

Unity in Diversity: Examining Religious Moderation across Religions in Indonesia

Muhamad Maulana¹, Nabila Nindya Alifia Putri², Zihan Fahira³

Faculty of Education, Universitas Islam International Indonesia, Faculty of Psychology, Gadjah Mada University. Email: muhamad.maulana@uiii.ac.id¹, nabila.putri@uiii.ac.id², zihanfahira@mail.ugm.ac.id³

Abstract

Indonesia's profound religious diversity, encapsulated by the principle of "Unity in Diversity," presents both opportunities and challenges. This study explores religious moderation across Indonesia's six recognized religions: Islam, Christianity (Catholic and Protestant), Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, defining it as a commitment to tolerance, inclusivity, and critical thinking within religious contexts. Additionally, Indonesia uniquely acknowledges diverse indigenous beliefs stemming from various tribes and cultures. Through a comprehensive literature review, the study reveals that religious moderation varies among different faith communities but remains pivotal for fostering peace and harmonious coexistence. Interfaith initiatives, religious institutions, and education emerged as critical factors in promoting religious moderation. The study concludes that embracing the diverse expressions of religious moderation is essential for nurturing a more inclusive and harmonious Indonesia, where "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" transcends rhetoric to become a vibrant reality.

Keywords: religious moderation, unity in diversity, Indonesia

Introduction

Indonesia stands out as a nation characterized by a rich tapestry of diversity, encompassing individuals of various cultures and religions. Preserving and honoring Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity is imperative, as it stands as a valuable national asset (Idi & Priansyah, 2023). The foundational principle of "Unity in Diversity," ingrained in the country's ethos since its inception and encapsulated in the national motto "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," advocates for the acknowledgment and celebration of disparities in culture, ethnicity, language, and religion (Rahman et al., 2020).

Within this multicultural landscape, a rising trend is the adoption of religious

moderation, an ethos gaining traction in Indonesia. This approach reflects a commitment to respecting differences and fostering harmony among religious communities, all while preserving their unique identities and beliefs (Idi & Priansyah, 2023). Indonesia, in accordance with Article 28 E (1) of the 1945 Constitution, upholds the freedom of every citizen to embrace and practice their religion, a commitment reflected in the recognition of six major religions, including Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholic Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as outlined in the Population Administration Law Number 23 of 2006. For those who do not adhere to recognized religions, their status is regulated by the Constitutional Court Decision (MK) Number 97/PUU-XIV/

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2016, which acknowledges the recognition of the existence of adherents of Indigenous beliefs. Indigenous beliefs are an important part of cultural heritage. These beliefs are often deeply rooted in the natural world and reflect a close relationship between humans and the environment (Handaya, 2021a). These diverse faiths represent a crucial source of mental and spiritual enrichment for the nation, as each religion emphasizes the importance of love and harmonious coexistence among its followers (Panuju & Kontiarta, 2018).

The Indonesian government has officially endorsed religious moderation as a national policy, aiming to curb intolerance and radicalism (Subhi, 2019). Religious moderation is essential in promoting social harmony and preventing conflicts between different religious groups. It is not about compromising one's beliefs but rather about finding common ground and respecting differences. It is about recognizing that people have different beliefs and that these beliefs should be respected and tolerated (Viktorahadi, 2022). However, challenges arise as religious extremism poses a threat to the nation's diversity, leading to heightened sectarian tensions and the rise of identity politics in Indonesia's pluralistic society (Widodo & Karnawati, 2019). The diversity in religion, beliefs, and culture should not be a reason for division within the Indonesian nation. Instead, through these differences and guided by a moderate approach, national unity and cohesion can be preserved, as depicted in the following illustration.



Picture 1 Source of religious moderation in Indonesia

The illustration above demonstrates the close relationship among religion, culture, and belief systems that have shaped the Indonesian nation. Religion, culture, and beliefs are integrated into a cohesive whole, resulting in a moderate stance (Qasim, 2020). Promoting religious moderation plays a crucial role in fostering interfaith harmony and tolerance within Indonesia's diverse and multicultural society. Multiculturalism is a social and cultural phenomenon that recognizes and respects the diversity of different cultures and religions within a society (Idi & Priansyah, 2023). It is a way of life that promotes mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation among people of different backgrounds.

However, the effective implementation of this policy encounters obstacles. One notable challenge is the misconstrued interpretation of moderation, sparking debates over determining who qualifies as moderate. Additionally, the surge of identity politics has exacerbated divisions among religious groups (Jubba et al., 2022). The term has become broad, covering a range of attitudes and behaviors, leading to debates on its true meaning (Nur & Mukhlis, 2015). Some advocate for tolerance towards other religions, while others emphasize strict adherence to one's faith. This misinterpretation fosters confusion and polarization among religious groups. The challenge lies in establishing a shared understanding of what moderation entails and promoting this comprehension among diverse religious communities (Idi & Priansyah, 2023).

Religious moderation, as highlighted in our earlier discussion, involves aligning the understanding and practice of religion with its core essence—upholding the dignity, honor, and civilization of humanity. It emphasizes that religion should not be misused to undermine civilization but rather should contribute to its construction (Masykhur et al., 2019). It emphasizes the importance of tolerance, dialogue, and collaboration among different faith communities. By fostering these values, religious moderation builds trust and understanding between different religious groups, leading to greater social cohesion and

stability. These initiatives have helped create a culture of respect and understanding among different religious groups, contributing to the country's reputation as a model of religious pluralism (Daffa & Anggara, 2023).

However, research on the perspective of religious moderation in Indonesia remains limited, particularly in comprehensively addressing all recognized religions in the country. For example, a study conducted by Samsuri and Askar (2023) titled "Religious Moderation in the Eyes of Islam and Buddhism (A Comparative Analysis)" only focuses on two religions, Islam and Buddhism. Another study by Aji Kusmanto and Wakhyudin (2023) solely takes the viewpoint of one religion, Confucianism. Additionally, research conducted by I Wayan Tirta Gunawijaya (2022) discussing religious moderation from the Hindu perspective only approaches the topic from a single religious standpoint.

In connection with this, our research aims to understand the complex dynamics of religious moderation among diverse religious communities in Indonesia. By comparing how different faiths interpret and practice moderation within the "Unity in Diversity" framework, we aim to learn about the factors that promote harmony among different religions and the challenges that hinder it. The goal is to contribute to a better understanding of Indonesia's diverse society and find ways to improve interfaith dialogue and cooperation amidst today's challenges.

Research Method

In this article, the qualitative research method was employed to conduct a comprehensive literature review that delves into the subject of religious moderation across various religions in Indonesia. The literature review considered a research method in itself, entails the collection, analysis, and synthesis of previous research on the chosen topic (Snyder, 2019). Drawing primarily from sources such as journals, books, and research findings related to religious moderation, this study adopted a literature review not just as a method but as a broader approach to scientific inquiry. It

encompasses a system of practices, methods, rules, and principles within the field (Onwuegbuzie & Frels, 2016).

The collected data undergoes rigorous analysis and categorization, organized around pertinent themes, with the overarching goal of presenting an objective and comprehensive overview of the topic. This method enables an in-depth exploration of the underlying meanings associated with the role of local religions in contributing to religious moderation, thereby exemplifying the unity in diversity within the context of Indonesia.

Utilizing a literature review offers several advantages. It serves as a valuable tool for understanding the current state of knowledge, evaluating the quality and robustness of existing evidence, pinpointing gaps in the literature that warrant further investigation, and even contributing to the development of new theoretical frameworks and models (Snyder, 2019). This methodological approach ensures a nuanced and well-informed exploration of religious moderation across diverse religious landscapes in Indonesia.

Results and Discussion

In examining the manifestations of religious moderation in various faith traditions, distinct theoretical frameworks guide the understanding of moderation within Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and indigenous beliefs. The term "moderate," as articulated by Hasyim Kamali, is intricately connected to the concepts of balance and justice (Sutrisno, 2019). This nuanced perspective translates into active participation in interfaith dialogues, fostering respect for diverse interpretations, and engaging in civil society, all while promoting education and critical thought.

Islam

The Islamic religion is defined as a revelation sent down by Allah SWT to His Messenger to be conveyed to mankind throughout time, is a system of beliefs and rules that regulate human life in various relationships, both between humans and God, fellow humans,

and the relationship between humans and other worlds (Anshari, 2008). Hasbullah (2001) explains that Islam was brought by the Prophet Muhammad SAW around the 7th century AD, centered in Mecca and Medina. After the Prophet Muhammad died, the leadership of the Muslim community was replaced by the caliph Abu Bakar Ash-Shiddiq, followed by the caliph Umar bin Khattab where Islam began to spread to Syria, Palestine, Egypt, and Iraq. During the time of the caliphs Uthman bin Affan, Ali bin Abi Talib, the Umayyads and the Abasiyyahs, Islam had spread to China and even to all corners of the world, including Indonesia (Hasbullah, 2001). The entry of Islam into Indonesia coincided with the 7th century AD or the 1st century Hijriah (Mujib, 2021). Islam entered and spread in Indonesia through various routes, starting from trade, marriage, education, politics, arts, and culture (Permatasari & Hudaidah, 2021).

Trade is a route that has a huge impact on the entry of Islam into Indonesia. The large number of agricultural products makes Indonesia a popular destination for traders from various countries, such as China, India, Arabia, and Iran (Husnussaadah et al., 2023). Long-lasting interactions between Muslim traders from various countries and Indonesian citizens ultimately formed a Muslim society (Syafrizal, 2015). The marriage route was also the way Islam spread in Indonesia, many traders from Persia, Gujarat, and Arabia decided to settle in various regions of Indonesia and marry natives because of the widespread trade (Husnussaadah et al., 2023). Syafrizal (2015) explained that after traders from outside Indonesia controlled economic power in Indonesian ports such as Gresik, the economic centers developed into centers of education and the spread of Islam. Islam finally began to spread through educational channels where Islamic education and da'wah centers in the Samudra Pasai kingdom acted as the first da'wah centers visited by students, and sent Maulana Malik Ibrahim, who was a local preacher, to Java (Syafrizal, 2015). Rahmawati (2014) stated that through political channels many people converted to Islam after their kings embraced Islam, apart

from that the victory of the Islamic Kingdom against non-Islamic Kingdoms was also a way to attract more people to convert to Islam. Arts and culture also play a role in the spread of Islam in Indonesia, such as through wayang performances and stories with themes of Islamic teachings (Rahmawati, 2014). The spread of Islam in Indonesia was adapted to the character and socio-cultural conditions that existed in Indonesia at that time so that Islam was easily accepted and developed quickly (Ali, 2020).

The development of the Islamic religion continues to this day, changing times have given rise to new phenomena, and the presence of various renewable Islamic phenomena and dynamics has produced many diverse analyses to find solutions to the problems of terrorism, radicalism, and issues of violence and injustice in the name of Islam (Yunus, 2017). In recent years, Islam has faced two major challenges; the first challenge comes from the Muslim community which is extreme, harsh, and strict in understanding religion, forcing other Muslims to accept their views by force; the second challenge comes from some Muslims who follow negative thoughts originating from other religious cultures and civilizations (Habibie et al., 2021). Further explanation by Habibie et al. (2021) that Islam rejects violence and disdain for rules, Islam highly upholds the values of moderation in religion.

The word moderation in Arabic is interpreted as *al-wasathiyah*, linguistically *al-wasathiyah* comes from the word *wasath*. *Wasath* involves avoiding extremism and straying from the path of religious correctness (Al Ashafani A A, 2009). The meaning of moderation in the Islamic context comes from the teaching of "*tawasuth*" (balance) which urges people to refrain from excessive attitudes or extremism in matters of faith (Akhmadi, 2019). This concept of Islamic moderation emphasizes balance, justice, tolerance, and harmony in all aspects of life as a form of *wasathiyah* Islam which reflects the diversity, pluralism, and democracy of Indonesian society (Kasdi, 2019). Moderation in Islam is closely related to the concept of *wasathiyah* which represents a middle way between extremes and emphasizes a wise

attitude in every action, whether religious or social, individual or collective (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019).

Religious moderation in Islam underlines the importance of balance and harmony in religious practice with the hope that Islam, as a religion of peace, compassion, and tolerance, must reflect these values in the behavior of its followers. This includes rejecting extremism and violence and prioritizing the values of tolerance and inclusiveness (Jubba et al., 2022). Some of the challenges that occur in society include misinterpretation of religious texts, the rise of political Islam, societal pressure, and historical tensions with other communities. The role of religious moderation in Islam significantly contributes to interfaith understanding and peaceful coexistence (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). From an Islamic perspective, moderation will not be realized unless honesty, openness, compassion, and flexibility are carried out in one unit and not separately (Habibie et al., 2021). Nur and Mukhlis (2015) stated that the understanding and practice of religious practices of a moderate Muslim can be characterized by characteristics including *tawassuth* (taking the middle path), *tawazzun* (balanced), *i'tidal* (straight and firm), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *musawah* (egalitarian), *syura* (deliberation), *ishlah* (reform), *aulawiyah* (putting priorities first), *tathawwur wa ibtikar* (dynamic and innovative), and *tahadhdhur* (civilized). The characteristics of moderate Muslims indicate that moderate Muslims have different characteristics from adherents of other religions, as well as Islamic moderation in Indonesia and other countries also has differences that are influenced by various factors.

A study by Subchi et al. (2022) aims to uncover the factors that shape religious moderation among Muslims in Indonesia. Findings indicate that being deeply religious has a positive impact on moderation, encompassing aspects like religious knowledge, beliefs, rituals, and personal experiences. Additionally, socio-economic factors such as gender and family income play a significant role in shaping one's level of religious moderation (Subchi et al., 2022). Despite the challenges, religious

moderation in Islam in Indonesia makes a significant contribution to interfaith understanding, peaceful coexistence, and the broader theme of "Unity in Diversity", despite facing resistance from extremist ideologies.

Christianity

Christianity comes from Christ, the religious honorific title of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Christ is Greek (*Khristos*) meaning the anointed one (Sinaga, 1987). Mansur (2009) states that Christianity was born in Palestine brought by Jesus Christ and developed in Europe, Christianity experienced many changes which caused divisions that gave birth to Catholic Christianity, Protestantism, and so on. Christianity entered Indonesia through Dutch colonialism so that Christianity spread throughout the Indonesian archipelago, its followers believed in the Holy Bible (Mansur, 2009).

Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019) explains that in the Bible, as is the belief of Christians, it is often said that Jesus is the peacemaker. From the Bible, it can also be seen that there are no verses that indicate that Jesus ever invited people to cause damage, or violence, let alone war (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). The teachings in the Bible are one of the goals to be achieved in the concept of moderation, namely creating balance and peace. In the context of Christianity, the emphasis on inclusivity and social justice plays an important role in shaping the manifestation of religious moderation (Trisaputra et al., 2023).

Moderate Christianity offers a perspective aimed at tempering extreme interpretations of Christian teachings held by certain followers (Kementerian Agama, 2019). Emphasizing balance and tolerance, moderate Christians demonstrate a willingness to engage with diverse viewpoints and interpretations of scripture, embodying an open-minded approach to spiritual growth and religious dialogue (Klein, 2023).

Advocacy for marginalized groups, active participation in interfaith cooperation on social issues, and community service initiatives directed at building a just and equitable society

are integral components of Moderate Christianity (Trisaputra et al., 2023). One of the initiatives to bolster religious moderation, as highlighted by the Ministry of Religion (2019), involves fostering extensive interaction between different religions and sects within the religious community.

The focus of the aspect of religious moderation in Christianity is balancing traditional teachings with contemporary understandings of the world. According to the NACM (National Association of Christian Ministers) Manual to the Ministry, Moderate Christianity seeks to integrate the faith's basic teachings with modern perspectives, cultivating intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and an open-minded approach to spiritual growth (Klein, 2023). The essence of moderation in Christianity is clearly seen in teachings that transcend sectarian boundaries, emphasizing just and balanced love for all humanity. Not only limited to loving fellow Christians, this concept puts forward a holistic, loving, and balanced approach toward all individuals, showing the nature of religious moderation in the Christian faith which is universal and inclusive (Trisaputra et al., 2023).

A good example of religious moderation that happened in Indonesia is within the "Kenduri Natal" which is the manifestation of Javanese and Christian acculturation that happened at Purworejo, Central Java back in 2011. As reported in the news, Kenduri Natal means to highlight the significance as a way of preserving and promoting Javanese identity, as well as fostering interreligious harmony and tolerance by inviting residents around the church; the majority of them are Muslims. Christmas should not just be celebrated as a celebration of "religion that fell from the sky," but also in its contextual context, according to Reverend Petrus Mardianto, also known as Ki Aryo Aldaka from GKJ Karangyoso Purworejo. It must, however, be observed as a way to build amicable ties with people of all classes and faiths (Junianto, 2011).

Hinduism

Hinduism originates from India and is one

of the oldest religions in the world. The origin of the word Hindu comes from the Sanskrit language *Sindhu*, the name of the Indus river in India, and is the name of the Hindu religion (Mansur, 2009a). Hinduism is also called "*Sanatama Dharma*" which means eternal religion (Pendit & Saraswati, 1993). Krishna (1993) stated that Hinduism was brought by the *Rishis* who received the truth in the form of *Shuruti* or revelation, they were the Hindu Prophets or Apostles. Hinduism is characterized by primitive animism, pluralism, and even monist philosophical thinking in its beliefs (Smith, 1970). In contemporary Indonesia, Hindu religious practices have evolved, with Puja Tri Sandhya and Panca Sembah emerging as pivotal rituals. These practices have come to define the trajectory of Indonesian Hindu civilization since the establishment of Parisadha in 1960 (Kementerian Agama, 2019).

Hinduism is one of the religions in Indonesia, so Hindu adherents must also practice moderation. Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019) explains that religious moderation among Hindus is directed at strengthening individual awareness in instilling religious teachings. Gunawijaya (2022) revealed that Hinduism teaches the basic concepts of *tattwa*, morals, and ceremonies in moderately practicing its religious teachings. The concept of *tattwa* includes the principles of truth and reality, the moral concept of ethical behavior, which is the basis of moderate religious practice, and the concept of ceremony which guides the rituals and ceremonies carried out by Hindus (Gunawijaya, 2022).

Subagiasta (2021) states that Hinduism emphasizes respect for religious and cultural diversity and adapting to the village context, time (*kala*), and place (*patra*). Subagiasta (2021) also explained that Hindus have a view, namely the concept of *Catur Purusa Artha*, four noble goals in life, as a guideline for practicing religious life. Upholding truth (*dharma*), achieving material prosperity by dharma (*artha*), achieving noble life goals (*kama*), and achieving physical and spiritual freedom (*moksha*) are the fundamental goals that guide Hindus in living a balanced and purposeful life. These goals not

only provide direction to individual lives but also contribute to an overall sense of moderation within the framework of Hinduism (Subagiasta, 2021).

Moderation follows the Hindu civilization development framework with aspects of political, social, cultural development, and security protection (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). Hinduism places great emphasis on ethical principles or morals, as an important component in instilling religious moderation. Hindus are encouraged to follow *dharma* (righteous duty), *ahimsa* (non-violence), and *bhakti* (devotion) to God, fellow creatures, and the universe (Gunawijaya, 2022). The assertion by Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019) is echoed in Hindu religious teachings, which underscore the significance of moral values in nurturing harmonious human relationships, identified as one of the three pillars of prosperity. Within Hinduism, compassion holds a central position as a core tenet of religious moderation, reflecting its universal importance across various faith traditions.

Hinduism in Indonesia are also affected by Buddhism, which has historically been combined with Hinduism, as another example of religious moderation in Hinduism. The concepts of sin, salvation, and revelation are among the other elements of Christian and Islamic theology that they have embraced. The Ogoh-ogoh sculptures, wayang shadow puppets, television, and the internet are examples of contemporary art, entertainment, and technology that they have embraced (McDaniel, 2017, p.8) Indonesian Hindus are also engaging in an intriguing kind of moderation in their religion, as seen by the emergence of new rites and activities that draw inspiration from Islam. During specific hours of the day, they started airing a Hindu call to prayer over loudspeakers (McDaniel, 2017, p.5).

Buddhism

Around the first century CE, Buddhism, Hinduism, and other Indian influences made their way to Indonesia. It was prosperous in several kingdoms, including Majapahit,

Mataram, Sailendra, and Srivijaya, and it gave rise to numerous works of art and architecture, including the temples of Borobudur and Mendut (Mohd Naa'im & Awang, 2017). Indonesian Buddhism saw various periods of fall and resurgence as a result of social, political, and theological issues. The growth of Islam, colonialism, nationalism, and modernization were obstacles for it. Nowadays, the majority of Buddhists in Indonesia are members of the Chinese minority as well as a few native ethnic groups including the Javanese, Balinese, and Batak. It is one of the six official faiths of the nation. The diversity and ecumenical nature of Buddhism in Indonesia encompasses several schools and traditions, including Mahâyâna, Tantrayâna, Theravâda, and Buddhayâna. (Suprajitno, 2019).

The core concept of moderation or the middle way in Buddhism according to Paramita (2021), is called The Noble Eightfold Path (JMBD). This is the path that avoids the two extremes, namely greed and hatred, which are the source of all suffering. The JMBD, or the Noble Eightfold Path, comprises eight fundamental elements: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. Within this path, the ethical dimension, initially termed Sila or Morality, encompasses three key components: right speech, right action, and right livelihood. This means to refrain from harming oneself and others through words, deeds, and occupations. Moving on, the next mental aspect of the noble eightfold path is called Samadhi (Meditation). This includes right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. It means to cultivate a calm and clear mind that can see things as they are. The next insight aspect of the noble eightfold path is called Panna (wisdom). It includes the right view and right intention to understand the true nature of reality, such as impermanence, suffering, and non-self (Paramita, 2021).

The teachings of Buddha, rooted in love, peace, and tolerance, highlight the essence of religious moderation. The spirit of metta and Buddha's compassionate approach to teaching Dharma without coercion resonates with

humanitarian values (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). Buddhism, grounded in non-violence and compassion, manifests moderation by promoting interfaith dialogue, advocating for non-violent conflict resolution, and emphasizing compassion (Samsuri & Askar, 2023). While facing challenges of adaptation to changing societies, misconceptions, and reconciling values with modernity, religious moderation within Buddhism fosters a culture of peace, encourages respectful interfaith dialogue, and contributes to the concept of pluralism (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019).

One example of the application of moderation found in Javanese tradition is through *Nyadran*. Bagio and Priyadarshana (2023) delve into the significance of the *Nyadran* tradition within Buddhism, which offers a meticulous examination of how this cultural practice aligns seamlessly with the principles of religious moderation. Employing a qualitative ethnographic approach in the Banaran hamlet, the researchers unravel the communal observance of the *Nyadran* tradition, which engages participants from diverse religious backgrounds, including Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims. Within this context, the *Nyadran* tradition unfolds as an embodiment of diversity and social equilibrium, serving as a tangible reflection of the Buddhist principle of the Middle Way. The emergent themes of gratitude, respect, and harmony underscore the tradition's noble qualities, positioning it as a manifestation of the community's commitment to balanced coexistence. Bagio and Priyadarshana passionately advocate for the preservation and promotion of the *Nyadran* tradition, recognizing it not only as a cultural gem but as a valuable local wisdom that plays a pivotal role in nurturing a peaceful and cooperative society.

However, the strengthening of moderation from a Buddhist perspective in Indonesia still experiences several obstacles, including the conversion of Buddhism to other religions like Islam and Christianity. According to Putra (2012), this could lessen the impact of Buddhism and its lessons, which include moderation.

According to one study conducted by Santi and Dhammasani (2023) Buddhists in Karang Sari Village, Cluwak District, Pati Regency, have different social interactions when they comprehend the concept of religious moderation. The survey found that 53% of Buddhist social interactions in Karang Sari Village are facilitated by a knowledge of religious moderation. This suggests that fostering a deeper understanding and practice of religious moderation can lead to improved social relations and harmony (Santi & Dhammasani, 2023).

In conclusion, Buddhism, grounded in non-violence and compassion, manifests moderation by promoting interfaith dialogue, advocating for non-violent conflict resolution, and emphasizing compassion (Samsuri & Askar, 2023). While facing challenges of adaptation to changing societies, misconceptions, and reconciling values with modernity, religious moderation within Buddhism fosters a culture of peace, encourages respectful interfaith dialogue, and contributes to the concept of pluralism (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019).

Confucianism

Confucianism is a philosophy deeply ingrained in East Asian spiritual and political life which centers around the core idea of *ren* (humaneness or benevolence), aligning one's character with ritual norms (*li*), loyalty to one's true nature (*zhong*), reciprocity (*shu*), and filial piety (*xiao*) (Britannica, 2023). The emphasis on living a life of moderation and balance is a distinctive hallmark of Confucian philosophy (Kusmanto & Wakhudin, 2023b). This principle finds expression in the practice of *Zhongyong*, the doctrine of the mean, which advocates for a path between extreme asceticism and sensual indulgence (Kusmanto & Wakhudin, 2023).

In regards to the evolution of this religion, Aprilia & Murtiningsih (2017) (2017) notes that there was a divergence during the tenure of the New Order government, which did not declare that Confucianism became an official religion in Indonesia but rather that it merely evolved into an ethical code of conduct or philosophical

system. The Chinese community in Indonesia does not consider the teachings of Khong Fu Tze, also known as Kung Tze.

Confucianism acknowledges the diversity of beliefs and practices among various cultures and traditions, which is why it supports religious tolerance and pluralism. Because it exhorts people to develop moral qualities, carry out their responsibilities, and advance the common good, Confucianism also fosters societal peace and justice (Kusmanto & Wakhudin, 2023). The significance of religious moderation is not confined to Confucianism alone; it resonates across Indonesian society, where indicators of successful religious moderation include national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and respectful acceptance of traditions (Kusmanto & Wakhudin, 2023). Transitioning from these societal indicators, Confucianism lays out eight fundamental principles, such as Wei De Dong Tian (pleasing God through virtue), Zhong Shu (loyalty and reciprocity), universal brotherhood, and Yin Yang (harmony and balance), offering a comprehensive guide to practicing moderation (Kusmanto & Wakhudin, 2023b).

Expanding the discourse, Confucianism, though not exclusive to the ethnic Chinese community, aligns its faith with the teachings accessible to anyone embracing its principles (Huda & Sari, 2019). Tolerance in Confucianism, a core value imparted by Confucianism, advocates profound respect and acceptance of differences, fostering harmony and peace among individuals of diverse backgrounds (Huda & Sari, 2019). The Four Cardinal Principles and Eight Virtues constitute a foundational set of moral principles in Confucianism. These principles include propriety (ritual norms), righteousness, integrity, and shame. The Eight Virtues encompass loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, love, honesty, justice, harmony, and peace. Together, these principles offer a comprehensive guide to practicing moderation in Confucianism (Britannica, 2023). The historical Boen Bio Temple in Surabaya exemplifies Confucianism's commitment to interfaith collaboration, garnering support from individuals of various

faiths and contributing to the social and cultural advancement of the community (Huda & Sari, 2019).

Furthermore, the principles of religious moderation extend beyond philosophical discussions to practical applications. Sudrajat, a youth leader in Tangerang, underscores the foundational role of open-mindedness in fostering religious moderation (Suhendra, 2022). Leaders in Kalipasisir, Tangerang, from both Islamic and Confucian backgrounds, set examples of mutual help and respect, emphasizing the role of leaders in maintaining social cohesion and preventing conflicts. The historical legacy of diversity and harmony in Tangerang, represented by the Chinese Benteng community, showcases a rich tapestry of cultural amalgamation, symbolized by the Boen Tek Bio Temple and the Kalipasisir Mosque (Suhendra, 2022).

However, despite the establishment of Confucius Institutes in Indonesia to promote Chinese culture and language, anti-Chinese sentiment remains prevalent. This sentiment has historical roots and is often associated with the perception that Indonesia benefits little from a close relationship with China (Rakhmat & Pashya, 2020). Such prejudice against Chinese people still exists today. For instance, a lot of Indonesians have been referring to COVID-19 on social media as the "Chinese virus" recently, and some have even called for a fatwa—a religious ruling—that would forbid Chinese nationals and Chinese-Indonesians from traveling to Indonesia (Rakhmat & Pashya, 2020).

To sum up, in order to live harmoniously within the majority society, Suhendra (2022) advocates for the popularization and preservation of moderation values, especially among the younger generation, through platforms like social media. This comprehensive exploration emphasizes that religious moderation, whether rooted in Confucian principles, societal indicators, or practical examples, contributes to social harmony, ethical values, responsible citizenship, and the overarching goal of Indonesia, Bhineka Tunggal Ika.

Indigenous Belief

It is thought that Indonesians live in an extremely diverse society. The numerous ethnic, religious, and racial groupings that make up Indonesian society demonstrate its plurality. With regard to Indonesia's religious variety, several religions have persisted and grown. The religions other than the six in Indonesia are referred to as "local religion," "native religion," "tribal religion," "mysticism," "belief stream," and "faith-bearing community" in Indonesian religious studies. While it is referred to as indigenous religions, ethnic and religious origins in Western religious studies (Earhart, 1992).

One example of Indonesian indigenous beliefs is Kejawen. Kejawen, also known as all Javanese views about divinity, worship, and faiths other than Islam, is essentially the worldview of the Javanese people with regard to religion, faith, and tradition (Hakiki, 2011). It is found in a few earlier investigations, according to Kejawen's exploration. Mega Ariyanti (2019) discovered that Kejawen followers follow eighteen different fasting rituals. These rituals are found in the Javanese philosophy of life, which holds that achieving spiritual maturity and genuine happiness is possible for everyone. Fasting and its constituting referents—certain activities, eating and drinking schedules, and other physical concerns—are connected. Moreover, fasting is regarded as having spiritual significance, i.e., as an austere way of living chosen to satisfy specific demands or to acquire knowledge and insight beneficial for one's home, community, and personal life. Kejawen stresses the value of personal experience, inner spirituality, and the interconnectedness of all things in the universe when it comes to moderation. It is a combination of both Javanese and Islamic traditions, showing a moderate attitude to religious practice (Suroyo & Bima, 2023).

Manunggaling kawula gusti, or the union of servants with God, is the ultimate objective of ascetic activities and is regarded as the central tenet of Kejawen teachings (Chakim, 2007). The idea of *manunggaling kawula gusti* symbolizes the entirety of this life on Earth, encompassing the

nature of the cosmos, human cognition, reason, and imagination, as well as the presence of souls. According to the theory of the oneness of all things, people are only a little part of the cosmos, which is thought of as a macrocosm (big universe) (Asmara, 2013). This example shows how everything is connected, and Kejawen teachings typically explain the involved patterns in a way that makes the relationship obvious.

Unfortunately, in Indonesia, through the Minister of Religious Affairs' (PMA) Number 9/1952/Article 4 rule asserts that the practice of ancestor worship by indigenous people is a sign of cultural regression (Ramstedt, 2005). The Indonesian government does not formally acknowledge Kejawen as a religion, and those who practice it are frequently classified as adherents of one of the six recognized faiths (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, or Confucianism). Their freedom of speech and behavior may be restricted as a result, and they may become the target of prejudice and marginalization (Suroyo & Bima, 2023). For instance, Kejawen believers frequently experience various sorts of social discrimination and criticism, such as being made fun of and ridiculed by those who think that their beliefs are irrational, unrealistic, outdated, or the product of black magic (Mahanani, 2024).

Despite its social criticism, Kejawen can promote intercultural communication and increase religious tolerance when viewed through the lens of Javanese spirituality. It honors the variations and individuality of religious rituals since it has a high appreciation of Javanese art and culture as part of its identity.

Another example of Indonesia's indigenous community is Toraja. The Toraja people in Indonesia exemplify this moderation through their unique blend of Christianity and traditional animism. Local wisdom values, such as *kasiuluran* (kinship), *tengko situru* (togetherness), and *karapasan* (tenacity), play a pivotal role in fostering inter-religious harmony within Toraja families and communities (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

Respecting diversity in religion and beliefs, the Toraja people actively support each other

during significant traditional and religious events, like the *Rambu Solo* (death ceremony) and *Rambu Tuka* (harvest ceremony), showcasing their commitment to tolerance. Institutional roles within Toraja society, including religious leaders, indigenous leaders, and clans within the traditional houses known as *Tongkonan*, contribute significantly to peace and tolerance, promoting harmony in both traditional and religious activities (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

Key to the Toraja approach is the utilization of socialization processes within traditional, religious, and social activities. These processes foster positive and dynamic interactions with other religious communities, instilling the value of tolerance within Toraja families and contributing to a culturalization of this essential virtue (Pajarianto et al., 2022). In conclusion, the Toraja people's religious moderation, shaped by local culture, traditional leaders, and religious leaders, serves as a valuable model for promoting social integration and instilling the practice of tolerance in Indonesia's diverse context.

To encapsulate Indonesia's indigenous beliefs, the Asmat tribe belief is another illustration of Indonesia's indigenous beliefs. The largest and most well-known tribe in Indonesia's Irian Jaya is The Asmat tribe. Their woodcarving business is well-known. Certain patterns or decorations are frequently used and take on a prominent role in the Asmat tribe's interpretation of their ancestor tribe, the *Mbis*. In addition, they discovered further decorations or patterns that have a boat or *wuramon* theme, which they believe represents a transportation transporting their ancestors to the afterlife. The Asmat people made wood, which assisted in incorporating the souls of their ancestors (Abubakar, 2013). The Asmat tribe belief, characterized by its belief system rooted in animism, dynamism, and ancestor worship, emphasizes the importance of preserving and safeguarding cultural and belief practices as part of Indonesia's national diversity and identity (Handaya, 2021). This multifaceted exploration collectively reinforces the idea that religious moderation within indigenous beliefs celebrates diversity, strengthens communities, offers

unique perspectives on spirituality, and contributes to the overarching principle of harmony without uniformity in Indonesia.

On the other hand while commonalities exist, significant variations arise, showcasing the unique challenges or manifestations of moderation specific to each community. Historical factors, theological interpretations, and existing social divisions contribute to these variations (Pedersen, 2016). Indigenous beliefs, on the other hand, grapple with preserving traditions in the face of modernization and integrating with dominant religious frameworks (Zinira, 2022).

Viewed from the lens of 6 religions in Indonesia, understanding the complex phenomenon of religious moderation requires a nuanced examination of internal and external factors as well as an exploration of their intricate interplay within different religious communities. Religious moderation is significantly shaped by internal dynamics unique to each community. The role of religious leadership plays a pivotal role, influencing the direction and emphasis on moderation within a faith tradition. Theological interpretations and doctrines contribute to the formulation of beliefs and practices that may either foster or hinder moderation (Suparta, 2022). Internal power dynamics, including the influence of religious institutions and the distribution of authority within a community, impact the extent to which moderation is embraced. Historical experiences, such as past conflicts or periods of coexistence, contribute to the collective memory of a community, influencing its approach to moderation (Kasdi, 2019).

External influences, including political, socioeconomic, and global factors, play a crucial role in shaping religious moderation (Zinira, 2022). Political policies, both at the national and international levels, can either promote or inhibit moderate religious practices. Socioeconomic conditions, such as levels of education and economic stability, may influence the openness to diverse perspectives and practices. Globalization introduces new ideas and influences that can either encourage moderation or contribute to extremist

ideologies. Regional dynamics, including interactions with neighboring communities and geopolitical considerations, also impact the religious landscape (Zuo'an, 2013).

Recommendations for strengthening cooperation and addressing challenges in the realm of religious moderation in Indonesia emerge as pivotal strategies. Empowering youth stands out as a transformative initiative to catalyze change within communities (Mustakim et al., 2021). Initiating programs that equip young people with essential skills, knowledge, and values fosters a new generation of interfaith ambassadors. Collaboration with educational institutions, community organizations, and religious leaders becomes imperative to create platforms for youth involvement in interfaith initiatives, thereby cultivating a sense of responsibility and engagement among the younger population.

Lastly, advocating for comprehensive training programs in mediation, dialogue facilitation, and conflict resolution for religious leaders and community members equips individuals with tools for peaceful dispute resolution (Ihsani et al., 2021). Collaboration with conflict resolution organizations ensures tailored training sessions that address the specific needs and dynamics of diverse religious communities. Integrating conflict resolution skills into educational curricula and religious leadership training programs further promotes a culture of peaceful dialogue.

Conclusion

Indonesia, a vibrant tapestry woven from diverse threads of faith and ethnicity, holds a unique mirror to the challenges and opportunities of navigating "Unity in Diversity." This intricate landscape, as our research has revealed, is not defined by a singular model of religious moderation, but rather by a kaleidoscope of interpretations and expressions within each community. Recognizing and embracing this rich tapestry is crucial for understanding the complex dynamics of interfaith harmony in Indonesia.

Our journey through different religious communities has exposed both the unifying

melodies of tolerance and understanding, and the dissonant chords of extremism and prejudice. We have witnessed how interpretations of *wasathiyah*, pluralism, and even the ideals of Pancasila itself take on unique contours within each faith. This diversity, often challenging, is ultimately the lifeblood of "Unity in Diversity." It demands continuous dialogue, respect for individual interpretations, and a concerted effort to find common ground amidst difference.

Emerging from this intricate dance of moderation, a powerful message resonates. Religious moderation, in its varied expressions, serves as a vital bridge towards peace, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence in Indonesia. Interfaith initiatives, grounded in dialogue and collaboration, offer tangible pathways towards bridging divides and fostering mutual understanding. Religious institutions, armed with moderate theological interpretations and outreach programs, become catalysts for interfaith solidarity and social justice. Education, when infused with critical thinking and respect for diversity, equips future generations to navigate the complexities of faith in a multi-faith society.

For future research endeavors exploring similar themes through alternative research methodologies, it is recommended to consider qualitative approaches such as ethnographic studies or participatory action research. Ethnographic studies would offer in-depth insights into the lived experiences of individuals within diverse religious communities, shedding light on the intricacies of religious moderation in everyday contexts. Additionally, participatory action research would empower community members to actively engage in the research process, fostering collaboration and co-creation of knowledge. These methodologies would complement existing quantitative research by providing a holistic understanding of religious moderation in Indonesia, enriching scholarly discourse and informing practical interventions aimed at promoting interfaith harmony and understanding.

Ultimately, Indonesia's journey serves as a beacon of hope for a world grappling with

similar challenges. Its tapestry, woven from the threads of religious moderation, inspires us to recognize the value of diverse interpretations, to champion policies that empower marginalized communities, and to invest in education that fosters critical thinking and interfaith understanding. By embracing the mosaic of moderation within its diverse faithscape, Indonesia charts a path towards a future where "Unity in Diversity" is not just a slogan, but a vibrant reality.

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