident in the use of polite, tolerant, and moderate language in articles, news, and opinions created by various religious actors. The website's content aims to create a calming religious social climate for its readers, who come from diverse religious backgrounds. NU Online's narrative aligns with the ideology of Nahdatul Ulama, prioritizing moderation and interfaith harmony. This concept is in line with Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which emphasizes the importance of being upright witnesses over humanity while practicing religion without extremism.

Religious moderation as a way of view, attitude and practice of religion becomes a foundation in everyday life so as to create harmony between religious communities (Fuadi, 2021). This is because religion is present in an effort to uphold human values, elevate dignity, degree and dignity and need each other. As social beings, collaboration between religious communities in the dimensions of life is important to be realized in the form of tradition or local culture (Lohker, 2023). The characteristics of religious moderation illustrated in the visualization of content in NU Online media contain the values of *tawāsuṭ* 'moderate', *tasāmuḥ* 'tolerant', and *tawāzun* 'balanced' (Fuadi, 2021). *Tawāsuṭ* means not being extreme in responding to various existing problems and being in the middle both in thought and movement. *Tasāmuḥ* takes the form of tolerance, namely mutual respect between religious communities as contained in the symbol of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* 'different but one in one'. This diversity is reflected in Indonesian society which is multilingual,

ethnic, cultural, and religious. *Tawāzun*, being balanced in addressing a number of issues that occur both in the past, present and future. These *tawāsuṭ*, *tasāmuḥ* and *tawāzun* characters contribute to the mainstreaming of religious moderation in social media and as Islam requires the principles of '*amr ma'rūf nahy munkar* 'enjoining good and forbidding evil'.

According to research conducted by Zetty Azizatun Ni'mah and Ahmad Rifa'i, the incorporation of religious moderation on social media platforms is crucial in mitigating the rise of radical ideologies among student populations. The perpetual dissemination of values such as moderation, equilibrium, temperance, and tolerance is advocated across a wide array of digital channels, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and YouTube (Zetty Azizatun Ni'mah, 2022). Yunita Ratna Sari noted that implementing religious moderation in online media in Indonesia is a complex task due to the country's diversity in races, ethnicities, languages, and religions. However, online media provides a useful platform for promoting religious moderation without being limited by physical constraints. Despite some challenges, such as the lack of interaction with the audience, efforts to promote religious moderation through digital spaces continue to create a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere (Sari, 2022).

The religious moderation campaign on the NU Online website is consistent with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' efforts to promote religious tolerance and diversity in Indonesia. The content on NU Online reflects the rich ethnic, religious, racial, and linguistic diversity of the Indonesian nation. Hamam Burhanuddin and Fahmi Khumaini emphasize the importance of promoting religious moderation in the digital space while also advocating for media literacy among the public. Media literacy is crucial for producing, selecting, and consuming information wisely to avoid being influenced by negative information and to counteract hate speech. Social media has the power to bring different perspectives and narratives, both inclusive and exclusionary. It is important for the audience to critically evaluate the information they encounter on social media (Burhanuddin & Khumaini, 2021).

Religious moderation from the perspective of the ministry of religion is a choice of religious methods as a middle way, a person or group is not extreme and not excessive when undergoing their religious teachings (Kholis & Rini, 2023). Wildani Hefni's research suggests that promoting religious moderation in online media requires collaboration between both society and government to manage diverse religious life. Information technology advancements support the strengthening of religious moderation content that emphasizes tolerance, balance, and moderation. Online media, as a source of diverse information, highlights the complexity of truth and openly displays social and religious issues. Religious communities play a significant role in promoting religious moderation on digital platforms. In today's digital era, knowledge is easily accessible through online media, making traditional sources of knowledge less influential. The rapid spread of information through various digital platforms facilitates the formation of different religious congregations. Therefore, prioritizing diverse moderation content in online media presents a humanist, tolerant, balanced, and moderate approach (Hefni, 2020). Siti Mustaghfiroh's research reveals the importance of mainstreaming religious moderation among multicultural communities in online media on an ongoing basis. Individual connections through the internet network have the opportunity to disseminate narratives of religious moderation based on attitudes of tolerance, unity and harmony between religious communities. In turn, a harmonious and coexisting life with each other is created (Mustaghfiroh, 2022). Ai Fatimah Nur Fuad and Nurjanah also voiced the urgency of mainstreaming religious moderation in online media as an effort to prevent narratives of radicalism, extremism and terrorism. The millennial generation also plays an important role in fertilizing religious moderation content on a number of digital platforms so as to create a harmonious, harmonious and peaceful climate (Nurjanah, 2022). Sauqi Futaqi and Saepudin Mashuri in their research argue that religious moderation is very relevant in Indonesian society with its diversity and offers a comprehensive approach and an open attitude in understanding religion. In turn, religious adherents do not fall into intolerant practices, radicalism, and extremism. In practice, religious moderation confronts the reality of cyber media through religious issues rolling very fast. For this

cyber media problem, religious moderation as a guide in living their respective religions, and also strengthens media literacy among the community. The collaboration of religious believers and a number of social media communities is needed to provide skills for media use, so as to produce polite and calming content that emphasizes tolerance, balance and moderation (Futaqi & Mashuri, 2021).

### **Promotion of Moderate Islam through the Creation of Respectful Religious Content**

The internalization of moderate values seen in NU Online's Islamic posts at least helps promote moderate Islam in the digital space so that it also encourages community involvement in accessing religious content easily (Ramadhani, 2023). Moderate Islam seeks to foster peaceful relations among Muslims and other communities. As emphasized by M. Hillay Basya, it promotes a non-violent religious discourse (Wahid et al., 2006). Muhammad Imarah added that moderate Islam is actually an effort to save the condition and situation of this nation in the midst of the swift information that circulates very quickly, even in seconds (Esha, 2008). The campaign of moderate Islam through the production of polite religious messages is at least in line with the guidelines of the Quran and Hadith, namely the design of *ummatah wasa'ah* (the middle ummah). Ahmad Najib Burhani advocated for Islamic moderation, which can be understood in four general ways. Firstly, it involves fighting for justice on earth. Secondly, it represents a middle way in a diverse life. Thirdly, it signifies the best ummah. And fourthly, it reflects Muslims being the leaders of the world. According to Najib Burhani, these four concepts of Islamic moderation are reflected in NU Online's religious campaign through its website-based digital platform. Moderate Islam encompasses all religious elements, aiming to achieve harmony between religious communities (Burhani, 2012).

It is important to emphasize the practice of religious moderation in both public and digital spheres, including within religious virtual communities and entities. Community participation is key, with religious leaders, traditional leaders, religious authorities, cultural figures, and the media playing important roles in promoting religious moderation (Rahmadhani & Wahyuni, 2023). Religious moderation, as a middle way of living between religious communities, is considered an important goal. It has four pillars: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and cultural accommodation. The media also plays a crucial role in promoting religious moderation in cyberspace by providing accurate information, educating about religious literacy, and creating a positive cyber media environment. Social media involvement is significant in promoting the narrative of sustainable and peaceful religious practices because it provides quick and inexpensive access to information for online audiences (Fatimah & Khumaedi, 2019).

Wawaysadhya et al. found moderation as a middle way to produce breakthroughs in living interfaith life in the current era. Practicing a moderate and harmonious life is the ideal of all religious people so as to create a life that is harmonious and coexists with each other. The religious spirit shown by various religious leaders, community leaders and religious authorities plays its role in campaigning for religious moderation in the dimension of community life (Wawaysadhya et al., 2022). The method of offering moderate religion looks moderate or neutral towards diversity of beliefs to be a solution in living life between religious communities. The strong influence of social media in promoting religious moderation, whether it is serving religious information, means education or sharing information in a healthy way. Society's dependence on digital technology encourages moderation of religious content to be more active through a number of digital platforms as long as they are connected online by various religious actors. Social media is a gathering place for various social statuses, social classes, and social hierarchies so that fertilizing religious content moderation becomes a positive opportunity (Thadi, 2022).

Media literacy among the public is very important to provide education about choosing information, filtering information and checking the truth of information circulating on social media. Social attitudes and wise ownership of the media respond quickly to information that blows through digital media platforms so as to obtain true, correct, accurate information from trusted sources (Arnus, 2018). In turn, social media is transformed into a space for realizing religious harmony

through a polite and neat view of Islam by playing various religious actors. Islamic entities and communities need to take part in calling for moderation of religious polite content based on the Quran and Hadith. The presentation of Islamic information through Islamic media websites, one of which prioritizes religious moderation, is a tangible manifestation of NU online to date, which is committed and consistent in campaigning for religious moderation and presenting a polite face of Islam (Online, 2023).

The positive implications of the practice of religious moderation both in the public sphere or social media as a middle way of living life between religious communities lead people to realize religious harmony (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). The rapid sophistication of digital technology and information growth creates opportunities for religious actors to produce religious moderation content in the form of images, texts, audio visuals and memes (Soraya & Wibowo, 2021). The presence of cyber media encourages religious moderation activism to seize the digital stage from the invasion of extremism content, propaganda narratives, and hate speech. As NU online Islamic media has done in campaigning for moderation of religious content on YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. As an Islamic media, NU online consistently provides an understanding of Islamic views and knits Indonesian knowledge. This Islamic journalism is consistent in spreading information, thoughts, teachings of Islam *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn*, Islam is peaceful, full of respect and love. NU online rubrics consist of several rubrics including news, fragments, cultural arts, *halaqah*, columns, *pesantren*, figures, literature, humor, wisdom, sermons, sharia, and other Islamic themes that are understood (Patoni, 2022).

NU online Islamic media takes part in disseminating Islamic information, educational communities, and campaigning for religious moderation through religious actors. Fostering moderation in religious narratives needs the support of all elements of society in sharing information, especially when applied in everyday life. Media mastery and Islamic content creation among Muslim communities play an important role in fostering moderate Islam through digital media channels (Juminem, 2019). In turn, digital media is not limited to providing information but is transformed into a cyber environment that presents peace, harmony, and harmony through moderate Islamic content that is polite and cool. Religious moderation activism has the opportunity to become agents of peace, ambassadors of religious harmony and religious actors in social media (Anwar et al., 2022). The hope of realizing religious harmony can be maximally achieved through the support of all elements of society.

## CONCLUSION

The religious content on NU Online website includes articles, opinions, and news that prioritize the principles of moderation *'tawāsu'*, tolerance *'tasāmuḥ'*, balance *'tawāzun'*, and fairness *'i'tidal'*, promoting moderate Islam among religious communities. The content is produced by religious figures to convey polite and calming information. NU Online promotes moderate values in its digital platform, aiming to present polite Islamic information and encourage care for diversity. The production of moderate religious content on NU Online website continues to gain popularity due to its practicality, speed, and flexibility. The accessibility of information in online media has made the digital world a platform for the production of Islamic and ideological content, allowing for easy and cost-effective dissemination. The rapid growth of information also encourages public engagement in social media activities

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