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## Comparative Study of Translations of Verses on Moderation by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib

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### Abstract

*This study aims to compare the approaches to translating verses of moderation in the Qur'an by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib, as well as to analyse their theological and ideological implications. Using a literature review and qualitative comparative analysis method, data was collected from the tafsir works of both scholars and examined in depth. The results show that Mahmud Yunus translates ummatan wasathan as the middle nation in a normative-traditional manner, while Muhammad Thalib chooses the just nation with a contextual-linguistic approach. This difference reflects the ideological content and da'wah orientation of each figure. These findings contribute significantly to the study of interpretation and religious moderation, highlighting the importance of contextual understanding in the interpretation of verses on moderation to strengthen social harmony and tolerance in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Quranic Exegesis; Interpretation of Islam; Religious Moderation; Translation of moderation verses; Concept of Wasathiyah; Comparative study of Quranic interpretation.*

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### Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan membandingkan pendekatan penerjemahan ayat-ayat moderasi dalam Al-Qur'an oleh Mahmud Yunus dan Muhammad Thalib, serta menganalisis implikasi teologis dan ideologisnya. Menggunakan metode studi pustaka dan analisis komparatif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari karya tafsir kedua ulama tersebut dan dikaji secara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Mahmud Yunus menerjemahkan ummatan wasathan sebagai umat pertengahan secara normatif-tradisional, sedangkan Muhammad Thalib memilih "umat yang adil" dengan pendekatan kontekstual-linguistik. Perbedaan ini mencerminkan muatan ideologis dan orientasi dakwah masing-masing tokoh. Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan terhadap studi tafsir dan moderasi beragama, menyoroti pentingnya pemahaman kontekstual dalam interpretasi ayat-ayat moderasi untuk memperkuat harmoni sosial dan toleransi di Indonesia.*

**Kata Kunci:** *Qur'anic exegesis; Religious interpretation; Religious moderation; Translation of verses on moderation; Concept of wasathiyah; Comparative exegesis studies*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the Indonesian context, the concept of religious moderation is crucial for maintaining social harmony amid a pluralistic society. This diversity not only enriches the national cultural heritage, but also reflects the ever-evolving social dynamics amid the challenges of modernisation and globalisation. The discourse on religious moderation in Indonesia has long been a concern for state elements and intellectuals, with its application considered a solution for maintaining harmony (Fatihatushshofwa et al., 2023). This concept is rooted in the principles of justice, balance, and tolerance that are essential in Islam, as embodied in the idea of *wasathiyah* (Rahmadani et al., 2024).

In Indonesia itself, there are six official religions practised by the community. Even outside of the official religions, there are many different teachings or sects practised by various communities or organisations in different regions. The level of diversity in this nation is so strong that anything related to religious activities is very sensitive and can trigger conflict if not managed properly (Kurniawati, 2023). However, although this diversity is a source of wealth, challenges often arise in the form of resistance to religious pluralism, such as the rejection of the construction of non-Muslim places of worship in some areas,



which shows that the understanding and implementation of religious moderation still needs to be strengthened (Pratama et al., 2024).

Ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious differences in Indonesia are often the cause of conflict. These conflicts usually arise because certain groups or organisations believe that they are the most righteous and consider other groups to be misguided, which then has the potential to trigger acts of violence in the name of religion (Irawan & Ruswanto, 2024). This also shows that Indonesian society still often has negative preconceptions about different groups and does not appreciate diversity as a gift from God (Palili & Fatimah, 2025). Therefore, religious leaders who are role models for society need to understand the importance of cultural diversity. They need to equip themselves with knowledge about differences, be aware of discrimination or racism, and learn to be fair to all groups. With this understanding, religious leaders will be better prepared to deal with differences in a wise and peaceful manner, thereby becoming effective agents of moderation in a pluralistic society (Anzaikhan et al., 2023).

The book *Tafsir Qur'an Karim* by Mahmud Yunus is one of the pioneers in Indonesian-language tafsir works that is widely used by Malay speakers because of its use of Latin script in the translation and interpretation of the Qur'an. On the other hand, Muhammad Thalib is also known for his significant works in interpreting the verses of the Qur'an, particularly those related to contemporary issues, including religious moderation. Therefore, it is important to conduct a comparative study of these two interpretations in order to understand how they interpret verses on moderation and their relevance in the multicultural context of Indonesia (Zakiyah et al., 2023; Mubarok & Yusuf, 2024).

Moderation in Arabic comes from the word *wasatha*, which means middle ground, fair, balanced, and can also be interpreted as good (Zakiyah et al., 2023). Yunus (2010, p. 253) in the Arabic-Indonesian Dictionary, the root word appears as *al-wasith*. In QS. al-Baqarah: 143, *wasathan* means fair, in QS. al-Baqarah 238 *wustha* means the best and middle ground, in QS. al-Qalam: 28 it means the fairest, ideal, best and knowledgeable (Peterson, 2005, p. 235; Arikarani et al., 2024). The concept of religious moderation itself generally refers to religious expression that prioritises balance between belief, morality, and action, as well as providing space for the beliefs of others.

The Holy Qur'an: An Exegetical Translation by Muhammad Thalib presents a translation of the Qur'an that is not only linguistically accurate, but also rich in context and meaning. The interpretation method used in this work prioritises an exegetical approach that emphasises a comprehensive understanding of the verses of the Qur'an, thereby capturing the essence of religious moderation in depth (Afwadzi, 2022). This comparative study will analyse how the two exegetes construct the meaning of moderation from the verses of the Qur'an, as well as the methodological implications of their interpretive approaches to understanding the concept of *wasathiyah* (Arikarani et al., 2024).

Lili Herawati Siregar (2021) 's research "*Religious Moderation in the Qur'an: The Thoughts of M. Quraish Shihab in the Book Wasathiyah: An Islamic Perspective on Religious Moderation*". This research discusses religious moderation in the book *Wasathiyah: An Islamic Perspective on Religious Moderation* by M. Quraish Shihab. Lili's research only refers to the opinion of one figure, namely M. Quraish Shihab, and the interpretation of verses on moderation, whereas this research refers to the opinions of two figures by comparing the translations of verses on moderation by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib. In addition the research Saleh (2022) on "*Interpretation of Islamic Moderation Verses According to Muchlis M. Hanafi (Study of the Book Moderasi Islam Menangkal Radikalisasi Berbasis Agama)*." It explains the verses of the Qur'an used by M. Hanafi in Islamic moderation as well as M. Hanafi's perspective in understanding Islamic moderation. The similarity between this

study and previous studies lies in the type of research, namely library research, which is a study that uses data or written materials related to the theme of the problem being studied. The difference is that previous research only referred to one figure, namely M. Hanafi and his thoughts, while this research refers to two figures, namely Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib, with their respective translations of the Qur'an that discuss verses on moderation.

The comparative study in this research does not intend to compare the quality of the translations or the translators, but rather to explore more deeply the scientific treasures hidden in the two translated books, especially those related to modernisation and tolerance. This paper attempts to analyse the concept of *wasathiyah* in the Qur'an from the perspective of exegesis, to find important points that can minimise misunderstandings and intolerant attitudes that are prone to occur in certain areas due to the community's lack of understanding of the true meaning of *wasathiyah*. The academic significance of this discussion will be particularly felt at this time, when we look at the positive effects of a moderate attitude in creating a tolerant, harmonious and peace-loving society.

## METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach using the literature review method (Maleong, 2007). This method involves collecting textual data from the interpretive works of the two scholars, then analysing them in depth to identify patterns, differences, and similarities in the interpretation of the concept of religious moderation (Fatihatushhofwa et al., 2023). This descriptive qualitative approach is also relevant in analysing political ethical values and the concept of religious moderation, as used in other studies to address contemporary issues (Abdillah, 2024). Qualitative research with literature studies allows for in-depth exploration of relevant literature, such as journals and books, to understand the concept of Islamic education in strengthening religious moderation (Arikarani et al., 2024). The author collected as much literature data related to the research theme as possible, both primary and secondary. The primary data in this study included translations of the Qur'an and interpretations by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib, while the secondary data included various literature discussing religious moderation, interpretations of the Qur'an, and related comparative studies. In analysing the data, the researcher used content analysis and qualitative review. The researcher used a qualitative approach with a comparative text analysis method to understand how Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib translated verses on religious moderation in the Qur'an. Then, the researcher used a deductive method, which is a way of thinking to obtain a truth from various general thoughts, drawn from specific conclusions. This approach allows the researcher to identify the characteristics and nuances of the interpretation of moderation offered by each translator, as well as its implications for the understanding of contemporary Islam (Saumantri & Hajam, 2023).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Biographies of Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib.

Mahmud Yunus was born in 1899. His contributions include the development of the madrasah curriculum and monumental works such as the first Indonesian-language interpretation of the Qur'an, which became an important reference for Muslims in the archipelago (Ajmain et al., 2020; Bakar, 2012). His works reflect his intellectual wealth and commitment to spreading a moderate and contextual understanding of Islam, particularly through translations of verses on moderation that are relevant to the conditions of Indonesian society. His works, especially his translation of the Qur'an, have provided a strong foundation for the internalisation of religious moderation in the world of Islamic



education in Indonesia, shaping students' characters to be open to development and diversity (Bahar, 2022; Arikarani et al., 2024).

Mahmud Yunus interprets the Holy Qur'an using the *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* style and the *tafsir ilmi* style. The *al-adabi al-ijtima'i* style emphasises the literary aspects and socio-cultural context of the verses of the Qur'an, while the *tafsir ilmi* style integrates modern scientific discoveries to enrich the understanding of the sacred text (Dalip, 2020; Sukma et al., 2025). The scientific style of interpretation used by Yunus not only reflects his openness to modern science, but also his efforts to present the relevance of the Qur'an to the development of the times (Zakiyah et al., 2023). The method used is the *ijmali* method, a method of writing Qur'anic interpretation that only interprets the main points of the verses. From one verse to another, there are approximately 1 to 3 verses that are interpreted (Fahrudin, 2014; Irawan & Ruswanto, 2024). This approach allows readers to quickly understand the basic meaning of the verses without losing the depth of the substance, while facilitating the integration of interpretation into the educational context.

Mahmud Yunus, as a reference source in writing his interpretation, it can be concluded that he used seven sources of interpretation, including: First. First, the exegesis of the Qur'an with the Qur'an is done by interpreting one verse using another verse so that they explain each other. For example, in the interpretation of Surah al-Anfal verse 21, which explains the condition of Muslims, namely that they hear but do not actually hear, therefore they are afflicted with various trials. Then this verse is interpreted with al-Anfal verse 25: "*Fear the trials that do not befall only sinners, but befall all of you*" (Yunus, 2010, p. 49). Second, interpretation is carried out using *authentic* hadith and does not refer to *weak* or *fabricated* hadith. For example, in Mahmud Yunus' interpretation of Surah at-Taubah verse 31 about elevating scholars and priests to the status of God, Mahmud Yunus interprets this verse with a hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW which reads: "*That my people will follow the ways of the people of old (the Jews and Christians). This is because, in the present day, there are many people who elevate their scholars to the status of God. Among them are those who submit and follow their teachers regarding the ruling on a matter, even though that ruling contradicts the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet*" (Yunus, 2010, p. 266) . Third. Interpretation is carried out using the words of the companions to explain the reasons for the revelation of the verses of the Qur'an. One example is found in the interpretation of Surah an-Nisa verse 71 regarding how to deal with enemies in war. In his explanation, Mahmud Yunus quotes Abu Bakar, who said, "*Fight your enemies with weapons similar to those they use to fight you, sword against sword, spear against spear*". Fifth, interpretation using general Arabic language for experts in Arabic linguistics. Sixth, interpretation through *ijtihad* for experts in *ijtihad*. Seventh, interpretation through rational interpretation for the *Mu'tazilah*.

Furthermore, it is important to understand the intellectual and social background of Muhammad Thalib, who also contributed to the discourse on religious moderation, although perhaps with a different approach from Mahmud Yunus. His full name is Muhammad ibn Abdullah ibn Thalib al-Hamdani al-Yamani. Muhammad Thalib was born in Banjaran Village, Gresik Regency, East Java, on 30 November 1948. Muhammad Thalib grew up and developed in the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding school environment. In 1954, he attended primary school at the State Elementary School in Karangandong. As a teenager, in 1962, Thalib continued his education at an Islamic boarding school in Bangil, (& Aminuddin, 2019). Muhammad Thalib was known as a critical, ambitious, and difficult young teacher during his time at the Persis Islamic boarding school in Bangil. Nevertheless, he was a special student of Abdul Qadir Hassan, the head of the local Islamic boarding school (Thalib, 2007).

Muhammad Thalib is known as a Muslim scholar who has a keen interest in interpreting the Qur'an and developing Islamic thought, with a focus on preserving the purity of religious teachings and their relevance amid modern challenges. Through a critical and contextual approach to interpretation, Thalib seeks to present an understanding of the Qur'an that is in line with the values of moderation, emphasising the importance of balance between sacred texts and social reality (Afwadzi, 2022). Muhammad Thalib began his career as a lecturer at the Faculty of Sharia and Tarbiyah at UII Yogyakarta. In addition, he also became an assistant to Professor Kahar Mudzakir at the same alma mater. His struggles with Kahar Mudzakir gave Thalib many opportunities to learn about politics and state administration informally (Thalib, 2007, p. 247). This experience helped shape Thalib's views, which later interacted with various Islamic thoughts and da'wah movements, especially those oriented towards the purification of faith and *sharia* (Gusmian, 2015). Amidst such busyness, Thalib remained consistent in writing articles and books as well as translating Arabic works, such as *Fiqh al-Sunnah* and *Tafsir al-Marāghī* (Fadil, 2016). His dedication to the world of literature and da'wah is evident in the more than 500 papers and 240 books he has written, often addressing social, family, and practical worship themes. In 1989, Thalib was appointed as a Non-Permanent Member of Rabitah A'lam Islami, based in Mecca. Thalib also actively wrote Qur'anic interpretations for the "*Khazanah Islam/Qur'an Sunnah*" column in *Risalah Mujahidin* magazine, which was in line with the spirit of MMI. Muhammad Thalib received direct guidance from Habib Abdul Qadir Bilfaqih, a leading hadith scholar and leader of the Darul al-Hadits al-Fiqhiyah Islamic boarding school, who also shaped the religious thinking of Quraish Shihab (Suwandi, 2022). The relationship between Thalib and Bilfaqih indicates a strong transmission of knowledge in the fields of hadith and fiqh, which also influenced the moderation orientation of contemporary figures (Husti, 2017). Thalib's encounter with the discourse of interpretation had actually been familiar to him since he studied under Mukhtar Yahya, Professor at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. In addition, Thalib's interaction with the practice of Qur'anic interpretation can also be seen from a number of attempts to translate classical tafsir products into Indonesian, as discussed earlier. According to Yahya, the pinnacle of Thalib's achievements in his struggle with the world of Qur'anic interpretation was the publication of *Al-Qur'an al-Karim: Tarjamah Tafsiriyah, Memahami Makna al-Qur'an Lebih Mudah dan Cepat* (The Holy Qur'an: Interpretive Translation, Understanding the Meaning of the Qur'an More Easily and Quickly), which is the pride of his followers (Yahya, 2012).

### **Analysis of the Translation of Verses on Moderation According to Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib.**

The author will conduct a comparative analysis of the two scholars' approaches to interpreting verses on moderation, highlighting the similarities and differences in their methodologies and theological implications. Some of the verses of the Qur'an that will be analysed include: Q.S. Al-Baqarah [2] 143; QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256; QS. Yunus [10]: 99; QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125; QS. Al-Kafirun [109]: 6. This comparative approach will identify how the socio-historical context and scientific background of each figure influenced their interpretation of the concept of moderation in Islam (Lukman, 2022). This study will also explore how both translations and interpretations reflect the dynamics of Islamic thought in Indonesia and its contribution to the global discourse on moderation (Nofitayanti & Supriadi, 2025; Irawan & Ruswanto, 2024).

1. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 143 Mahmud Yunus provides the meaning, "*Thus We have made you a middle nation, so that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger may be a witness over you. We did not make your former qiblah except to distinguish those who follow the Messenger from those who return to disbelief. Indeed, that is very difficult, except for those whom*



*Allah has guided. Allah does not waste your faith. Truly, Allah is Merciful and Compassionate to mankind." Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib translates the same verse as: "Such is the decree of Allah. O believers, We have made you a just nation, so that you may be witnesses to other people, and the Messenger of Allah may be a witness to you in the Hereafter. We made the Qiblah of Baitul Maqdis, which you faced before, only to test who would continue to follow the Messenger and who would reject him. The change of the Qiblah is a very difficult matter, except for those whom We have guided to faith and Islam. Allah has not at all nullified the reward of your previous prayers. Verily, Allah is Most Merciful and Most Compassionate to all humanity."*

Both figures give the meaning of "moderate" or "middle ground" to the phrase "ummata wasathan", in line with the interpretation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which defines moderation as a balance between worldly life and the hereafter. This is also in line with the meaning of "ummata wasathan" as the essence of moderation, where Allah makes Muslims an example of justice and the best choice for all mankind (Rahmasari, 2022; Rahmadi et al., 2023). The concept of wasathiyah in this verse signifies the position of Muslims as an exemplary community with characteristics of justice, balance, and consistency in upholding values of goodness (Rahmadi et al., 2023). This interpretation is in line with the views of many scholars, including Quraish Shihab, who interpret "ummata wasathan" as a community that is in the middle, moderate, and a role model for humanity (Rahmadi et al., 2023). Furthermore, wasathiyah as an attitude of honesty and balance in responding to religious teachings also means that Muslims must provide space for tolerance towards other religions, as interpreted by several contemporary scholars (Arikarani et al., 2024).

2. QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 256 Mahmud Yunus gives the meaning *"There is no compulsion in religion, for the right course has become clear from error. Whoever disbelieves in false gods and believes in Allah has grasped the firmest handle, which will never break. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing."* Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib translates this verse as, *"No one should be forced to enter Islam. Islam is clearly distinct from other religions. Whoever abandons polytheistic beliefs and practices, then believes in Allah, has truly followed a religion with strong arguments. Its arguments cannot be refuted. Allah is All-Hearing of your discussions about the true and false religions. Allah is All-Knowing of your intentions to follow Islam."*

Both interpretations emphasise the fundamental principle in Islam that there is no compulsion in religion, stressing the distinction between truth and error (Najib & Firmansyah, 2023). This principle affirms individual autonomy in choosing one's beliefs, a crucial aspect of the concept of religious moderation that promotes peaceful coexistence among religious communities (Arikarani et al., 2024). This interpretation is in line with the view that "ummata wasathan" does not only refer to a geographical middle position, but also to justice and moral excellence, making Muslims a reference for humanity (Hidayat et al., 2023). Both also emphasise that the clarity of Islamic teachings on monotheism (tauhid) and the rejection of polytheism is the foundation for a firm choice of faith, unshaken by doubt or coercion (Izzan, 2021). This is further reinforced by the understanding that religious moderation requires Muslims to be witnesses of truth and justice for all humanity, as summarised in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143 (Gunawan et al., 2021; Munandar & Amin, 2023). This statement reflects the essence of religious tolerance, which is an integral part of moderation, where respect for other beliefs is a basic principle (Sopandi & Taofan, 2019; Bransika et al., 2025).

3. QS. Yunus [10]: 99 Mahmud Yunus gives the meaning, *"If your Lord had willed, all the people on earth would have believed. Can you force people to believe?"* Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib translates the same verse as: *"O Muhammad, if your Lord had willed, all the people on earth would have believed. Therefore, is it right for you to force all people to believe in you?"*

The interpretations of these two scholars emphasise that faith is a matter of the heart that cannot be forced, in line with the principles of religious tolerance and the absence of coercion in adopting a belief (Abror, 2020; Rokhmad, 2012). This verse underlines the importance of freedom of belief as an integral part of Islam, where each individual has the autonomy to choose their beliefs without external pressure (Hafidzi, 2019). This confirms that da'wah efforts should be carried out by conveying the truth persuasively and providing enlightening explanations, not by coercion, in line with Islamic *da'wah* ethics which emphasise individual freedom in determining one's choice of faith (Najib & Firmansyah, 2023; Sidik, 2023). Both emphasise that interactions between religious communities must be based on the principles of equality, mutual assistance in goodness, and respect for religious freedom in order to foster a spirit of togetherness and friendship (Saihu, 2022). This principle is in line with the teachings of the Medina Charter, which proves the early commitment of Muslims to live peacefully alongside the Jewish community, providing protection and freedom of worship (Zohdi & Fahrurrozi, 2018).

4. QS. An-Nahl [16]: 125, Mahmud Yunus provides the meaning "*Invite (people) to the path (religion) of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching, and argue (debate) with them in the best way. Indeed, your Lord knows best those who have strayed from His path, and He knows best those who are guided.*" Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib translates the same verse as: "*O Muhammad, call people to Islam, the religion of your Lord, with strong arguments and good advice. Verily, your Lord is All-Knowing of those who deviate from His religion, and Allah is All-Knowing of those who receive guidance.*"

Both interpretations consistently emphasise a wise and persuasive method of preaching, rather than coercion, in line with the values of tolerance and religious freedom taught in Islam (Kurdi, 2018; Hasan, 2018). This message is in line with Surah Al-Anfal verse 61, which advocates peace as a way out of conflict and indicates that Islam is a religion that promotes harmony and prosperity. In fact, the Prophet Muhammad SAW also emphasised the importance of feeding the poor and creating social welfare, showing that the main mission of Muslims is to bring goodness to all of humanity (Fuad, 2014). This moderate approach to preaching is also in line with the Prophet's recommendation to free slaves, which demonstrates Islam's commitment to liberation and human dignity since the beginning of its civilisation (Zohdi & Fahrurrozi, 2018). This is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an, which never commanded the Prophet Muhammad SAW to force the Quraish to convert to Islam, even when Islam had political power in Medina (Kurdi, 2018).

This attitude became an important foundation in the Medina Charter, where Muslims lived side by side with the Jewish community, providing protection and freedom of religion, even when some of them responded with betrayal (Zohdi & Fahrurrozi, 2018; Rosa, 2014). Nevertheless, the principles of tolerance and freedom of religion remain fundamental pillars of Islam, as emphasised in various verses of the Qur'an and the implementation of the Prophet Muhammad's da'wah (Azhar, 2017; Maulina, 2021). In the context of da'wah, preachers are expected to focus on guiding and educating the people with a gentle approach, avoiding insults or curses against other religions, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (Huda & Luthfiah, 2019).

5. QS. Al-Kafirun [109]: 6 Mahmud Yunus gives the meaning "*For you is your religion, and for me is my religion*". Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib translates this verse as, "*For you is your polytheistic religion, and for me is my monotheistic religion*".

Both translations, despite their different nuances, fundamentally affirm the principle of religious freedom and the rejection of coercion of belief, reflecting that every individual has the right to choose their religion without intimidation. In addition, Mahmud Yunus reflects the principles of tolerance and recognition of the existence of other religions, albeit



with different emphases on theological aspects (Jamilah, 2023). Yunus' translation highlights peaceful coexistence between religious communities, while Thalib's translation emphasises the fundamental differences between Islamic monotheism and the polytheistic practices of other religions, while still recognising autonomy in belief (Waskito & Rohman, 2018). Both views are in line with Surah Al-Kafirun verse 6, which affirms that every individual has the freedom to choose their spiritual path without coercion, and supports mutual respect among religious adherents. This verse, in particular, is the theological basis for religious pluralism, strongly rejecting attempts at syncretism or compromise of faith (Hafidzi, 2019). The implication of this verse, and the consistency of the two scholars' translations, is an affirmation of the principle of "*lakum dinukum wa liya din*", which fundamentally separates the sphere of personal belief from the social sphere, allowing peaceful coexistence amid doctrinal differences (Amin et al., 2020). Furthermore, this principle reinforces that da'wah efforts should not lead to ostracism or hostility towards non-Muslims, but should be directed towards an inclusive and transformative religious paradigm (Syarifuddin & Arifin, 2016). Quraish Shihab's view supports this interpretation, stating that although Islam does not impose beliefs, da'wah must be conveyed without coercion and acknowledge the existence of other religions (Kurnia et al., 2023). Similarly, Hamka also argues that Al-Kafirun provides clear guidance on the boundaries in theology, where differences in belief cannot be compromised (Anam & Ghozali, 2022). However, this non-compromising stance on faith does not necessarily negate tolerance in social and humanitarian interactions, but rather affirms clear boundaries between fundamental beliefs and *muamalah* practices (Jamilah, 2023; Munandar & Amin, 2023). This principle emphasises that religious freedom is highly valued in Islam, so that coercion in belief is not justified, even though it acknowledges the difference in status between believers and non-believers (Surahman et al., 2022).

### **Analysis of the Translation of Verses on Moderation According to Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib.**

This study comparatively examines the translation approaches used by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib towards verses of the Qur'an that contain values of moderation, analysing the methodological differences and similarities as well as the theological implications of their lexical and syntactic choices. The following is an analysis of the similarities and differences in the translations of verses on moderation by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib:

#### **1. Upholding the Spirit of Moderation (*Wasathiyah*).**

Both figures are consistent in their translations in interpreting verses that promote the middle path and balance in religion, avoiding extremism in both dogma and social practice (Akhsan & Darmawan, 2023; Sakhok, 2016). They are committed to presenting values of moderation in translating verses from the Qur'an. Although their approaches differ, both Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib present Islam as a balanced religion that upholds justice.

This is in line with the concept of *tawassuth*, which emphasises a moderate attitude, neither too strict nor too lax in religion. This approach reflects the understanding of Islam as a religion that always strives to create balance in all aspects of life, both spiritual and social (Arikarani et al., 2024). Their interpretation of verses on moderation does not only focus on linguistic meaning, but also integrates social context and Islamic ethics to form a comprehensive understanding of the principles of moderation.

## 2. Using Communicative Indonesian

Both provide translations in Indonesian that are understandable to the general reader. The style of language used is designed to reach Muslims in Indonesia, especially those who do not speak Arabic. The choice of diction and sentence structure tends to be simple but still maintains theological depth, allowing the message of moderation to be conveyed effectively to a wide audience (Fatihatushshofwa et al., 2023).

In addition, the selection of words that are familiar to Indonesian culture contributes to better acceptance and understanding of the messages of the Qur'an, so that the relevance of moderation in everyday life can be more deeply felt (Nadia, 2023). Mahmud Yunus, in particular, is known for his tendency to translate with an emphasis on lexical and semantic meaning in accordance with the development of the language used when the Qur'an was revealed (Nadia, 2023). Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib prioritises interpretative translation to communicate the meaning of the Qur'an more clearly and contextually to readers. This difference in approach marks a spectrum of interpretations in the effort to present a message of moderation to Indonesian audiences, with Yunus leaning more towards historical literalism and Thalib towards contemporary contextualisation. Nevertheless, both remain committed to conveying a message of moderation, even though the translation approaches they have chosen have different nuances.

## 3. Translating *Wasath* as the Middle Way or Fairness

In QS. al-Baqarah[2]: 143, both Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib place the term "*ummatan wasathan*" as a description of the ideal community. Although using different terms (middle ground and fair), both interpret Muslims as a group that is not extreme. Mahmud Yunus translates "*ummatan wasathan*" as the best and fairest chosen community, while Muhammad Thalib tends to interpret it as a moderate position that rejects all forms of violence and extremism, adhering to the principle of social justice (Rahmadi et al., 2023). Although both agree that "*wasath*" refers to the principles of balance, neutrality, and justice, Mahmud Yunus tends to emphasise the legal and social implications of this concept, while Muhammad Thalib highlights its ethical and spiritual dimensions (Syauqani & Zulyadain, 2023; Rahmadi et al., 2023).

The importance of this moderate stance is also emphasised by Al-Jaziri, who associates "*wasath*" with fair behaviour in the context of conflict management, underlining the urgency of preventing radical thinking (Royani et al., 2025). This moderate attitude not only encompasses balance in religion, but is also a middle ground between two extremes of thought, such as Qadariyyah and Jabariyyah, as well as between Salafi Sufism and philosophical Sufism (Arikarani et al., 2024). The concept of *wasatiyyah* emphasises that Muslims are a just and chosen people, who do not lean to the left or right, are able to accept differences rationally, and are open to scientific developments that are in line with Islamic values.

## 4. Emphasising the Social Value of Moderation

In further explanation, both Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib convey that moderation is not only theological in meaning, but also has an impact on social relations and the collective responsibility of the ummah towards justice and truth in society. This is in line with the views of classical and contemporary exegetes who interpret *wasathiyah* as fair and balanced, where Muslims act as witnesses of justice among various communities (Achmad & Jannah, 2022). This concept also refers to the best and most just community, which always seeks a middle ground in resolving issues, even when faced with differences among fellow religious communities (Almu'tasim, 2019). Similarly, epistemologically, *wasathiyah* encompasses a position between two extremes, describing



a balanced society that does not lean towards excessive materialism or spiritualism (Budi & Yulianti, 2023).

These two figures also have differences in their approach to translating verses on moderation, including:

1. Differences in Translation Approaches. Mahmud Yunus is known for tending to use a literal or word-for-word translation method, which prioritises the accuracy of the original Arabic meaning, while Muhammad Thalib adopts a more interpretative approach, which involves contextual interpretation to clarify the message of the Qur'an for modern readers. This approach allows Thalib to be more flexible in integrating the relevance of verses on moderation with the contemporary challenges faced by Muslims (Abidin & Aziz, 2018). Yunus maintains a strong historical and linguistic nuance, while Thalib seeks to bridge the meaning of the text with the social and cultural realities of the reader (Putri & Fadlullah, 2022). Thus, these differing approaches reflect the dynamics of Qur'anic translation, which seeks to balance fidelity to the original text with the need for contemporary understanding (Ihsan, 2023).
2. Differences in Exegesis Styles. Mahmud Yunus is known for his "linguistic" style of interpretation, which emphasises the linguistic and grammatical aspects of the Qur'an, while Muhammad Thalib tends to favour an "ijtimai adabi" style of interpretation, which is more oriented towards the social, literary, and contextual dimensions of the verses of moderation (Yunika & Rosalia, 2025). This ijtimai adabi style allows Thalib to present moderation as a solution to social and ethical problems in society (Prastyo & Fikra, 2022), unlike Yunus, who focuses more on linguistic accuracy.
3. Differences in Communication Objectives. Mahmud Yunus prioritises educational objectives to equip readers with a basic literal understanding of the Qur'an, while Muhammad Thalib is more oriented towards transformative objectives, encouraging the application of moderate values in social life to achieve social justice (Asroor, 2019). This difference in orientation shows that Thalib not only wants readers to understand the meaning of moderation, but also to actively internalise and implement these values in their daily lives in order to overcome social problems (Afwadzi, 2022). However, there are no significant differences between the literal translation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the interpretive translation by Muhammad Thalib; the differences only lie in the emphasis of each translation.
4. Differences in the Choice of Diction that Contain Ideological Consequences. In this aspect, Yunus tends to choose more traditional diction that is in line with classical understanding, while Thalib does not hesitate to use more progressive words that are relevant to the discourse of contemporary Islamic moderation, as seen in his translation efforts that are closer to interpretive translation (Adib, 2018). These different choices of diction reflect the ideological biases of each translator in constructing the meaning of moderation in the Qur'an, where Thalib explicitly advocates the deradicalisation of the understanding of the Qur'an, which was previously considered biased by some circles (Fadil, 2016). Therefore, this comparative study identifies how these ideological biases influence each translator's interpretation of verses on moderation, resulting in different nuances of understanding that are still rooted in the spirit of Islamic moderation. These differences, although seemingly substantive, often lie only in additional wording that does not fundamentally change the core message of moderation in the Qur'an (Adib, 2018).
5. Differences in Target Audience. Mahmud Yunus targets a broader audience, including students and the general public with limited religious education, through straightforward and easy to understand translations, while Muhammad Thalib targets Muslim scholars and social activists who need a deep understanding of the relevance of moderation in

dealing with contemporary issues. These differences in audience shape the style and depth of their explanations of moderation, with Yunus emphasising accessibility and Thalib focusing on more complex interpretative nuances. The difference in target readers also has an impact on the selection of references and the depth of the arguments presented by the two. However, a comparison between the Ministry of Religious Affairs' translation and Muhammad Thalib's work shows that the difference in the interpretation of jihad tends to be more explicitly emphasised in Thalib's work.

Differences in Emphasis on Social and Historical Context. Yunus tends to limit himself to the context of the descent of verses of moderation directly, while Thalib more extensively links these verses to socio-political developments and contemporary challenges facing Muslims (Fadil, 2016). Thalib's approach allows for the elaboration of moderation as an adaptive strategy in dealing with vulnerabilities that may arise from a lack of centralised leadership in Muslim groups, an issue that often causes friction. This indicates that Thalib is more inclined to apply the spirit of moderation to overcome actual problems, such as intolerant views and the spread of teachings that contradict the values of diversity, which are often exacerbated by a limited understanding of true religion among the community (Arikarani et al., 2024). The Ministry of Religious Affairs itself plays a role in providing translations of the Qur'an that are used as the main reference by Muslims in Indonesia, emphasising the importance of moderate interpretation in understanding the sacred text.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the translation of Qur'anic verses on moderation by Mahmud Yunus and Muhammad Thalib reflects the different approaches and backgrounds of each exegete. Mahmud Yunus emphasises a more normative-traditional approach, which is reflected in his choice of diction that tends to be literal and conservative, such as translating "*ummatah wasathah*" as "the middle nation". On the other hand, Muhammad Thalib favours a more dynamic contextual-linguistic approach, translating the term as "a just community". This difference shows that translations of the Qur'an are not neutral, but rather contain the ideological content and missionary orientation of each figure.

Both figures examined in this study have made important contributions to the world of interpretation and preaching in Indonesia. Mahmud Yunus, with his formal educational background and long experience in the field of Islamic education, has produced practical and pedagogical works of interpretation. Meanwhile, Muhammad Thalib, who is better known in the field of da'wah and contemporary Islamic ideological movements, emphasises translations that respond to the ideological and socio-political challenges facing Muslims today. Nevertheless, both of them uphold the values of *wasathiyah* (moderation), but take different narrative paths in conveying them to the people. These differences underline the complexity of interpreting the concept of moderation, where each interpreter brings a unique perspective influenced by their academic background and contemporary context (Sutrisno et al., 2023). Therefore, comparative studies such as this not only enrich intellectual knowledge but also provide critical insights into the dynamics of religious interpretation in a multicultural society (Syauqani & Zulyadain, 2023).

Substantively, this study reveals that the translation of the Qur'an influences the formation of people's understanding of the concept of religious moderation. The choice of diction, emphasis on meaning, and style of interpretation greatly determine whether the message of moderation can be conveyed in a complete, gentle, and tolerant manner, or whether it becomes exclusive and rigid. Therefore, studies such as this are very important for building critical awareness among the community in reading, understanding, and interpreting sacred texts contextually. This phenomenon is in line with the rapid



development of Al-Qur'an translations in Indonesia, which has reached more than 20 works since the early 20th century, demonstrating its vital role in shaping the discourse of Islamic moderation in society.

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