

## Religious Moderation and the Exegesis of Qur'anic Verses on Tolerance: A Comparative Study of Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar and Its Relevance to Indonesia's National Life

Sudarmadi Putra<sup>1\*</sup> Rakhmad Agung Hidayatullah<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Sekolah Tinggi Islam Al-Mukmin Surakarta, Indonesia*

✉ [sudarmadiputra@stimsurakarta.ac.id](mailto:sudarmadiputra@stimsurakarta.ac.id)\*

### ABSTRACT

Religious moderation is a strategic need in a pluralistic Indonesian society, especially to strengthen relations between religious communities without blurring the boundaries of faith. This study aims to analyze and compare interpretations of tolerance verses in Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar, and to assess their relevance to the lives of Indonesian nationals. The method used is qualitative, descriptive-analytical with a comparative approach, through the study of texts on the interpretation of tolerance verses and analysis of the methodology, socio-historical context, and social implications of each mufasir. The results of the study show that both interpretations affirm the principles of respect for differences, prohibition of religious coercion, and justice in social relations; however, they differ in emphasis and orientation. Tafsir Al-Misbah tends to be contextual, linking the verse's meaning to the dynamics of plurality and modern citizenship. At the same time, Tafsir Al-Azhar is more historical-da'wah, with an emphasis on the ummah's experience and the ethics of interfaith association. The contribution of this research enriches the study of the interpretation of the archipelago by comparative mapping of the concept of tolerance as the basis of religious moderation, and it provides practical implications for education, da'wah, and strengthening harmony within the national framework.

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation; Tolerance; Interpretation Of The Archipelago; Tafsir Al-Misbah; Tafsir Al-Azhar; Quraish Shihab; Hamka.

### ARTICLE INFO

*Article history:*

Received  
February 15, 2026

Revised  
May 24, 2026

Accepted  
June 20, 2026

Journal Homepage

<https://attractivejournal.com/index.php/aj/>

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

@ 2026 by the authors

Published by

CV. Creative Tugu Pena

### INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation in Indonesia is increasingly urgent not only because of the complexity of pluralism, but also because of the increasing identity contestation and polarization of religious discourse in the public sphere, which often triggers a narrowing of the meaning of tolerance (Afrimadona, 2021; Aspinall & Mietzner, 2019). Several studies show that religious moderation research in Indonesia is growing rapidly, but it still leaves a conceptual problem, namely that moderation is often understood as normative policy, while the epistemic basis of religious texts (especially interpretation) has not always been mapped as the foundation of civic ethics and social harmony (Subchi et al., 2022; Zaluchu et al., 2025). Therefore, reading the verses of tolerance through authoritative and widely accepted interpretations is crucial to ensure that religious moderation does not stop at rhetoric but is rooted in the Qur'an's arguments that inform national life.

Several studies related to religious tolerance and moderation in Indonesia reveal that strengthening moderation often faces obstacles at the level of praxis and meaning, because it is influenced by differences in educational ecology, institutional design, religious authority, and

social dynamics that form tolerant or intolerant attitudes in society (Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022; Mappiasse & Hayadin, 2022; Takdir & Sumbulah, 2024). Several studies also confirm that moderation and tolerance are often debated in the public sphere because they intersect with different normative discourses and social strategies, ranging from the formulation of culture-based coexistence ethics and cross-faith fiqh, the role of pesantren in peacebuilding and civic involvement, to the emergence of exclusionary practices and social tensions due to certain mobilizations (Lukito, 2016; Rozaki & Izudin, 2025; Sodikin & Umroh, 2023). In addition, research in the realm of interpretation shows that differences in interpretation approaches can give rise to variations in the emphasis on the meaning of tolerance, for example between contextual-civic orientation and historical orientation and da'wah, so a more systematic study is still needed to map how the differences in the methodology of interpretation of the two main references of the archipelago shape the construction of Qur'anic tolerance and its relevance to national life (Fuadi, 2021; Jamarudin et al., 2019).

Although prior scholarship has mapped religious moderation at the institutional level and in social praxis, advanced coexistence ethics grounded in local culture, and framed tolerance as a lived Qur'anic practice, it has generally not positioned *tafsir* as an "epistemic link" that clarifies how Qur'anic tolerance is conceptually constructed and translated into public ethics. Meanwhile, comparative studies of *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Al-Azhar* have identified differences in interpretive tendencies. Still, they often remain at the level of broad description and have not been developed into a systematic comparative reading that tightly connects (i) hermeneutical procedures, (ii) the mufassir's socio-historical situatedness, and (iii) ethical-civic implications for Indonesian public and national life – particularly through a purposive selection of key tolerance verses that operationalize the principles of "recognition of difference," "non-coercion," and "relational justice." Consequently, a clear research space remains to explain, in a methodologically accountable way, how the distinctive interpretive approaches of these two authoritative Nusantara commentaries delineate the boundaries, indicators, and mechanisms of Qur'anic tolerance and how these can be operationalized as a foundation for religious moderation in the context of citizenship.

The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of a comparative analysis model that bridges the interpretation and agenda of religious moderation through three operational contributions at once: first, a structured mapping of the difference in hermeneutic logic between the contextual-civic orientation in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and the historical-da'wah orientation in *Tafsir Al-Azhar* as a mechanism for the production of the meaning of Qur'anic tolerance. Second, the articulation of the "tolerance limit" as an ethical tool that can be tested in interfaith social relations, namely the distinction between peaceful relations and hostile relations drawn from the coherence of the interpretation of the tolerance verses, so that tolerance does not fall into syncretism, but also does not turn into exclusion. Third, the reduction of the implications of *tafsir* into an applicative framework for national life (education, da'wah, and harmony), showing how the Qur'anic values of respect, anti-coercion, and justice can be translated into concrete, contextual moderation practices in Indonesia.

This study aims to analyze and compare interpretations of tolerance verses in *Tafsir Al-Misbah* and *Tafsir Al-Azhar*, and to assess their relevance to the lives of Indonesian nationals. The formulation of the research problem includes: how the methodology and hermeneutic tendencies used by the two mufassir in interpreting the verses of tolerance; how the socio-historical background and da'wah orientation of each mufassir affect the construction of the meaning of tolerance; and how the implications of the interpretation of both can be operationalized to strengthen religious moderation in interfaith social relations in Indonesia. The contribution of this research is theoretical and practical. Theoretically, this study enriches the study of Nusantara interpretation by providing a more precise comparative mapping of the construction of the meaning of Qur'anic tolerance across the two main reference works, as well as clarifying the position of *tafsir* as a source of social ethical legitimacy in the discourse of religious moderation. In practice, the research findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of religious literacy, religious education, and da'wah materials, so that

religious moderation is understood as a religious attitude that affirms beliefs, rejects coercion, and upholds social justice in a pluralistic national space.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a comparative, descriptive-analytical design in a library research format, oriented towards interpretive-conceptual analysis. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to interpret the meaning, value structure, and conceptual relationships in religious texts in depth and contextually, especially when the focus of the study is not on the measurement of numbers, but on the explanation of the logic of argumentation and the normative consequences of an interpretation (Morgan, 2022). Comparative design is used so that two interpretations can be read side-by-side in the same unit, allowing the similarities and differences in argumentation patterns, strategies for binding texts to context, and tolerance limits formulated by each mufasir to be traced to the level of ethical-civic implications in the discourse of religious moderation.

The main objective of the research is to construct the meaning of tolerance through the interpretation of key verses in Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar. The primary data of the study were determined in three verse units: QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109):6 (declaration of respect for differences of belief), QS. Al-Baqarah (2):256 (the principle of “there is no coercion in religion”), and QS. Al-Mumtaḥanah (60):8-9 (ethics of doing justice to non-hostile non-Muslims as well as limits on relations when there is hostility). The interpretation of these verses is analyzed in two works of tafsir, which serve as primary sources: Tafsir Al-Misbah by M. Quraish Shihab and Tafsir Al-Azhar by Hamka, because both exemplify a strong pattern of Nusantara tafsir in connecting the message of the Qur’an with the socio-Indonesian context.

Secondary data sources include international scientific articles published in the last 5 years (2021-2026) that are prioritized from reputable journals to strengthen the conceptual context (moderation, tolerance, and interfaith relations) and to assist in understanding the social implications of interpretation. The cutting-edge literature is also used as a “conceptual bridge” so that comparative synthesis does not stop at the description of interpretation, but is connected to contemporary academic debates about the practice of tolerance and moderation (e.g., the framework for evaluating the practice of thematic analysis and good practice in qualitative interpretation) (Ahmed et al., 2025; Braun & Clarke, 2023).

Data collection was carried out through qualitative document analysis with close reading techniques and repeated reading of interpretation segments that discuss three verse units (QS. Al-Gaddafi 109:6; QS. Al-Baqarah 2:256; QS. Al-Mumtaḥanah 60:8-9) on Tafsir al-Misbah and Tafsir al-Azhar, since repeated reading is a prevalent analytical practice to ensure accuracy of meaning extraction, consistency of encoding, and sensitivity of context in the work of interpreting texts (Im et al., 2023; Klingberg et al., 2024). The data collection procedure is systematically pursued through: (1) searching for verses and identifying relevant segments of interpretation, (2) marking and copying key quotes and the context of their arguments, (3) recording of reasoning tools that are activated by mufasir such as correlation between verses, linguistic arguments, or socio-historical context references and (4) archiving all citations in extraction sheets so that the process of searching, storing, and tracing data is maintained as a rigor prerequisite document analysis (Kayesa & Shung-King, 2021; Klingberg et al., 2024). Furthermore, all citation data are entered into a comparative matrix so that each verse can be compared in parallel along the themes, interpretation logic, activated context, and derived ethical-social implications. The use of the matrix helps maintain comparative regularity and facilitates transparent cross-source reading (Hodgson et al., 2024).

Data analysis is carried out with a rule-guided qualitative content analysis approach through the stages of determining analysis units, coding, category formation, category consistency testing, and comparative synthesis (Bohm & Sundqvist, 2025; Mayring, 2021). To maintain the depth of interpretation as well as procedural order, the theme development process is carried out iteratively with the principle of reflexive thematic analysis emphasizing the clarity of the theme, coding consistency, and the connectedness of data, themes, and arguments (Ahmed et al., 2025; Braun & Clarke, 2023). The categories of analysis are

operationalized into three dimensions: (a) hermeneutic orientation (textual, contextual, and argumentative structure), (b) socio-historical context of mufasir (social-intellectual horizon that influences the emphasis on meaning), and (c) ethical-civic implications (limits of tolerance, principles of justice, and ethics of coexistence in the public sphere).

The research instruments are organized in a document analysis grid that serves as a consistent guide for data extraction, coding, and interpretation comparison. This grid contains analysis focus areas, data sources, analysis indicators, analytical questions, and analysis outputs, so that each finding can be linked back to clearly cited evidence.

**Table 1. Document Analysis Instrument Grid (Comparative Interpretation of Tolerance)**

Focus of Analysis	Data Source	Analysis Indicators	Analytics Questions	Analysis Output
Declaration of difference	QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109):6 in two interpretations	Definition of “difference”, affirmation of the limits of beliefs	How is verse positioned as the basis for respecting differences?	Theme of respect and boundaries of faith
Anti-coercion	QS. Al-Baqarah (2):256 in two interpretations	The principle of non-coercion, rationalization of da’wah	How is “without coercion” relegated to social ethics?	Themes of non-coercion and freedom of religion
Relational ethics and relational boundaries	QS. Al-Mumtahanah (60):8–9 in two interpretations	Kindness-justice, non-hostile conditions, prohibition of loyalty to the hostile party	How are tolerance limits defined in social relations?	Coexistence & boundary-setting theme
Hermeneutic orientation	Two interpretations	Textual-contextual patterns, postulate references, contextual strategies	What is the dominant pattern of reasoning in each interpretation?	Argumentation pattern profile
Ethical-citizenship implications	Two interpretations + literature 2021–2026	Coexistence, justice, harmony, public moderation	What are the relevant consequences for religious moderation in Indonesia?	Comparative synthesis of public implications

The analysis was carried out iteratively and interpretively, i.e., the data was reduced by selecting the relevant interpretation sections, coded according to a grid, grouped into main themes, and then compared cross-interpretations to map patterns of similarities and differences and explain their argumentative consequences (Ahmed et al., 2025; Braun & Clarke, 2023). At the synthesis stage, comparative findings are sharpened against the international literature of the last 5 years, ensuring that the explanation of social implications is not merely normative but grounded in contemporary academic research.

The validity of findings is maintained through the principle of trustworthiness, which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Hammarberg et al., 2016; Stahl & King, 2020). Operationally, this is applied through triangulation of sources (two primary interpretations and scientific literature 2021–2026), perseverance of context reading (coherence of arguments and linkages between interpretation sections), peer debriefing to test possible interpretation-alternatives, and trail audits in the form of analytical decision documentation (sentence selection, code definition, category revision, and reflective memo) so that the analysis process can be traced and accounted for (Ahmed, 2024; Johnson et al., 2020).

Because the research is literature and does not involve human participants, the ethical aspects of the research are focused on academic integrity: citation accuracy and anti-plagiarism, strict distinctions between citations and researchers' interpretations, and the principle of non-misrepresentation (avoiding selective citations that alter the intention of the mufasir). Matrix documentation, extraction sheets, and coding decisions are neatly stored to maintain scientific accountability and traceability of analysis procedures.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are compiled from a textual review of the interpretations of tolerance verses in Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar, focusing on three key principles: recognition of difference, anti-coercion, and relational justice. In this section, data are presented per verse and show the trend.

### *"Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn"* (QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109):6)

#### Findings from Tafsir Al-Misbah

On QS. Al-Kāfirūn:6, Tafsir Al-Misbah places the verse "For you your religion and for me my religion" as a formulation of how to meet in social life when a compromise of faith is impossible. The affirmation of "*lakum*" and "*liya*" is read as a form of specificity that maintains the boundaries of religious identity, so that "each religion should stand alone and not need to be mixed." In this framework, tolerance is not interpreted as an acknowledgment of the truth of the other party's creed, but rather a reciprocal acknowledgment of existence: each party is given space to practice its beliefs without coercion and without mixing rituals or theology.

Interestingly, Tafsir Al-Misbah expands the meaning of the word *dīn* (religion/reply/obedience). When some scholars interpret it as retaliation, the verse is understood as an affirmation of moral consequences. Each party will receive a reward according to its choice, "left to God," who decides. However, when *dīn* is understood as a religion, this interpretation confirms that the verse does not mean the recognition of the truth of the polytheists, but rather a "normative abandonment" after the truth has been explained and they still refuse. At this point, QS. 2:256 ("There is no compulsion in religion") is used to reinforce the idea that freedom of choice in belief goes hand in hand with moral responsibility before God.

From a public ethical point of view, Al-Misbah's interpretation raises an important formula: doctrinal absolutism is an "attitude of the soul inward", but when absolutism is brought "into the real world", the Prophet is not directed to make strong claims that provoke conflict. Tafsir exemplifies a Qur'anic way of communication that refrains from direct verdict: "perhaps we are righteous, perhaps you too," and leaves the final decision to God. Thus, tolerance appears as a dignified management of differences: maintaining self-confidence without symbolic aggression against others, and avoiding coercion or mixing beliefs.

#### Findings from Tafsir Al-Azhar

Tafsir Al-Azhar reads QS. Al-Kāfirūn is a historical response to the "peaceful" proposal of the Quraish polytheists who want a compromise of faith: "We worship what you worship, and you worship what we worship." In Hamka's interpretation, these verses constitute a firm rejection of theological compromise, because "Tawheed and shirk cannot be met." Hamka emphasized two layers of difference: those worshipped are different and the ways of worship are different, so that "our religion cannot be reconciled or united."

From here, Al-Azhar's version of tolerance follows a clear line: tolerance is not syncretism or ritual mixing. In fact, Hamka said that when monotheism is "reconciled" with shirk, it means "the victory of shirk." Thus, the verse "*Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn*" is understood as an affirmation of the distance between faith and belief, to maintain the purity of monotheism, rather than an invitation to the relativism of belief. However, this affirmation of boundaries is also the basis of the ethics of living together: "use religion itself... and for me is my religion," meaning that each party practices its beliefs without interfering with the other's.

Both interpretations affirm that tolerance is not synonymous with the mixing of faiths, but differ in the degree of emphasis they place on it. Al-Misbah emphasizes the mode of social coexistence (the recognition of mutual existence, the management of claims to truth in public

spaces, and communication ethics). In contrast, Al-Azhar emphasizes the mode of assertive faith (rejection of theological compromise as the core meaning of the surah). By implication, Al-Misbah is more easily reduced to a citizenship argument that addresses shared space. At the same time, Al-Azhar provides a strong normative line on the “limits of tolerance” to avoid syncretism.

#### **“Lā ikrāha fi al-dīn” (QS. Al-Baqarah (2):256 )**

##### **Findings from Tafsir Al-Misbah**

On QS. 2:256, Tafsir Al-Misbah places “no coercion in religion” as a correction to the conjecture that the power of God can be used as a basis for religious coercion. Verses are understood mainly in the context of faith or belief, not in the freedom to fulfill one’s obligations after choosing Islam. This interpretation emphasizes that the freedom to choose the creed does not mean the freedom to reject the sharia’s guidance after accepting it; if a person has accepted the creed, he is “bound by its guidance” and cannot claim the freedom to violate it.

On the philosophical-psychological side, Al-Misbah links coercion to the destruction of inner peace: coercion creates a restless soul, whereas Islam, as “peace,” requires inner peace. Therefore, the prohibition of coercion is a moral-spiritual prerequisite for faith to grow as a conscious choice rather than as a result of coercion. This interpretation also places an epistemic emphasis: the verse states that “the straight path has become clear from the wrong path,” making coercion irrelevant; those who refuse after it becomes clear have a problem with their inner orientation or reason, or are neglecting the potential of knowledge that should be utilized.

In addition, Al-Misbah provides an important conceptual elaboration on *thāghūt* as all forms of “transcending limits” that lead to (tyranny, Satan, forces that establish laws contrary to Divine provisions). The structure of the verse, which prioritizes “denying *thāghūt*” before “believing in Allah,” is read as an ethical principle: getting rid of evil comes first before adorning oneself with goodness. The metaphor “*urwat al-wuthqā*” (a very strong rope) was developed into a picture of the steadfastness of faith as a guideline that helps people through the abyss of difficulty. Faith is not just a declaration but a commitment maintained with sincerity.

##### **Findings from Tafsir Al-Azhar**

Al-Azhar’s interpretation emphasizes QS. 2:256 as a logical continuation of the Ayat Kursi (QS. 2:255), which explains monotheism: because the truth of monotheism is in accordance with nature and logic, there is no need for coercion. Hamka explains the relationship between the verses: after the truth is clear, humans are invited to think and choose, not forced to do so. The center of his interpretation is very historical through the explanation of the *asbab al-nuzūl*: the case of the Ansar children who had become Jews and were also expelled when the Bani Nadhir were expelled from Medina. When there was a request for them to be “forced” to convert to Islam, the verse was revealed as a correction: belief should not be forced; the Prophet only gave a choice, and some still chose Judaism.

Hamka then emphasized the important distinction between political-security matters and matters of faith: Bani Nadhir was expelled for political treason (wanting to kill the Prophet), but was not offered “freedom from expulsion” on the condition that they convert to Islam. This is evidence that the conflict was not a religious coercion. This interpretation also counters the narrative that “Islam was advanced by the sword” by pointing to historical examples: the conversion of several figures or individuals to Islam occurred through searching and volunteering. At the core, Hamka emphasized this verse as the “firm foundation of Islam,” namely, the freedom to choose one’s faith as the pinnacle of human progress and freedom of thought.

Both interpretations affirm the prohibition of forced belief. The difference is that Al-Misbah emphasizes normative-psychological and epistemic arguments (faith demands inner peace, coercion destroys it; the path to truth is clear; responsibility after choosing a creed), while Al-Azhar emphasizes historical and apologetic arguments (*asbab al-nuzūl*, the political-religious distinction, refuting accusations of forced Islam). Both provide a strong foundation for religious moderation: freedom of belief is guaranteed, but there remains an ethical commitment for those who have chosen Islam.

### **Ethics of doing good, fairness, and the limits of relationships (QS. Al-Mumtaḥanah (60):8-9 ) Findings from Tafsir Al-Misbah**

In QS. 60:8-9, Tafsir Al-Misbah positions the verse as a correction to the mistaken impression that all non-Muslims should be treated as enemies. The verse is positioned as a “basic principle of interaction” between Muslims and non-Muslims. The interpretation emphasizes that Allah “does not forbid” doing good (tabarrūhum) and acting justly (tuqsithū) toward non-Muslims who do not fight for religious reasons or expel them from their lands. Even if they are right in social interactions, Muslims are obligated to defend that truth. At the same time, the prohibition is directed specifically at those who fight, expel, and assist in the expulsion, namely, prohibiting them from making them “close friends who keep secrets” and strategic helpers.

Tafsir Al-Misbah refines the boundaries of tolerance through linguistic analysis: the *mudhāri* form in “*lām yuqātilūkum*” conveys the factual meaning of “fighting,” so that not all non-Muslims fall into the category of hostility; conflicts “within religion” are not the same as worldly conflicts unrelated to religion. The interpretation also includes data from the hadith about Asma’ bint Abu Bakr, whom the Prophet commanded to maintain good relations with her polytheistic mother. From this, tolerance emerges as a broad virtue (*birr*) that can encompass many forms as long as it does not negatively impact Muslims.

Notably, Al-Misbah emphasizes the interconnectedness of “goodness” and “justice” not as a pragmatic strategy, but as a theological value, because “God loves those who are just.” Thus, tolerance does not stop at “allowing,” but becomes an active ethical responsibility (doing good and being just), while maintaining boundaries within relationships that are overtly hostile and harmful to the community.

#### **Finding From Tafsir Al-Azhar**

Hamka interprets QS. 60:7-9 by highlighting the moral optimism that hostility can turn into compassion (“may Allah cause compassion...”). He linked it to the Prophet’s preaching strategy of not cursing enemies personally, as well as to the example of the Prophet’s social policy, which softened hostility through morals, a kinship approach, and a peaceful attitude. In Hamka’s reading, this verse not only regulates interfaith relations but also conveys the lesson of preaching: the preacher’s morals must maintain the space for the possibility of peace, because conflict can melt away in the future.

For QS. 60:8, Hamka gives a firm statement: Allah does not forbid doing good and being fair to Jews, Christians, or polytheists as long as they do not fight or expel them. He expands the meaning of *qisṭh* not only to “fair in decisions,” but also “fair in relationships”: doing good to non-Muslim neighbors as well as fellow Muslims, joining in their sorrow when they are sad, and practicing social compassion. Hamka also emphasized that this verse is “*muhkamah*” (valid for all time), so the principle of just social relations with peaceful parties is permanent.

In QS. 60:9, Hamka emphasizes the limits of tolerance: the prohibition of strategic friendship with those who fight and expel, including those who assist in hostilities. This clarifies that tolerance is conditioned by security and justice: being kind to peaceful parties, but not naive to aggression.

Both interpretations agree that interfaith social relations are built on kindness and justice toward peaceful parties, as well as establishing boundaries for relations with those who fight and expel. Al-Misbah is more systematic in its normative principles and boundaries for strategic relationships (including linguistic analysis and legal and social consequences). At the same time, Al-Azhar expands this to include lessons in *da’wah*, morals, and daily social ethics that impact long-term peace—including internal criticism of inter-Muslim conflicts caused by fanaticism over the issue of caliphate. Thus, Qur’anic tolerance here is not simply “living side by side,” but “living justly and doing good” within a framework of realistic boundaries.

Based on the data above, the results of the study show that Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar both emphasize three foundations of Qur’anic tolerance: recognition of differences (QS. 109:6), anti-imposition of beliefs (QS. 2:256), and relational justice-virtue with limits on hostility (QS. 60:8-9). The difference lies in the orientation: Al-Misbah tends to be contextual

and emphasizes the management of truth claims in the public sphere and the operationalization of the ethics of coexistence, while Al-Azhar tends to be historical-da'wah with an emphasis on asbāb al-nuzūl, the experience of the people, refutation of the stereotype of "religious imposition," and moral pedagogy in maintaining peace.

**Table 2. Results of Comparative Research on the Interpretation of Tolerance Verses in Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar and Their Relevance to National Life**

Key Verse/Issues	Main Findings of Tafsir Al-Misbah	Main Findings of Tafsir Al-Azhar	Equations	Emphasis Differences	Implications for Moderation & Nationality
QS. Al-Kāfirūn (109):6 "Lakum dīnukum wa liya dīn" (Recognition of Differences)	Affirming freedom of religion and the recognition of mutual existence without mixing faiths, "lakum-liya" indicates specificity, tolerance in acknowledging the truth of other faiths, and can also be understood as retribution (moral consequences are left to God).	Firmly rejecting the compromise of faith (tauhid vs shirk), the verse descends in response to the Quraish's "peaceful" proposal; affirming the difference between the object of worship and the way of worship; tolerance of syncretism.	Together: tolerance does not mean mixing beliefs; Each religion runs its own way.	Al-Misbah: more contextual-social (how to meet in a public space). Al-Azhar: more faith-historical assertiveness (anti-theological compromise).	It is the basis of coexistence: maintaining the identity of faith while respecting the rights of others; strengthening the ethics of living together without theological relativism.
QS. Al-Baqarah (2):256 "Lā ikrāha fi al-dīn" (Anti-coercion)	"There is no compulsion" especially in the faith; coercion destroys inner peace; After choosing faith, there is an attachment to guidance; the path is right, misguided clearly; Thāghūt must be rejected first.	Emphasizing the connection with the Verse of the Chair (tauhid according to fitrah → does not need to be forced); strong on asbāb al-nuzūl (the case of the Anshar-Jewish child); political/security vs. religious distinctions; rebuttal of the accusation of "Islam is forced by the sword".	Equally, faith is invalid if forced; the freedom to choose beliefs is affirmed.	Al-Misbah: epistemic-psychological argument (faith needs peace). Al-Azhar: a historical-apologetic argument (a real case of stereotypical rebuttal).	The foundations of policy and education moderation: strengthening religious freedom and non-violence; encouraging postulate-based religious literacy that is operational for social harmony.
QS. Al-Mumtahānah (60):8-9 (Virtue,	The basic principle of relations: to be able to do good	Affirming the verse of muhkamah (happening all	Welcome: peaceful relations → must be fair	Al-Misbah: more normative-systematic	Public ethics guidelines: interfaith social justice,

Justice, and Relationship Boundaries)	(birr) and just (qisth) to non-Muslims who do not fight/expel them; prohibition only on those who are fighting and are a threat (not making them secret allies or friends); linguistic analysis clarifies the limits of "fighting for religion".	the time), qisth is broadly understood: just in judgment and just in association; highlighting the moral lesson of da'wah: hostility can turn into love; Strict limits on the aggressive side.	and good; Aggressive relations → there are limits or prohibitions of strategic proximity.	(limits of strategic relations, details of terms). Al-Azhar: more ethical da'wah and social daily life (morality, reconciliation).	humanitarian cooperation, and security boundaries; strengthening harmony without sacrificing principles and vigilance against aggression.
General pattern of interpretation orientation (moderation framework)	Contextual-civic tendencies: connecting the verse to the reality of modern plurality, communication ethics, and social coexistence.	Historical-da'wah tendencies: strengthening asbāb al-nuzūl, the experience of the ummah, and the formation of social morals and the firmness of tauhid.	Both provide a basis for limited Qur'anic tolerance (not syncretism; not total hostility).	The emphasis is different: civic ethics vs history-da'wah.	Providing a foundation for religious moderation: civic rights, education, da'wah, and harmony policies based on the authoritative interpretation of the text of the archipelago.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the research findings, the interpretation of the verses on tolerance in QS. 109:6, QS. 2:256, and QS. 60:8–9 in Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar show a similar tendency, which is to form a pattern of limited coexistence: (1) the recognition of the existence of the other party without mixing the faith, (2) the rejection of the imposition of belief as an ethical principle in interfaith relations, and (3) a commitment to virtue and social justice that remains limited when the relationship turns into aggression or real hostility. This "boundary" framework is in line with the trend of recent studies that consider religious moderation to be more effective when understood as a relational practice that works in the public sphere through habituation, interaction governance, and dialogue mechanisms, rather than just normative slogans that stop at the declarative level (Day, 2021; Jati et al., 2024).

In the dimension of recognition of differences (QS. 109:6), the emphasis of Tafsir Al-Misbah on the management of claims of truth in the public sphere and the ethics of co-existential communication can be understood in line with recent studies that place tolerance as a daily practice that is formed through socio-cultural mechanisms at the community level—for example, through local leadership, cultural-educational work, and interfaith interaction routines that normalize acceptance of the "other" and maintain harmony Social (Ahdad et al.,

2023; Anas et al., 2025; Gede Agung et al., 2024). Meanwhile, the affirmation of the Tafsir of Al-Azhar on the limits of faith as a rejection of theological compromise can be read as a boundary-setting strategy, namely, maintaining the purity of faith so that coexistence does not shift into syncretism, but still opens up an orderly space for coexistence through relational ethics and the rules of interaction in the public space (Alniatul Fadilah et al., 2025; Dharta et al., 2025).

In the anti-coercion dimension (QS. 2:256), the argument of Tafsir Al-Misbah that links the prohibition of coercion with the psychological-moral prerequisites of faith as a coherent conscious choice is consistent with the findings of recent research that shows that the strengthening of religious moderation is more effective when religious orientation is built through the internalization of values, reflective dialogical pedagogy, and the strengthening of critical reasoning in the educational ecosystem rather than through coercive pressure or uniformity of beliefs. (Muhajir & Nurcholis, 2024; Mukhibat et al., 2024). On the other hand, the emphasis of Tafsir Al-Azhar on *asbāb al-nuzūl* and the distinction between political-security versus belief-based conflicts are relevant to the latest academic criticism that an overly security-centric approach to moderation risks shifting the problem into a matter of control and reputation, whereas what is more decisive is the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, the strengthening of rights governance, as well as the work of social beliefs and community participation at the grassroots. (Cholil, 2023; Fansuri, 2025).

On the dimensions of relational justice and relational boundaries (60:8–9), the finding that both interpretations encourage kindness and justice toward the peaceful side but limit strategic proximity to the aggressive side aligns with the literature on interfaith dialogue, which affirms that harmony is not born of “passive neglect”. Harmony is more precisely understood as the result of deliberate, gradual, and directed social communication, carried out through spaces for dialogue, mediation, and joint initiatives that serve to reduce prejudice and build trust across identities. (Corpuz, 2025; Driessen, 2025). At the same time, the latest intergroup contact literature shows that the quality of relationships (positive or negative) shapes attitudes towards diversity; Therefore, the ability to distinguish peaceful relations from hostile relations needs to be placed within the framework of behavior and situation evaluation (e.g. Threats or coercion), not a stigma against group identity, so as not to give birth to negative generalizations that actually damage social cohesion. (Genkova & Schreiber, n.d.; Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Thus, the three analytical principles of this study—recognition of difference, non-coercion, and relational justice—gain a strong conceptual footing from contemporary research that understands moderation and tolerance as infrastructure for social relations. This infrastructure does not stop at normative slogans; it operates through concrete mechanisms: maintaining identity boundaries with dignity, rejecting the imposition of beliefs, and upholding justice in interfaith relationships through communication practices, managing relational boundaries, and strengthening social trust at the community level.

The main strength of this research lies in its comparative-textual design per se, which goes beyond explaining meanings to operationalize ethical-civic consequences for the public sphere and education. This strength is reinforced by the selection of three clusters of verses that form a relatively intact spectrum of Quranic tolerance: identity or coexistence (Qur’an 109:6), freedom of belief (Qur’an 2:256), and virtue and relational justice with realistic limits (Qur’an 60:8–9). This allows moderation to be read as a balance between the steadfastness of identity and social responsibility, both of which help maintain harmony in a pluralistic society.

The implications for religious education and civic development are the need to teach tolerance as a practical relational competency, including the use of non-aggressive public language, respect for religious choices, and the inculcation of social justice in everyday interactions, while emphasizing the boundaries of faith to prevent tolerance from degenerating into syncretism. At the policy and public sphere levels, these findings call for the simultaneous strengthening of two channels: civic ethics (more prominent in the Al-Misbah emphasis) and moral pedagogy, along with historical narratives (more prominent in the Al-Azhar emphasis) so that moderation does not stop at slogans or a predominantly security-oriented approach, but is instead supported by a culture of relationships, the capacity for dialogue, and grassroots

participation (especially youth and communities) in fostering harmony as a daily social practice.

This research has two limitations. First, the corpus of analyzed verses remains focused on three main clusters, so the broader spectrum of Quranic tolerance, such as ta'aruf (reconciling differences), the etiquette of differences, and the ethics of dialogue, has not been comprehensively mapped. Therefore, further research needs to expand the corpus of verses and strengthen intertextual reading so that the "bounded coexistence" model can be tested in more thematic contexts and variations in social relations. Second, the dominant focus of studies on interpretive texts means that the "derivatives" of the concept into the realm of social practice (education, sermons, media, harmony programs) have not been empirically verified. Future researchers are advised to combine interpretive analysis with field data, interviews, FGDs, and observations to map how interpretation-based tolerance arguments are produced, circulated, and negotiated at the community level, including the roles of youth and social networks in expanding the culture of dialogue.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that a comparative reading of the Tafsir Al-Misbah and Tafsir Al-Azhar affirms Qur'anic tolerance as an active and realistic ethic of living together: maintaining religious identity with dignity, rejecting the imposition of beliefs, and upholding goodness and justice in interfaith relations while maintaining clear boundaries when relations turn into aggression; therefore, these findings are relevant to strengthening religious education, community development, and harmony policies so that moderation is understood not as a slogan, but as a relational competence that works through communication practices, managing relationship boundaries, and strengthening social trust at the community level.

## REFERENCES

- Afrimadona. (2021). Revisiting Political Polarisation in Indonesia: A Case Study of Jakarta's Electorate. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 40(2), 315–339. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034211007490>
- Ahdad, M. M., Suyadi, S., Loka, N., Purnomo, E., & Mansur, M. (2023). Local Wisdom Learning Strategies In Early Childhood Education (Case Study: Early Childhood Education In The Special Region Of Yogyakarta And South Sumatra). *Cakrawala Dini, Jurnal Anak Usia Dini*, 14(1), 63–72. <https://ejournal.upi.edu/index.php/cakrawaladini>
- Ahmed, S. K. (2024). The pillars of trustworthiness in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 2, 100051. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2024.100051>
- Ahmed, S. K., Mohammed, R. A., Nashwan, A. J., Ibrahim, R. H., Abdalla, A. Q., M. Ameen, B. M., & Khdhir, R. M. (2025). Using thematic analysis in qualitative research. *Journal of Medicine, Surgery, and Public Health*, 6, 100198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.glmedi.2025.100198>
- Alniatul Fadilah, Ahmad Yusam Thobroni, Alvita Niamullah, & Eka Pratiwi Wulandari. (2025). "For You Your Religion and For Me My Religion": A Theological Limitation on Religious Inclusivism and Religious. *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir*, 4(2 SE-Articles), 529–542. <https://doi.org/10.58363/alfahmu.v4i2.295>
- Anas, M., Saraswati, D., Ikhsan, M. A., & Fiaji, N. A. (2025). Acceptance of "The Others" in Religious Tolerance: Policies and Implementation Strategies in The Inclusive City of Salatiga, Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 11(2), e41826. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e41826>
- Aspinall, E., & Mietzner, M. (2019). Indonesia's Democratic Paradox: Competitive Elections amidst Rising Illiberalism. *Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies*, 55(3), 295–317. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00074918.2019.1690412>
- Bohm, I., & Sundqvist, J. (2025). Qualitative Content Analysis: A Step-by-Step Guide for Beginners to the Method, Theories, Epistemology, Ontology, and Rigour. *Qualitative Report*, 30(9), 4236–4263.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2023). Toward good practice in thematic analysis: Avoiding common

- problems and be(com)ing a knowing researcher. *International Journal of Transgender Health*, 24(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26895269.2022.2129597>
- Burhanuddin, N., & Ilmi, D. (2022). Typologies of religious moderation in Indonesian higher education institutions. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(2), 455–479. <https://jiis.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/JIIs/article/view/2709>
- Cholil, S. (2023). Freedom of Religion amid Polarization and Religious Moderation Policy. *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology*, 6(2 SE-Round Table), 196–204. <https://doi.org/10.1558/isit.24603>
- Corpuz, J. C. G. (2025). Toward Grassroots Interfaith Dialogue: The Role of a Faith-Based Movement. In *Religions* (Vol. 16, Issue 3, p. 345). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030345>
- Day, J. (2021). Everyday Practices of Toleration: The Interfaith Foundations of Peace Accords in Sierra Leone. *Politics and Religion*, 14(1), 54–82. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.1017/S1755048319000555>
- Dharta, F. Y., Susanto, T., Anggara, R., Hariyanto, F., & Sianturi, H. R. P. (2025). MUI's fatwa on interfaith greetings and religious tolerance: can Indonesia find a middle ground? *Frontiers in Communication*, Volume 10. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/communication/articles/10.3389/fcomm.2025.1537568>
- Driessen, M. D. (2025). Interreligious Dialogue, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Review. In *Religions* (Vol. 16, Issue 2, p. 150). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16020150>
- Fansuri, H. (2025). When Piety is Framed as Threatening: The Hijrah Movement within the Politics of Religious Moderation in Indonesia. *Muslim Politics Review*, 4(2), 337–375. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mpr.v4i2.511>
- Fuadi, A. (2021). Quraish Shihab's Quranic Exegesis on Interreligious Harmony and Its Relevance to the Contemporary Western Hermeneutics. *Ulumuna*, 25(1 SE-Articles). <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v25i1.441>
- Gede Agung, D. A., Nasih, A. M., Sumarmi, Idris, & Kurniawan, B. (2024). Local Wisdom as A Model of Interfaith Communication in Creating Religious Harmony in Indonesia. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 9, 100827. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.100827>
- Genkova, P., & Schreiber, H. (n.d.). Diversity Contact: The Relationship of Positive and Negative Intergroup Contact with Assimilation and Multiculturalism. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 25(2 SE-Articles), 164–182. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v25i2.1096>
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction*, 31(3), 498–501. <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334>
- Hodgson, D., Cordier, R., Parsons, L., Walter, B., Chikwava, F., Watts, L., Thoresen, S., Martinez, M., & Chung, D. (2024). Developing and using matrix methods for analysis of large longitudinal qualitative datasets in out-of-home-care research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 27(2), 235–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2022.2159323>
- Im, D., Pyo, J., Lee, H., Jung, H., & Ock, M. (2023). Qualitative Research in Healthcare: Data Analysis. *Journal of Preventive Medicine and Public Health = Yebang Uihakhoe Chi*, 56(2), 100–110. <https://doi.org/10.3961/jpmp.22.471>
- Jamarudin, A., May, A., & Pudir, O. C. (2019). The Prospect of Human in the Exegetical Work: a Study of Buya Hamka's Tafsir al-Azhar. *Ulumuna*, 23(1 SE-Articles). <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v23i1.360>
- Jati, W., Syamsurijal, S., Halimatusa'diah, H., Aji, G., & Yilmaz, I. (2024). Reevaluating Approaches to Religious Moderation at the Grassroots Level: The Role of Muslim Youth in Advancing Interfaith Dialogue. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 62(1), 185–213. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2024.621.185-213>
- Johnson, J. L., Adkins, D., & Chauvin, S. (2020). A Review of the Quality Indicators of Rigor in Qualitative Research. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 84(1), 7120. <https://doi.org/10.5688/ajpe7120>

- Kayesa, N. K., & Shung-King, M. (2021). The role of document analysis in health policy analysis studies in low and middle-income countries: Lessons for HPA researchers from a qualitative systematic review. *Health Policy OPEN*, 2, 100024. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hpopen.2020.100024>
- Klingberg, S., Stalmeijer, R. E., & Varpio, L. (2024). Using framework analysis methods for qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 164. *Medical Teacher*, 46(5), 603–610. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2023.2259073>
- Kurniawan, P., Nasution, L. R., & Ahmatnijar. (2025). Cultivating Harmony: Strengthening Religious Inclusivity Through Interfaith Dialogue in Rural South Tapanuli. *Afkaruna: Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Studies*, 21(1 SE-Articles), 84–98. <https://doi.org/10.18196/afkaruna.v21i1.24161>
- Lukito, R. (2016). Islamisation as legal intolerance: The case of GARIS in Cianjur, West Java. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 54(2), 393–425. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2016.542.393-425>
- Mappiasse, S., & Hayadin, H. (2022). STUDENTS'RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE: Comparing Muslim Students at Public Schools and Pesantren. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(2), 326–351. <https://jiiis.uinsa.ac.id/index.php/JIIs/article/view/2400>
- Mayring, P. (2021). *Qualitative content analysis: A step-by-step guide*.
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64–77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Muhajir, A. Ari, & Nurcholis, A. (2024). Education in religious moderation to counter radicalism. *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 16(1), 194–213. <https://ixtheo.de/Record/1897943431>
- Mukhibat, M., Effendi, M., Setyawan, W. H., & Sutoyo, M. (2024). Development and evaluation of religious moderation education curriculum at higher education in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2302308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>
- Rozaki, A., & Izudin, A. (2025). Peacebuilding Pesantren: The Study of Madurese Diaspora in Reinforcing Social Resilience in Post-ethnic Conflicts, West Kalimantan, Indonesia. *Ulumuna*, 29(1 SE-Articles). <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v29i1.1432>
- Sodiqin, A., & Umroh, R. R. (2023). Towards an interreligious fiqh: A study of the culture-based religious tolerance in the Kaloran community, Central Java, Indonesia. *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 61(1), 159–180. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.611.159-180>
- Stahl, N. A., & King, J. R. (2020). Expanding Approaches for Research: Understanding and Using Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 44(1), 26–28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45381095>
- Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Latifa, R., & Sa'diyah, S. (2022). Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims. In *Religions* (Vol. 13, Issue 5). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>
- Takdir, M., & Sumbulah, U. (2024). Understanding and Practice of Religious Tolerance: A Study of the Living Qur'an in Madura, Indonesia. *Ulumuna*, 28(1 SE-Articles). <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i1.759>
- Zaluchu, S. E., Widodo, P., & Kriswanto, A. (2025). Conceptual reconstruction of religious moderation in the Indonesian context based on previous research: Bibliometric analysis. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 11, 101552. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2025.101552>
-