

Religion and Education: A Comparative Analysis of Indonesian and Tunisian Religious Moderation Policies

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Abstract

Indonesia and Tunisia demonstrate distinct cultural, political, and educational environments concerning religious moderation, despite their predominantly Muslim populations. The two nations' divergent approaches to religion highlight their efforts to adopt a moderate stance. This paper examines the nuanced policies employed by Indonesia and Tunisia to promote religious moderation within their educational systems, focusing on modern educational standards. This qualitative study utilized interviews, literature analysis, and insights from relevant formal events. By contrasting Indonesia and Tunisia, the study aims to elucidate their strategies for fostering religious moderation and cultivating inclusive learning environments. The primary finding of this research is that Indonesia has incorporated religious moderation into its educational curriculum. In contrast, Tunisia's state policies do not mandate a specific curriculum on religious moderation but involve conferences and forums on the subject. These findings contribute significantly to the global discourse on integrating religion and education, highlighting diverse national approaches to promoting religious tolerance and moderation.

Keywords: religious moderation, education, Indonesia, Tunisia, state policies

Introduction

Indonesia is a country with the highest Muslim population in the world and has a high level of pluralism (Nugraha, 2020). This can have potential for the nation's progress or even be a cause of deterioration, depending on the quality of management of this heterogeneity. Since up until now, conflicts based on ethnicity, religion and race between groups (*Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antargolongan* or SARA) still often occur in some areas (Nugraha, 2020).

In terms of religion and belief, based on data from the Data Centre of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia, by 2023, the number of Muslims had reached 231,069,932 people, Christians had reached 20,246,267 people,

Catholics had reached 8,325,339 people, Hindus had reached 464,6357 people, Buddhists had reached 2,062,150 people, Confucians had reached 71,999 people, and adherents of indigenous beliefs had reached 112,792 people (*Data Umat Berdasar Jumlah Pemeluk Agama Menurut Agama*, n.d.).

The extraordinary condition of pluralism in Indonesia allows it to become positive capital for the country's development, but it can also be a negative signal if not managed well (Sa'diyah et al., 2021). This is where the importance of religious and multicultural education is. Education shapes the behaviour and attitudes of people in order to create a humanism society by the learning process

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(Kuncoro, 2019).

Many observers both in America and Europe are still amazed to this day, why has Indonesia, where the absolute majority of the population is Muslim (88.2%), not become an Islamic country? Meanwhile, in Europe, there are many countries based on religion, especially Christianity, Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Anglicanism (*Moderasi Beragama dalam Pandangan Azyumardi Azra*, n.d.).

Just like in Indonesia, where the majority of the population is Muslim. In Tunisia, Islam is the most widely practiced religion in this Maghreb region of North Africa (Sullivan, 2013). The percentage of Tunisians who identify as Muslims is predicted to be about 98% in 2022. The Pew Research Centre reports that 58% of Muslims in Tunisia identify as Sunni Muslims, while 40% claim to be Muslims in general and not affiliated with any particular sect (*Religious Affiliation*, n.d.). However, there are also Bahá'í, Christian, and Jewish communities in the nation (*Identity and Citizenship in Tunisia*, n.d.).

According to the 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom in Tunisia, as of mid-2021, there are 11.8 million people living there, with 98 percent of them being Sunni Muslims. The percentage of nonbelievers, Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, and Baha'is is less than 1% of the total population. According to estimates from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MRA), there are about 30,000 Christians living there. Less than 5,000 people are estimated to be members of the church by Catholic officials, who are widely distributed across the nation. There are roughly 1,400 Jewish people in the community. There is a tiny Baha'i community, although accurate data regarding its size is not readily available (*Tunisia 2021 International Religious Freedom Report*, 2021).

Religious freedom is nonetheless guaranteed by the constitution, albeit with legal limitations. Tunisia is known for its tolerance and openness to many cultures and religions, qualities that have shaped the nation's identity (Breskaya et al., 2021). As well as the reputation of Tunisia as a tolerant and welcoming nation toward other cultures has grown to define the nation (*La Ghribal : La Tunisie a Donné l'exemple*

En Matière de Tolérance et de Respect de La Liberté de Religion, n.d.).

This is interesting to study considering that Tunisia is a country that has experienced secularization under the leadership of Habib Bourguiba, the first President of the Republic of Tunisia (1957–1987), and continued until the next president, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987–2011) (McCarthy, 2014). However, after the Arab Spring revolution, Tunisia appears to have a great movement towards religious moderation and is more open to Islam in particular and other religions in general, and it is referred to as the only country in the Middle East and North Africa to have successfully completed the 2011 “Arab Spring” transition to democracy (Netterstrom, n.d.).

On the other hand, in the framework of education, it is imperative that religious moderation be practiced. In addition to imparting academic knowledge, education also aims to shape students' attitudes and characters for the future (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024). Numerous studies regarding the situation in Indonesia indicate that managing the issue of religious extremism is currently proving difficult for the country's religious education system, particularly given the conservative social milieu (Zuhdi & Sarwenda, 2020).

Meanwhile in Tunisia, according to Fryer & Jules (2013), religious education is an essential component of the educational system. Islam is the most common religion in the nation, which has a diversified cultural and religious environment overall. While upholding Islamic values, Tunisia's approach to religious instruction in the classroom takes into account this variety (Wiseman & Wolhuter, 2013).

In line with the problem statement mentioned above, the author outlines research on the policies of two countries, Indonesia and Tunisia, towards religious moderation and its implementation in the field of education, considering that both countries have a majority Muslim population, and education is one of the means important in implementing state policy (Hefni, 2020).

The objective of this study is to examine and compare the policies that Tunisia and Indonesia

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have put in place regarding religious moderation and their' implementation through education. It also aims to investigate the difficulties that both countries have encountered in putting these policies into practice and keeping them up to date. Finally, based on the comparative analysis that was done, the study will make recommendations or suggestions for how to make these policies better.

Furthermore, highlighting the tactics used by both nations to encourage religious moderation within frameworks for education can help to understand how governments manage a variety of religious environments while promoting inclusivity and tolerance. By looking into these policies, readers will learn more about how educational systems are set up to accept a range of religious beliefs. This could provide ideas or information on how to make educational policies in other multicultural societies better.

The results of this study will add to the amount of knowledge already available on religious moderation by providing a novel viewpoint. Additionally, discussions on religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, and social cohesion in Indonesian and Tunisian cultures may be influenced by the revelations from this research.

Additionally, the following three research questions utilized as the foundation for this research:

1. What are the government's policies regarding religious moderation in Indonesia?
2. How does the Tunisian government manage the country's religious moderation policy?
3. How do religious moderation policies relate to educational framework in Indonesia and Tunisia?

The overall objective of this essay is to encourage inclusivity, comprehension, and tolerance, especially in the educational framework. The author hopes to promote a more thorough and nuanced discussion on religious moderation by studying the state policies in this case in the two countries.

Research Method

This paper is written using the qualitative research methodology. Exploring and comprehending the intricacies of human experience, behavior, and social phenomena is the main goal of qualitative research, according to Leavy in "Research Design: Quantitative, Qualitative, Mixed Methods, Arts-Based, and Community-Based Participatory Research Approaches" (2022). Qualitative research is dependent upon non-numerical data, such as words, images, and narratives, in contrast to quantitative methods, which prioritize numerical data and statistical analysis (Leavy, 2023).

In qualitative research, the researcher frequently conducts in-depth investigation while employing diverse techniques for gathering data, including document analysis, focus groups, interviews, and observations. The objective is to produce rich, context-specific information, identify patterns, and get insights into the meanings people ascribe to their experiences (Leavy, 2023).

In this research, the participant is a Tunisian student who studied in the master program of Islamic Studies at Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII). The interview was recorded and conducted in the Library of UIII on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, and the interview video was uploaded to the DEUS TV YouTube channel after being allowed by the participant in order to be more useful for anyone who wants to dive into this topic, the video title is "State Policies on Religious Moderation in Tunisia".

Furthermore, aside from the literature review, the researcher also attended some events related to this topic and noted the important points to gain broader insight. One of the most important events is the monthly meeting of Muhammadiyah in the house of *Pimpinan Ranting* or branch leader of Muhammadiyah in Bintaro on Monday, January 21, 2024. The topic here was "*Islam Wasathiyah: Antara Cita dan Praktik di Indonesia*," or "Wasathiyah Islam: Between Ideals and Practice in Indonesia" and the speaker was Andar Nubowo, a Ph.D. holder from École Normale Supérieure, Lyon, France,

who has graduated with his dissertation *La genèse d'un "islam du juste milieu" en Indonésie: histoire et portée de l'institutionnalisation d'une notion ambiguë* or The genesis of an "Islam of the golden mean" in Indonesia: history and scope of the institutionalization of an ambiguous notion.

Apart from that, the most recent formal event which became one of the sources for this research was a presentation from the Faculty of Social Science UIII research team in the event "*Orientasi Keberagaman Muslim Indonesia: Gejala Perubahan Tradisi dan Generasi*" or "Orientation of Muslim Diversity in Indonesia: Symptoms of Changing Traditions and Generations" which was delivered by the invited speaker, Ismail Fajri Alatas, Associate Professor of Middle East and Islamic Studies and History New York University, US, and Andar Nubowo, On Wednesday, February 7 2024 in classroom 10 of Faculty A UIII.

In addition, the author also reflects on her experiences when she was an undergraduate student at Az-Zaituna University in Tunisia, majoring in Islamic Civilization in 2011-2013, by reopening the lecture notes she had written while there and related to the topic of this research.

Results and Discussion

A. State Policy on Religious Moderation in Indonesia

Religion will always remain a political topic in Indonesia (Makruf, 2011). The generally moderate and tolerant nature of Indonesian faiths has been called into question by the rise of some radical movements (Azra, 2004). The fact that the religious moderation is shaped by Indonesia's long historical struggles. Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama or NU are examples of two Islamic organizations that have contributed a lot to maintaining religious harmony in Indonesia throughout history (Suharto, 2019).

Muhammadiyah is an Islamic movement that was born in Kauman Yogyakarta on November 18, 1912. The founder of Muhammadiyah was a kyai who was known to be pious, intelligent and had a reformer spirit,

namely Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (Amirudin, 2018). According to Sebastian & Nubowo (2019), this second largest community organization after NU is renowned for its Progressive Islam manifesto or *Islam Berkemajuan*, which encapsulates the organization's progressive interpretation of Islam. The theory has a non-ritualistic stance, meaning it embraces modernity and believes that advancements in science, technology, democracy, and human rights are all compatible with Islamic principles (Sebastian & Nubowo, 2019).

Meanwhile, NU was first established on January 31, 1926, as a representation to the *Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah* (Aswaja) philosophy (Haris et al., 2023). It is an Indonesian Islamic religious organization founded by Hasyim Asy'ari, who also founded the Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, East Java (Alatas et al., 2022). According to Esposito & Shahin (2013) in the "Oxford Handbook of Islam and Politics" NU has members ranging from 40 million in 2013 to more than 95 million in 2021, making it the largest Islamic organization in the world (Esposito & Shahin, 2013). With their respective roles as the largest community organizations in Indonesia, NU and Muhammadiyah both strive for religious moderation, not only for Muslims but also for all religious communities in Indonesia (2024).

Muhammadiyah, just like NU, has highlighted how Islam in Indonesia has become more moderate than in other parts of the Middle East. Muhammadiyah has always encouraged its adherents to adopt a moderate stance on political pragmatism and to embrace patriotism for the sake of the greater national good rather than joining any particular political party (Nashir et al., 2019).

Both NU and Muhammadiyah play an important role in maintaining tolerance in Indonesia (Upal & Cusack, 2021). NU, which houses the Wahid Foundation, is almost the same as Muhammadiyah, which founded the Maarif Institute as a forum for youth, academics, activists and all elements of the Indonesian nation to maintain peace and harmony (Mahfud et al., 2018).

According to Nubowo (2024), the history of

religious moderation in Indonesia can be traced from the bombing phenomenon at the World Trade Centre (WTC) in 2001, where the world began to have a complex perspective on Islam, including Islam in Indonesia. Since at that time, there were also challenges and controversies related to extremism, radicalization and inter-religious conflict after the end of Soeharto's leadership during the *Orde Baru* or New Order era (2024). In keeping with what Vermonte & Shidiq (2013) said on Indonesia's experience following a severe political and economic crisis in 1998 that signaled an abrupt change from an authoritarian to a democratic government and served as a pivotal point for political reform (Vermonte & Shidiq, 2013).

At that time, after the WTC bombing in 2001, the term "Islam Moderat" was used as part of efforts to combat radicalism, but many conservative Muslim clerics rejected this term because it was considered un-Islamic and tended towards western thought. Until finally in 2006, Azyumardi Azra as Chancellor of the Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta, and Din Syamsuddin as General Chair of Muhammadiyah, and other Muslim scholars change the term "Islam Moderat" into "Islam Wasatiyah (2024)."

Wasatiyyah can be interpreted linguistically as a middle path, not too left to lead to liberalism, nor too right to lead to extremism (*Theology of Wasatiyyah*, 2023). Wasatiyah Islam means the Islam taught by Rasulullah SAW according to the word of Allah in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143: "And so We have made you an upright community so that you may be witnesses over humanity and that the Messenger may be a witness over you."

When the 212-action occurred on December 2, 2016, in Jakarta, at least two million people from all over Indonesia demanded that the former Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), be named a suspect in a case of alleged religious blasphemy. This is the turning point for the term "Islam Wasatiyah" which was then studied by Muslim intellectual scholars and ministers under the instructions of President Joko Widodo and Jusuf Kalla as vice president at that time. This is where NU and

Muhammadiyah increasingly play an important part, "Islam Wasatiyyah" is part of the ideas of these two largest community organizations for peace and tolerance in Indonesia (Syabani, 2021).

Finally, in 2019, the term "moderasi beragama" or "religious moderation" emerged, led by Lukman Hakim Saifuddin as the minister of religious affairs at the time, which was considered to be more effective and appropriate, more embracing of all religions and this does not only apply to Islam but also to all religions in Indonesia (2024).

In short, towards the end of 2023, President Joko Widodo ratified the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 Concerning Strengthening Religious Moderation, which is a guideline and proof that the government is serious about preventing extremism, radicalism and other similar actions that pose a threat to peace and tolerance in Indonesia (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, 2023).

According to this Presidential Regulation, religious moderation is carried out in the form of socialization, advocacy, mentoring, and/or other activities in accordance with the characteristics and culture of the community. Strengthening religious moderation can be interpreted as a religious perspective, attitude, and practice in living together, by embodying the essence of religious teachings and beliefs, which protect human dignity and build public benefit, based on principles of fairness, balance and compliance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as a national agreement. Strengthening religious moderation is not an effort to moderate religion, but rather to moderate understanding and practice of religion and belief (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, 2023).

The term religious moderation does not only exist in the Islamic religion, but also in other religions. If in Islam there is *Wasatiyyah*, in Christianity there is the Golden Mean, in Buddhism there is *Majjhima Patipada*, in Hinduism there is *Madyhamika*, in Confucianism there is *Zhong Yong*, all these terms mean the middle way, not too extreme and not too radical

(Puslitbang, n.d.).

Implementing and measuring the success of strengthening religious moderation is carried out using four indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of tradition. Besides, the education sector is the most effective medium for transferring values and knowledge. Instilling the value of religious moderation for educators, education staff, and students very much determines the realization that the management of educational institutions is non-discriminatory (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, 2023).

Enhancing comprehension of diverse religious customs is the most effective way to mitigate intolerance and prejudice. Similar to how education that encourages moderation in religion may foster pluralism and tolerance (Zuhdi & Sarwenda, 2020). In addition, it is fascinating to examine Islamic religious instruction in schools and even in higher institutions in the context of the growing conversation about character education, religious moderation, and defeating extremism and terrorism (Afrianty, 2012), because religious education provides knowledge, skills, and shapes students' attitudes in practicing religious teachings in all pathways, levels, and types of education (Suprpto, 2020).

B. State Policy on Religious Moderation in Tunisia

Tunisia is a nation in North Africa that shares borders with Algeria to the west, Libya to the east, and the Mediterranean Sea to the north. Its climate, which is characterized as Mediterranean and moderate in the north and desert in the south, spans an area of around 63,000 square miles (Evan Norris, 2020). At 11.9 million, Sunni Muslims make up about 98 percent of Tunisia's overall population in 2021. Less than 1% of the population is made up of Christians, Jews, Shia Muslims, Baha'is, and non-believers (*Tunisia 2021 International Religious Freedom Report*, 2021). Somehow, the Tunisian elite, driven by this "colonial modernity", sees the act of uncovering the head for Muslim women as a representation of Tunisia's desire

to modernize and the veil as something archaic and oppressive (Ghumkhor, 2012).

As far as embracing secularism goes, Tunisia has been called the most aggressive Arab nation. With its most secularized Personal Status Code, it has also restricted the autonomy of religious institutions and the place of religion in society due to its modernization-driven efforts (Shahin, n.d.). Under Habib Bourguiba's direction as the first president, Tunisia followed a secularization campaign from 1956 to 1987. The next secularist government of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, however, fell after the Arab Spring in 2011 (Lakhdhar, n.d.).

As mentioned by Ennaji (2014), the Arab Spring in Tunisia, triggered by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, led to the overthrow of President Ben Ali, inspired similar movements across the Arab world, such as Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, and set the stage for Tunisia's transition to democracy. The Arab Spring had a profound impact on the political landscape of the Middle East and North Africa, but the outcomes varied significantly across different countries, reflecting the unique challenges and dynamics in each nation (Ennaji, 2014).

According to Tamimi (2020), the form of secularism that Tunisia embraced after gaining its independence was distinct from that of the West. There hasn't been a complete or defined separation of politics and religion in Tunisia. The leaders of the nation, Bourguiba and Ben Ali, have not publicly said that they support secularism, which is the idea that religion and the state should be kept apart. They have, meanwhile, consistently emphasized that political Islam and the state must be kept apart. The approved secularism did not uphold the people's long-held beliefs, religious customs, or liberties in a humanist or democratic manner. It frequently violated religious teachings and imposed its beliefs through coercion and physical assault (Tamimi, 2020).

After the Arab Spring Revolution in 2011, Tunisian people gained more freedom to embrace any ideologies or religious groups. Unlike the rule of Bourghiba and Ben Ali, Muslims in Tunisia were granted the freedom

to practice their religions more openly; for instance, there is no restriction for Muslim women in wearing hijabs and they are allowed to work in all agencies (Lakhdhar, n.d.).

Eya (2023) stated that the 2014 adoption of the Tunisian Constitution places a strong emphasis on the defence of individual liberties, such as freedom of conscience and belief. While ensuring everyone's right to freedom of religion and belief, it acknowledges Islam as the official state religion. Ennahda, as an Islamist political party, played a significant role in Tunisian politics (Lakhdhar, n.d.). However, it has also demonstrated a commitment to a more moderate and inclusive form of political Islam. To encourage a more inclusive and moderate understanding of Islam, changes have been made to the educational system. In an effort to combat extremism and advance tolerance, curriculum revisions have been undertaken (Wiseman & Wolhuter, 2013).

As of right now, Tunisia is still overcoming obstacles on its path to democracy and religious moderation. A careful balancing act is required to manage security concerns in a way that respects individual freedoms and promotes inclusivity in society, as is the government's approach to religious moderation (Lakhdhar, n.d.).

The Tunisian government supports its people's participation in international forums and collaborations focused on countering extremism while respecting religious diversity and addressing the global challenges related to religious moderation. As an example, on February 22, 2022, the Faith Communities in Tunisia signed the Coexistence Pact. The agreement demonstrates their unity in variety and offers a novel perspective on their society by recognizing a rising realization of their fundamental unity ("*United in Our Diversity*": *Tunisian Faith Communities Sign Coexistence Pact*, 2022).

According to the Report on International Religious Freedom (2022), like the 2014 Constitution, the 2022 Constitution stipulates that the president must be a Muslim. According to the legislation, mosques are subsidized by the government, which also appoints imams and

provides wages for them. The president appoints the grand mufti, who is tasked with studying and writing about Islam, including providing religious guidance and issuing fatwas, as well as declaring religious holidays, awarding certificates of conversion to Islam, answering citizens' questions, representing the nation at international religious conferences, and offering opinions on school curriculum (2022 *Report on International Religious Freedom: Tunisia*, n.d.). These laws did not come into effect during the secularization period.

Dridi & Dabbabi (2022) in a conversation on religious freedom and its social implications at the Religious Freedom Institute in Washington, D.C. stated that from the initial 1959 constitution of the country's independence to the 2014 revolution constitution to the most recent 2022 constitution proposed by President Kais Saied and approved by popular referendum on July 25, 2022, Tunisia has seen significant changes in its constitutional protections and freedoms. The way the state and religion interact, as well as the preservation of religious freedom and related rights, are some of these developments (Dridi & Dabbabi, 2022).

The term religious moderation in Tunisia is different from the religious moderation that applies in Indonesia, due to differences in political policies, culture, and religious practice in two countries on different continents. Tunisia is promoting religious freedom more than religious moderation, in connection with political traces in the past which are currently still heading in a more democratic direction (Lakhdhar, n.d.).

C. Religious Moderation in the Educational Framework in Indonesia and Tunisia

With its most extensive Muslim population in the world, Indonesia has a distinct experience when it comes to religious education, particularly Islamic education, was instituted even before the nation gained its independence (Zuhdi, 2006). The education system in Indonesia was not well established when the nation declared its independence in 1945. Religiously linked and non-religiously affiliated schools are the two main types of current

educational establishments.

The country's educational authorities chose to implement non-religious-oriented education as the national system after it became clear that the country's political system was secular, in spite of the wishes of a faction of Muslims for it to be based on religion. Consequently, the religious schools continued to operate independently of the government and were kept outside of the system. But that does not imply that the government ignored these educational institutions (Zuhdi, 2006). The Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) was in charge of these schools' oversight because of their religious focus. In fact, the government had an impact on the modernization of curricula following independence. Since the turnover of national education leaders, which has a significant impact on the execution of national education policies (Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2020).

The educational policies and curriculum are intimately linked. It is a collection of lesson plans that must be prepared in a dynamic manner to accommodate community requirements and changes (Wahyudin & Suwirta, 2020). Curriculum is seen as a political process from the other viewpoint. Many factors from numerous stakeholders substantially influence it. When a public policy is implemented through the establishment of rules and regulations, it usually refers to both executive and legislative regulations pertaining to the curriculum (Komara, 2017).

In connection with religious moderation programs that have been established and approved by the President in a Presidential Regulation (Kementerian Sekretariat Negara, 2023), materials that teach religious moderation are contained in the Merdeka Curriculum, the latest curriculum that provides freedom for educators to create quality learning that suits students' needs and learning environment (Rahayu et al., 2022).

The implementation of this material on religious moderation was not only applied in Islamic religious studies but also in other religions. For instance, in a school where the majority of students are Hindu, teachers at SDN Saraswati 6 Denpasar are used to implementing

religious moderation by inviting students to take part in ceremonies, both national and traditional, as well as providing religious counselling for their students in order to foster the harmony among students (Darma, 2023).

In the meantime, Tunisia has been juggling modern educational ideas with religious conservatism in a precarious balance (Fahlvik & Wittrock, n.d.). One of the most important ways to promote a peaceful society that honours diversity and core values is to incorporate religious moderation into the educational system.

Since the beginning of independence, the Tunisian state has paid close attention education as stated by Musholihin (2017). Movements always beginning with the anxiety of knowledge. From the founding of *Shadaqiyah*, *Khaldûniyah*, and Ibn Ashur's book which examines what Islamic education should be like reformed.

Ibn Ashur was a renowned Islamic scholar who studied under reform-minded professors in the field of classical Islamic scholarship (Gunaryo et al., 2021). In 1932 he was appointed judge and later *Shaykh al-Islâm*. He was a writer and novelist who wrote about the need to modernize Islamic law and education. Most notably, he is known for *al-Tahrir wa'l-Tanwir*, an exegesis of the Qur'an (Gunaryo et al., 2021).

The great attention paid to education by the Tunisian government has resulted in low tuition fees at all state universities (be it science majors, or religious studies) so that education is a societal need and affordable for Tunisian citizens (Musholihin, 2017).

As mentioned above, religious freedom is more regulated than religious moderation in Tunisia. One proof of this is the reopening of lectures on the Az-Zaituna University which had been closed for a long time during the secularization period (*Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2012). Az-Zaituna University is a public university located in Tunis, Tunisia, and is considered the oldest university in the world. Founded at the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 8th century, the Az-Zaituna Mosque served as the university's original location and grew to become a significant Islamic educational

hub in North Africa. A part from that, there is also the Centre of Islamic Studies, a research facility located in Kairouan, is comprised of the Higher Institute of Theology and the Higher Institute of Islamic Civilization located in Tunis (Hamdi, 2001).

Conclusion

The government's policies regarding religious moderation in Indonesia is mentioned in the Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 58 of 2023 concerning Strengthening Religious Moderation. The regulation also states that education is the most effective medium for conveying the essence of religious moderation, and teachers play an important role in implementing the material.

Religious moderation in Indonesia applies to all religions adhered to by its population. Since other religions also use the term "religious moderation," not just the Islamic one, If Islam has *Wasatiyyah*, Christianity has the Golden Mean, Buddhism has *Majjhima Patipada*, Hinduism has *Madyhamika*, and Confucianism has *Zhong Yong*, then these concepts all refer to the middle path, which is neither too radical nor too extreme.

Since the two nations are on separate continents and have different political systems, cultures, and religious practices, the term "religious moderation" has different meanings in Tunisia and Indonesia. In keeping with historical political tendencies that are still moving toward more democracy, Tunisia is advocating for religious freedom over religious moderation. The reopening of lectures at Az-Zaituna University, which is the oldest campus in the world in the center of Tunis city, is proof of religious freedom in Tunisia after the era of secularization.

In its curriculum, Indonesia included some materials on religious moderation. Unlike the state policies in Tunisia, which organize conferences and forums pertaining to this topic rather than creating a specialized curriculum for religious moderation in the educational realm.

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