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The Emergence of Religious Moderation in Indonesia's Multicultural Society

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ABSTRACT

Background: Conceptual ambiguity around religious moderation and tolerance persists in Indonesia's plural society, complicating both discourse and practice. **Objective:** To clarify the meanings and limits of religious moderation and tolerance through a focused review. **Method:** This library research, conducted in 2023, used documentation to gather sources and applied Miles and Huberman's stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. **Results:** The literature converges on moderation as a middle path that aligns religious commitment with local wisdom and civic coexistence. Tolerance is framed as respectful acceptance of difference within legal and ethical boundaries. Moderation delineates boundaries that avoid both relativism and extremism while encouraging reflective dialogue, empathy, and shared responsibility. **Conclusion:** Religious moderation functions as a culturally grounded strategy for sustaining social harmony in Indonesia, enabling principled faith practice alongside mutual respect in daily life. **Contribution:** This review synthesizes dispersed scholarship into a coherent conceptual map, proposes working definitions and limits suited to the Indonesian context, and offers a baseline for curriculum design, policy guidance, community programming, and subsequent empirical testing, including indicators to inform evaluation and future comparative studies across regions and media.

KEYWORDS

Emergency; Religious Moderation; Diversity; Multicultural; Indonesian State

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1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a land where a variety of cultures thrive and are nurtured by its people. There are more than 740 ethnic groups and 583 languages and dialects of 67 parent languages spoken by various ethnic groups. Indonesian people adhere to various religions such as Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, and hundreds of local religions and beliefs that are part of local culture (Nurdin, 2021). Cultural diversity (multicultural) is a natural event due to the meeting of various cultures, interacting with various individuals and groups with cultural behaviors, and having different and specific ways of life (Jannah & Yani, 2023). Diversity such as cultural diversity, family background, religion, and ethnicity interact with each other in the Indonesian community.

Indonesia is a democracy, so differences in views and interests often occur (Lismanto & Utama, 2020). Likewise in religion, the state has an important role in ensuring the security of the community to embrace and practice their

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religion by the chosen beliefs and beliefs. Religious tolerance is tolerance that includes matters of belief in humans related to the creed or deity they believe in (Nasution, 2022). Everyone should be given the freedom to believe and embrace the religion (have a creed) of their choosing and get respect in the implementation of the teachings they embrace or believe in (Rohman, 2022).

Indonesia is a country that is modernizing (Wisnaeni, 2020), which is a process of transformation from a direction of change to a more advanced or improved direction in various aspects of people's lives. Modernization is a process of change from traditional ways to more advanced ways to improve people's welfare (Matondang, 2019). This change process takes place quickly, the onset of modernization can be caused by advances in science and technology, so consciously or unconsciously this will change socio-cultural phenomena in the community environment (Maryamah et al., 2023).

The concept of religious moderation can be interpreted as confidence in the substance (essence) of the religious teachings adopted, while still sharing the truth as far as religious interpretation is concerned (Salahuddin et al., 2023). Most people interpret moderation as an activity that does not deviate from previously agreed-upon provisions or rules (Shihab, 2019). This meaning is a form of the attitude of someone who has values of honesty, justice, compassion, and tolerance towards others. Of course, this certainly has many positive and negative impacts. To address changes and problems in the practice of religious moderation, it is necessary to understand the attitude of religious moderation (Hidayat, 2022). Religious moderation is a conception that can build a tolerant and harmonious attitude to strengthen national unity (Nurhidayah et al., 2022). As we know before, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is a country that has a lot of diversity, of course, this can cause many conflicts to emerge. With this religious moderation, it is hoped that at least we can avoid and reduce conflicts between religions by respecting each other, being tolerant, understanding, and being able to accept each other's uniqueness.

Indonesia, as a country with multicultural characteristics encompassing diverse ethnicities, religions, races, and cultures, faces challenges in maintaining social harmony and national integration (Mazya et al., 2024). The fact that pluralistic values and beliefs often lead to potential conflicts among communities or identity groups calls for a specific strategy (Jonkers, 2019). Studies show that religious moderation is a critical element in addressing intolerance and extremism, which can undermine social cohesion (Hutagalung, 2023). By fostering tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for differences, religious moderation not only serves as a preventive tool but also as the foundation for creating a safe and unified public space (Ngarawula & Wahyudi, 2024).

Moreover, in the digital age and with globalization driving the rapid flow of information across borders, the challenge of religious moderation has become even more complex (Zhang, 2025). Social media and digital platforms have become battlegrounds for ideas, including exclusive or radical religious beliefs, which can accelerate social fragmentation (Adeoye & Noorhayati, 2024). In this context, strengthening religious moderation through education, interfaith dialogue, and responsive public policies is essential (Majemu, 2024). Therefore, religious moderation should be viewed not just as an individual stance but as an integral part of national character building and reinforcing the values of nationality in a diverse society (Huda, 2024).

While the study provides a comprehensive review of religious moderation in Indonesia (Subchi et al., 2022; Afwadzi & Miski, 2021; Mulyana, 2023; Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Khasanah et al., 2023; Idi & Priansyah, 2023), there is a gap in addressing the practical challenges and barriers that hinder the implementation of moderation in everyday interactions among religious groups. The research emphasises the theoretical aspects of moderation and tolerance. However, it does not explore the real-world dynamics, such as potential resistance from specific religious communities or political influences, that might limit the effectiveness of these concepts. Additionally, while the study highlights the coexistence of religion and local wisdom, it does not examine the role of government policies or educational systems in promoting or hindering religious moderation. A deeper exploration of these factors could offer a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of fostering religious moderation across different societal sectors.

The background of this study is grounded in Indonesia's plural reality, which encompasses hundreds of ethnic groups, regional languages, and diverse religious and cultural traditions that coexist under the Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika." This diversity represents significant social capital but is also vulnerable to friction when exclusive religious attitudes, identity polarization, and misinformation in digital spaces take root. As online communication intensifies, the contestation of religious discourse often blurs the line between firm conviction and intolerance, creating a need for a conceptual and practical framework that safeguards religious commitment while ensuring respect for difference. Religious moderation offers a middle path that links religious teachings with local wisdom and civic ethics; yet, its meaning remains diffuse, its indicators are not standardized, and its application in education, public policy, and community programs remains fragmented. This study maps the emergence of religious moderation in Indonesia's multicultural society, clarifies its definitions and limitations, and

proposes operational directions to institutionalize moderation measurably and adaptively across regions, groups, and the evolving dynamics of digital spaces.

This study aims to analyse the role of religious moderation in Indonesia's diversity, focusing on understanding and defining religious moderation and tolerance in a pluralistic society. This study seeks to explore how religious moderation can be used to maintain harmony between religious groups, and how a culture of moderation can be integrated with local wisdom without negating either. The primary focus of this study is to understand the urgency of religious moderation in creating a harmonious social environment by examining the relationship between religion, culture, and government policies in supporting or hindering the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia.

2. METHOD

2.1 Research Design

This research is a type of library research, which is research whose data comes from literature related to the object of research, and then analyzes the content (Shafira & Arbi, 2023). This research is literature, including the type of library research. Library research is research whose data collection is carried out by collecting data from various literatures (Sari & Asmendri, 2020). The literature studied is not limited to books but can also be in the form of documentation materials, magazines, journals, and newspapers. The emphasis of literature research is to find various theories, laws, arguments, principles, opinions, ideas, and others that can be used to analyze and solve the problem under study.

2.2 Research Location

This research was conducted in the area of availability of research information sources such as the library at Jakarta State University. The research time was carried out in 2024.

2.3 Data Source

Research data sources consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data in this study were taken from books and research results on the concept of religious moderation and its implementation. Secondary data is a source of supporting data outside of primary data.

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection is done through the documentation method. This process is done by collecting documents, selecting documents according to the purpose and needs of the research, explaining recording, and interpreting them, and connecting them with other phenomena. Documentation studies can also be complemented by literature studies to obtain theories, and concepts as material for comparison, reinforcement, or rejection of research findings to then conclude.

Furthermore, data triangulation was carried out, namely combining data from various data collection techniques and existing data sources. The purpose of triangulation is not to find the truth about some phenomena, researchers use source triangulation, namely by exploring the truth of one or more information through several sources.

2.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is done by organizing data, breaking it down into units, synthesizing, arranging it into patterns, choosing which ones are important and which ones will be studied, and making conclusions that can be told to others. The flow used in analyzing data includes (1) data reduction; (2) data display; and (3) conclusion drawing.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

a) Public Understanding of Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism entered public discourse in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Australia and Canada began to declare their support for multiculturalism. These countries at this time felt the need to embrace multicultural identities and declared their support for multiculturalism, thus providing important clues to the general meaning and significance of these terms. The current of multiculturalism blows very fast along with the wave of globalization

sweeping the world. The wave of globalization, fueled by information technology, has created not only a world culture but also a cyber culture. [Colombo \(2015\)](#) revealed that three terms are often used to describe a society consisting of different religions, races, languages, and cultures, namely plurality, diversity, and multicultural. All three represent the same thing, namely the state of more than one or plural. Furthermore, [Fatmawati \(2021\)](#) explains that diversity affects human behavior, attitudes, and mindsets so that humans have different ways (usage), habits (folkways), rules (mores), and even customs. If the above conditions cannot be well understood by one party and the other, it will be very prone to intersections that then result in conflict. This is where multicultural values need to play a role.

Multiculturalism contains a very complex meaning, which consists of two syllables "multi" which means plural, and "culturalism" contains the meaning of culture or culture. The term plural implies a variety of meanings because pluralism does not just mean recognition of the existence of things that are types but also recognition that has political, social, and economic implications. Therefore, pluralism is related to the principles of democracy.

Multiculturalism is also defined as an understanding of diverse cultures. This cultural diversity requires understanding, mutual understanding, tolerance, and the like, to create a peaceful and prosperous life and avoid prolonged conflict. Multiculturalism is a concept where a community in the context of nationality can recognize diversity, differences, and plurality of cultures, both racial, ethnic, and religious. A concept that gives us an understanding that a plural nation is a nation filled with diverse cultures (multicultural). A multicultural nation is one in which ethnic and cultural groups can coexist peacefully in the principle of co-existence characterized by a willingness to respect other cultures. [Muwaffiqillah \(2021\)](#) explained that multiculturalism is the wisdom to see cultural diversity as a fundamental reality in people's lives. This wisdom will soon emerge, if a person opens himself to live life together by seeing plural reality as a natural necessity of life, both in his own multidimensional life and in the life of a complex society, and hence the realization that diversity in the dynamic reality of life is a necessity that cannot be rejected, denied, let alone destroyed.

[Poulter et al \(2016\)](#) explain five kinds of multiculturalism concepts as a worldview which are then realized in the Politic of Recognition, as follows: (1) Isolationist Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism refers to a society where various cultural groups live autonomously and engage in only minimal interaction with each other; (2) Accommodative. Multiculturalism is a plural society that has a dominant culture and then makes adjustments and accommodations for the cultural needs of minorities; (3) Automatic Multiculturalism. Is a plural society where the main cultural groups try to realize equality with the dominant culture and envision an autonomous life within a collectively acceptable political framework. The concern of these latter cultural groups is to maintain their way of life, which is the same way of life as the dominant group. They oppose the dominant cultural group and seek to create a society where each group can exist as equal partners; (4) Critical or Interactive Multiculturalism. This is a plural society where groups are less concerned with autonomous cultural life, but rather demand the creation of collectives that reflect and affirm their distinctive perspectives; (5) Cosmopolitan Multiculturalism. This is an ideology that seeks to erase cultural boundaries altogether to create a society where individuals are no longer bound to a particular culture. Instead, they freely engage in intercultural experiments and simultaneously develop their own cultural lives.

b) Public Understanding of Moderation

In language, moderation comes from English moderation which means moderate attitude, not excessive attitude. In Mu'jam Maqayis, Ibn Faris said that what is meant by wasatiyah (moderation) is something that shows justice and the middle. Linguist Raghil Al-Asfahani said that wasatiyah which comes from the word wasathiyah is something that is between two extremities, while that comes from awsat means the midpoint.

The word modernization comes from the Latin moderation which means moderation (neither excess nor deficiency). Religious moderation is fair and balanced in viewing, responding to, and practicing all concepts in pairs, in the dictionary the word fair is drawn as (1) not one-sided or impartial, (2) in favor of the truth, and (3) appropriate or not arbitrary.

In his book *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam* ([Ushama, 2014](#)) Mohamad Hasyim Kamali affirms that moderate in Arabic "wasathiyah" is inseparable from the keywords balance and justice. According to Mohammad Hashim Kamali, balance and justice are the basic principles of moderation in religion.

A religious person should not have an extreme or even radical view by only seeing things from one point of view but must be able to find a middle point from the two points of view, that as a relationship between religious communities will create a harmonious and comfortable relationship.

Moderate itself does not mean the attitude or behavior of inviting to compromise the main principles of the practice of worship of each religion that has become a belief, but moderation is a tolerant attitude towards people of

other religions in human relations, then [Nair & Kamalanabhan \(2010\)](#) concluded that moderation is a commitment to what it is, without being reduced or exaggerated, meaning that being in the middle does not lead to a sense of egoism. According to [Inglehart \(2020\)](#), modernization is a process of change, both attitudes and mentality to adjust the guidance of life with the guidance of current life to create happiness for the community. Moderation can also be interpreted as a movement or effort that has the aim of reinterpreting traditional doctrines and adjusting to the development of the Age and science.

Religious moderation is very important in a homogeneous country, such as Indonesia, which is rich in diversity so it is very easy for friction to arise between groups, especially between religions. So the a need to be an understanding that the values of behaving in the context of diversity make us not selfish, intolerant, discriminatory, and so on. So, religious moderation is our perspective on religion in a moderate way, namely understanding and practicing religious teachings without extremes, either extreme right or extreme left. Extremism, radicalism, hate speech, and fractured inter-religious relations are problems faced by the Indonesian people today.

Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance and harmony, at the local, national, and global levels. The choice of moderation by rejecting extremism and liberalism in religion is the key to balance, for the sake of maintaining civilization and creating peace. In this way, each religious community can treat others with respect, accept differences, and live together in peace and harmony. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, religious moderation may not be an option, but a necessity ([Mulyana, 2023](#)).

c) The Need for Integration of Multiculturalism and Religious Moderation

One of the best ways to respond to multiculturalism to run well in Indonesia is to make every level of education both at schools to the university level a center of socialization and acculturation of these aspired values or what can be called multiculturalism education from here students or the next generation of the nation can understand also the values of the importance of religious moderation. Multiculturalism and Religious Moderation offer a solution to overcome the threat of all forms of conflict and all kinds of conflict in the form of cultivating multicultural awareness in society and policies that can accommodate various interests. We, especially, as the future of the nation, should be able to practice the values of diversity well, be able to understand differences and have a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect not only in terms of religion but also in all other aspects. The unity and integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia is basically in the grasp of the community, the Indonesian millennial generation. In this case, a millennial can socialize the content of religious moderation among the community to create a harmonious, peaceful, and harmonious life. Several strategic steps need to be taken to create inclusive diversity.

These steps include including the content of religious moderation in the education curriculum, developing multicultural and multi-religious insights among the community (bottom-up approach), intensifying dialogue between community-based religious communities, and involving the entire community to organize cross-cultural and religious socio-economic activities, especially among the younger generation/millennial.

3.2. Discussion

All nations in the world are multicultural. The existence of a multicultural society gives added value to the nation. The diversity of race, ethnicity, tribe, or religion becomes its characteristic, as the Indonesian nation is unique and complicated because of the plurality of ethnicities, religions, nations, and races. Indonesian multicultural society is a society based on the ideology of multiculturalism or multicultural Unity in Diversity, which underlies the structure of Indonesian society at the national and local levels.

Factors causing the emergence of a multicultural society are geographical conditions, the influence of foreign cultures, mixed marriages, and also different climates. Indonesia, as a country, is rich in cultural treasures. Judging from the geographical situation of Indonesia, there are thousands of islands lined up from the West end to the East end, from Sumatra to Papua ([Aragon, 2012](#)). Each island has its ethnicity, religion, and race. The influence of foreign cultures, such as the influx of Chinese, Arabs, and Indians, has made Indonesian people have different customs and outlooks on life.

In my opinion, one of the best ways to respond to multiculturalism to run well in Indonesia is to make schools up to the University level the center of socialization and acculturation of these aspired values which can be called multiculturalism education. The essence of multiculturalism is tolerance for the common good and respect for the beliefs and interactions of each member of society. Cultivating mutual respect without distinguishing groups such as gender, ethnicity, race, culture, social strata, and religion.

For the Indonesian people, diversity is believed to be Allah Swt.'s will. Diversity is not requested, but rather a gift from Allah Swt., not to be bargained for but to be accepted (taken for granted). Indonesia is a country with ethnic, tribal, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity that is almost unrivaled in the world. In addition to the six most

widely practiced religions, there are hundreds or even thousands of tribes, regional languages and scripts, and local beliefs in Indonesia.

With the reality of the diversity of Indonesian society, one can imagine how diverse the opinions, views, beliefs, and interests of each citizen of the nation, including in religion. Fortunately, we have one united language, Indonesian, so that the diversity of beliefs can still be communicated, and therefore citizens can understand each other. Even so, friction due to mismanagement of diversity sometimes occurs.

To address these frictions and problems or conflicts, it is necessary to understand the attitude of religious moderation in the community. Religious moderation is confidence in the substance (essence) of religious teachings that are adhered to, while still sharing the truth as far as religious interpretation is concerned (Nabhani et al., 2023). Most people interpret moderation as an activity that does not deviate from the provisions or rules that have been agreed upon before. This word is usually confronted with extremism and radicalism, which means it can be interpreted that moderation is a form of the attitude of a person who has values of honesty, justice, compassion, and tolerance towards others.

From a religious point of view, diversity is a gift and Allah Swt.'s will; if Allah Swt. wants, it is certainly not difficult to make Allah Swt servants become uniform and one type only. But Allah Swt. indeed wills that mankind be diverse, tribal, and national, to make life dynamic, learning from each other, and getting to know each other. That way, isn't diversity very beautiful? We should be grateful for the diversity of the Indonesian nation. In addition to diverse religions and beliefs, within each religion, there is also a diversity of interpretations of religious teachings, especially when it comes to religious practices and rituals. Generally, each interpretation of religious teachings has adherents who believe in the truth of the interpretation they practice.

Knowledge of diversity is what allows a religious adherent to be able to take the middle way (moderate) if one choice of truth interpretation available is not possible. Extreme attitudes will usually arise when a religious adherent does not know the existence of other alternative truth interpretations that he can take. In this context, religious moderation becomes very important to be used as a perspective in religion (El Ishaq, 2021). In Indonesia, in an era of open democracy, differences in views and interests among diverse citizens are managed in such a way that all aspirations can be channeled properly. Likewise in religion, our constitution guarantees the freedom of religious people to embrace and practice religious teachings by their respective beliefs and convictions.

Our state ideology, Pancasila, strongly emphasizes the creation of inter-religious harmony (Intan, 2019). Indonesia has even become an example for the nations of the world in terms of successfully managing its cultural and religious diversity and is considered successful in terms of harmoniously juxtaposing the ways of religion and state. Conflicts and social friction on a small scale do often occur, but we always manage to get out of conflict and return to the awareness of the importance of unity as a great nation, a nation blessed with diversity by the Creator (Arifinsyah et al., 2020).

However, we must remain vigilant. One of the biggest threats that can divide us as a nation is religious conflict, especially those accompanied by acts of violence. Why? Because religion, whatever and wherever it is, has a basic nature of partisanship that is loaded with emotional content, and high subjectivity it almost always creates emotional bonds in its adherents. Even for its fanatics, religion is a sacred "thing" that is sacred, haunted, and sacred. Instead of leading to a peaceful and reassuring life, extreme fanaticism towards the truth of religious interpretation often leads to hostility and quarrels between them. Religious conflicts can affect various groups or sects within the same religion (sectarian or intra-religious), or occur among various groups within different religions (communal or inter-religious) (Njoku & Hamid, 2014). Usually, the beginning of religious conflicts is fueled by the attitude of blaming each other's religious interpretations and understandings, feeling self-righteous, and not opening up to other people's religious interpretations and views. To manage the very diverse religious situation in Indonesia as described above, we need a vision and solution that can create harmony and peace in carrying out religious life, namely by promoting religious moderation, respecting the diversity of interpretations, and not being trapped in extremism, intolerance and acts of violence.

The spirit of religious moderation is to find the meeting point of two extremes in religion. On the one hand, some religious extremists believe in the absolute truth of one interpretation of religious texts, while considering other interpreters heretical (Husna & Thohir, 2020). This group is commonly called ultra-conservatives. On the other hand, some religious believers go to the extreme of deifying reason to the point of ignoring the sanctity of religion or sacrificing the basic beliefs of their religious teachings for the sake of Tang's out-of-place tolerance for followers of other religions. They are commonly called extreme liberals. Both need moderation. Here are at least three reasons why religious moderation is needed and required in Indonesia, including:

First, one of the essences of religion is to maintain human dignity as a noble creature created by Allah Swt., including not taking his life. That is why every religion always carries a mission of peace and salvation. To achieve

that, religions always present teachings about balance in various aspects of life; religions also teach that protecting human life must be a priority; eliminating one life means eliminating the lives of all humanity. Religious moderation upholds human values. Extreme people are not infrequently trapped in the practice of religion in the name of Allah Swt. only to defend His majesty while putting aside the human aspect. Religious people in this way are willing to degrade their fellow human beings "in the name of Allah Swt.", even though preserving humanity itself is part of the core teachings of religion.

Secondly, thousands of years after religions were born, humanity has grown and diversified, tribes, nations, and skin colors, spread across various lands and regions. Along with the development and spread of humanity, religion also developed and spread. The works of previous scholars written in Arabic are no longer sufficient to accommodate the entire complexity of humanity's problems. Religious texts are also subjected to multiple interpretations, and the truth becomes multiplicative; some religious adherents no longer cling to the essence and essence of their religious teachings, but are fanatical about the interpretation of the truth of the version they like, and sometimes the interpretation that suits their political interests. Thus, conflict is inevitable. Such complexities of human life and religion occur in various parts of the world, not only in Indonesia and Asia but also in various other parts of the world. This context causes the importance of religious moderation so that human civilization is not destroyed due to conflicts with religious backgrounds.

Third, specifically in the Indonesian context, religious moderation is needed as our cultural strategy for maintaining Indonesianis. As a very heterogeneous nation, since the beginning, the founding fathers have succeeded in bequeathing a form of agreement in the nation and state, namely Pancasila in the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, which has succeeded in uniting all religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural groups. Indonesia has agreed not to be a religious state, but it also does not separate religion from the daily lives of its citizens. Religious values are preserved, combined with the values of local wisdom and customs, some religious laws are institutionalized by the state, and religious and cultural rituals intertwine in harmony and peace. That is the true identity of Indonesia, a country based on religion, with a character that is polite, tolerant, and able to dialogue with diversity. Extremism and radicalism will undoubtedly damage the joints of our Indonesianis if allowed to grow. Therefore, religious moderation is very important as a perspective. Apart from the three major points above, it can also be explained that religious moderation is a common moral good that is relevant not only to individual behavior but also to communities or institutions.

According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs, moderation has two principles: fairness and balance (Davids, 2017). Being fair means putting everything in its place while carrying it out as well and as quickly as possible. Meanwhile, being balanced means always being in the middle between two poles. Balance is a term to describe the perspective, attitude, and commitment to always be on the side of justice, humanity, and equality. It can be thought of as a way of doing things in moderation, neither too much nor too little, neither conservative nor liberal. In terms of worship, for example, a moderate believes that religion is about devotion to Allah Swt. in the form of carrying out His teachings that are oriented towards efforts to ennoble humanity. Moderation has long been a prominent aspect of the history of civilization and the traditions of all the world's religions (Kubro & Ali, 2021). Each religion undoubtedly tends to teach that refers to the same point of meaning, namely that choosing the middle way between two extremes and not going overboard is the most ideal religious attitude.

This common value of moderation is also what is likely to be the driving energy for the historic meeting of two major world religious figures, Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Sheikh Ahmad el-Tayyeb, on February 4, 2019. The meeting produced a human fraternity document, which among its main messages emphasized that our common enemies today are fanatic extremism, destruction, war, intolerance, and hateful attitudes among fellow human beings, all in the name of religion.

As a plural and multicultural country, conflicts with religious backgrounds have very potential in Indonesia. We need religious moderation as a solution so that it can be an important key to creating a religious life that is harmonious, and peaceful, and emphasizes balance, both in personal life, family, society, and life as a whole. Moderation in religion in no way means compromising the basic principles or main rituals of religion to please others who have different religious views, or different religions. Religious moderation is also not an excuse for someone not to take the teachings of their religion seriously. Rather, religious moderation means being confident in the essence of one's religion, which teaches the principles of fairness and balance, but sharing the truth as far as religious interpretation is concerned.

4. IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

4.1 Research Implications

The implications of this study confirm that religious moderation can be operationalized as a cross-sectoral framework that guides education, policy, and community programs in Indonesia's diverse society. In the field of education, the findings can be translated into learning outcomes, attitude indicators, assessment rubrics, and teaching materials that integrate religious teachings with local wisdom and reflective dialogue practices. In the realm of public policy, the government and religious institutions can develop guidelines for curating digital space content, standards for training dialogue facilitators, and citizen-based mediation mechanisms that are sensitive to contextual differences between regions and between urban and rural areas; At the community level, community organizations, schools, and houses of worship can build working coalitions that promote equal communication, media literacy, prevention of hate speech, and interfaith dialogue. For accountability, each initiative needs measurable indicators of moderation and tolerance, periodic surveys, and impact evaluations that monitor changes in attitudes and behavior. These findings also open up a further research agenda, including the development of valid instruments for the Indonesian population, the trial of dialogue models and curricula in long-term designs, and the mapping of more detailed contextual variations to ensure interventions are targeted effectively.

4.2 Research Contributions

The contribution of this research is to provide a clear conceptual map of religious moderation and tolerance in the context of Indonesia's diversity, while also defining the boundaries of the concept so as not to fall into relativism or extremism; to offer an operational framework that integrates religious teachings with local wisdom and constitutional values so that it can be translated into attitude indicators, learning outcomes, assessment rubrics, and guidelines for dialogue practices; proposing a methodological design for reliable measurement through the development of indicators that can be tested for validity and reliability, multimodal analysis templates for digital content, and impact evaluation designs using quasi-experimental approaches and long-term studies; presenting a foundation for policies and programs that can be used by the government, religious institutions, and communities for content curation, facilitator training, and citizen mediation; and establishing a follow-up research agenda that maps variations between regions, between religions, and urban-rural differences to ensure more targeted and replicable interventions.

5. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

4.1 Research Limitation

Limitations of this study include: its library based design, which does not incorporate field data to test causal relationships or empirically assess intervention effectiveness; potential publication and language bias in source selection, as gray literature, community reports, and non indexed local sources may be underrepresented; a temporal cutoff at 2023, making the findings vulnerable to obsolescence amid the rapidly evolving discourse on moderation in digital and public spheres; unquantified heterogeneity across Indonesian provinces, religions, and urban and rural settings, requiring caution in generalization; the operationalization of "moderation" and "tolerance" and their indicators, which have not yet been tested for reliability and validity in the Indonesian population; a synthesis process, through data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing, that relies on the researcher's judgment and may introduce interpretive bias; and insufficient analysis of multimodal expressions, including audio video, symbols, and rituals.

4.2 Recommendation for Future Research Directions

Future research should empirically validate indicators of moderation and tolerance through a national-scale survey accompanied by psychometric testing, including both exploratory and confirmatory analyses, as well as reliability assessments. It should also design comparative studies across regions, religions, and community types using stratified sampling to map contextual variation systematically. Multimodal content analysis of podcasts, YouTube, and short video platforms should be conducted with a standardized codebook and interrater reliability checks, combined with mixed methods such as community ethnography, focus group discussions, and vignette experiments to test the boundaries of tolerance and the effectiveness of dialogue strategies. Longitudinal designs are recommended to track changes in attitudes and behaviors following curriculum interventions, facilitator training, or interfaith dialogue programs. Policy and program evaluations can employ quasi-experimental approaches, such as propensity score methods and difference-in-differences, to estimate their impact on social cohesion.

6. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Indonesia's rich plurality of ethnicities, languages, religions, cultures, and social strata is both a unifying resource and a potential source of friction. Diversity becomes constructive when supported by mutual recognition and civil norms, yet it can trigger tension when exclusive claims to truth and salvation dominate public discourse. Evidence from the review indicates that frictions often arise where communities compete for influence without a foundation of tolerance. In this landscape, cultural diversity is not an anomaly but a natural condition arising from continuous encounters among groups with distinct lifeways and value systems.

Religious moderation emerges as the most viable middle path for sustaining harmony within this plural setting. Moderation is not a call to dilute conviction but an invitation to practice faith in ways that respect others, resonate with local wisdom, and align with the nation's constitutional values. It fosters empathetic dialogue, the refusal of coercion, and fairness in treating individuals from diverse backgrounds. The tradition of moderation in Islam, as shown by the Prophet, companions, and scholars, illustrates how firm belief can coexist with justice toward people of varied religions, races, ethnicities, and languages. This ethos can be translated across communities to build shared civic space without erasing distinct identities.

Building on these insights, the study affirms moderation as a culturally grounded approach to fostering long-term social cohesion. It recommends that education, community programs, and public communication adopt moderation as a guiding principle for curriculum design, leadership training, and interfaith practice. While future empirical work is still needed to test specific indicators and measure impact, the conceptual map offered here provides a baseline for policy guidance and community engagement. By anchoring religious commitment in respect for difference and practical cooperation, Indonesian society can harness its diversity as a strength and reduce the risk of conflict in everyday life.

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Author Contribution Statement

The authors declare that all data in this article are the result of field studies conducted by the authors, each of whom contributed fully. Salma Khoerunisa: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing - Original Draft. Shahibah Yuliani: Conceptualization, Writing - Review & Editing.

Declaration of GenAI in Scientific Writing

The authors declare that Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools were employed in the drafting and revision of this manuscript to check spelling and grammar, identify typos, grammatical errors, suggest paraphrases, reduce passive voice, and eliminate repeated words, sentences, and unnecessary adverbs. The suggestions provided by GenAI were critically evaluated and modified to ensure that the final draft remains representative of the authors' own work. All instances of Generative AI usage in this article were conducted by the authors in accordance with the [JISMB Generative AI \(GenAI\) Policy](#), with the authors assuming full responsibility for the originality, accuracy, and integrity of the work."

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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