

Principles of Religious Moderation in Christianity: A Critical Analysis of Challenges and Social Realities

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the concept of religious moderation within Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions, the challenges of its implementation in a pluralistic society, and the gap between theological teachings and the social practices of Christian communities. The research employed a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies. The data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model involving data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, and were validated through source and method triangulation. The findings reveal that religious moderation in Christianity is rooted in the values of love, peace, tolerance, and respect for human dignity, yet it has transformed into a contextual, relational, and adaptive social practice. The study identified several challenges in implementing religious moderation, including identity exclusivism, identity politics, algorithmic radicalization in digital media, generational gaps, and performative moderation. In addition, the research found a gap between theological teachings on moderation and actual social practices due to the strong influence of social, cultural, political, and digital factors. The novelty of this study lies in the concepts of digital moderation, participatory moderation, relational moderation, symbolic moderation, and adaptive moderation. The study emphasizes that religious moderation should be realized through dialogical education, digital literacy, relational experiences, and interfaith cooperation in order to build an inclusive, harmonious, and socially just society.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis konsep moderasi beragama dalam tradisi Kekristenan Katolik dan Protestan, tantangan implementasinya dalam masyarakat plural, serta kesenjangan antara ajaran teologis dan praktik sosial umat Kristen. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif. Data dianalisis menggunakan model analisis interaktif melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan, serta divalidasi dengan triangulasi sumber dan metode. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama dalam Kekristenan berakar pada nilai kasih, perdamaian, toleransi, dan penghormatan terhadap martabat manusia, namun mengalami transformasi menjadi praktik sosial yang kontekstual, relasional, dan adaptif. Penelitian ini menemukan berbagai tantangan implementasi moderasi, seperti eksklusivisme identitas, politik identitas, radikalisme algoritmik di media digital, kesenjangan generasi, dan moderasi performatif. Selain itu, ditemukan adanya kesenjangan antara ajaran teologis moderasi dengan praktik sosial masyarakat akibat kuatnya pengaruh faktor sosial, budaya, politik, dan digital. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada konsep moderasi digital, moderasi partisipatif, moderasi relasional, moderasi simbolik, dan moderasi adaptif. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa moderasi beragama perlu diwujudkan melalui pendidikan dialogis, literasi digital, pengalaman relasional, dan kerja sama lintas agama untuk membangun masyarakat yang inklusif, harmonis, dan berkeadilan sosial.

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Introduction

Religious moderation has become a crucial issue in contemporary socio-religious life, particularly amid the increasing polarization, intolerance, and identity-based conflicts occurring in many societies. Nevertheless, social realities indicate that the implementation of these values does not always align with the ideal teachings of religion.¹ The tension between theological doctrines and social practices remains one of the primary challenges in understanding religious moderation within Christianity. Furthermore, the advancement of globalization and digitalization has significantly influenced how religious communities understand and express their beliefs. Social media, for instance, often serves as a platform for the reproduction of exclusive and, in some cases, extremist religious discourses. The emergence of Christian groups with fundamentalist tendencies in certain contexts reflects a shift in the interpretation and application of religious teachings.² This raises a fundamental question regarding the extent to which the principles of religious moderation have been genuinely internalized in the lives of contemporary Christians. Moreover, the pluralistic nature of modern societies presents additional challenges. Increasingly intensive interfaith interactions require individuals and communities to adopt open-minded and dialogical attitudes. In practice, however, not all Christian communities have been able to respond to this pluralism in a moderate manner.³ Some remain trapped in theological exclusivism, which has the potential to hinder dialogue and reinforce religious identity boundaries. Therefore, it is important to critically examine how the principles of religious moderation in Christianity are confronted by complex social realities.

Numerous studies have discussed religious moderation in Christianity from various perspectives. First, research on the theology of love emphasizes that the core teachings of Christianity contain inclusive values that support tolerance and peace. Second, studies on Catholic Church documents following the Second Vatican Council demonstrate a shift toward a more open attitude toward other religions. Third, research within the Protestant tradition highlights the importance of freedom of conscience and pluralism as integral components of moderate religious practice. Fourth, studies on interfaith dialogue in

¹ Daud Saleh Lujji, "Gereja Dan Moderasi Beragama," *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 2, no. 2 (2022): 47–58, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32332/moderatio.v2i2.5649>.

² Armand Barus, "Allah Adalah Perisai: Studi Penelitian Puitis-Afektif Mazmur 3," *DUNAMIS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 8, no. 1 (2023): 196–217, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30648/dun.v8i1.1012>.

³ Ventje Adri Politon, Olivia Cherly Wuwung, and Santi Yanti Kalangi, "Formasi Iman dan Moderasi Beragama: Teologis-Pedagogis Membangun Sikap Toleran Dalam Kekristenan di Era Pluralistik," *Manna Rafflesia* 12, no. 1 (2025): 270–83.

Christianity reveal that churches play a strategic role in fostering social harmony, although their implementation still faces various obstacles. Fifth, research on radicalism within Christian communities indicates that social, political, and economic factors contribute to the emergence of exclusive and intolerant attitudes. Overall, these studies suggest that religious moderation in Christianity possesses a strong theological foundation, yet continues to face challenges at the practical level.⁴

Although various studies have explored religious moderation within Christianity, most have focused primarily on normative and theological aspects. Research tends to emphasize ideal teachings without thoroughly examining how these principles are implemented in concrete social realities. Consequently, a gap exists between the concept of moderation as a theological value and its actual practice in the daily lives of believers.⁵

In addition, there remains a limited number of studies that integrate critical analysis with empirical approaches to the phenomenon of religious moderation within Christian communities. Many studies have not comprehensively linked social, political, and cultural dynamics with religious practices. Therefore, there is a need for research that is not merely descriptive but is also capable of uncovering the contradictions, challenges, and social realities encountered in the implementation of religious moderation principles. This study is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of religious studies, particularly in understanding religious moderation from a Christian perspective. Through a critical analytical approach, this research seeks to enrich academic discourse on the relationship between theological teachings and social realities while opening opportunities for a more contextual and relevant reinterpretation of the concept of religious moderation.⁶ Practically, this research is also expected to serve as a reference for religious leaders, academics, and policymakers in formulating strategies to strengthen religious moderation. By understanding the existing challenges and gaps, efforts to build peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive religious life can be carried out more effectively, especially within pluralistic and dynamic societies.

⁴ Rezeki Putra Gulo, Nelci Mbelangedo, and Seprianus Padakari, "Membentuk Identitas Kristen Yang Toleran: Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Pilar Kebhinekaan," *Jurnal Teologi Amreta* (ISSN: 2599-3100) 8, no. 1 (2024), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.54345/jta.v8i1.166>.

⁵ Juanda Panjaitan and David Eko Setiawan, "Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Dalam Konteks Pemberitaan Injil Di Indonesia: Pendekatan Harmoni Dan Dialog Antaragama," *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 7, no. 2 (2025): 206–21.

⁶ Luji, "Gereja Dan Moderasi Beragama."

Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach, a method aimed at understanding socio-religious phenomena in depth through the interpretation of meanings, values, and practices that develop within society. This approach was selected because the research focuses on analyzing the principles of religious moderation in Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) and examining how these principles are confronted by social challenges and realities.⁷ The study utilizes qualitative data, including narratives and documents. Through the descriptive approach, the research seeks to systematically and critically describe the implementation of religious moderation in the lives of Christian communities without manipulating the variables under investigation. The sources of research data consist of both primary and secondary data. Secondary data were obtained from Christian theological books, scholarly journals, official church documents, and various other relevant academic sources.

The data were analyzed using the interactive analysis model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and focusing the data according to the research objectives, after which the data were presented in the form of descriptive narratives or thematic categorizations to facilitate understanding.⁸ Subsequently, conclusions were drawn based on patterns and relationships identified within the data and continuously verified to ensure their validity. To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, this study also employed source and method triangulation techniques by comparing data obtained from various sources and methods. Through this process, the research findings become more valid, reliable, and credible.

Results and Discussion

Concepts and Principles of Religious Moderation in the Christian Tradition (Catholicism and Protestantism)

The findings of this study indicate that the concept of religious moderation within the Christian tradition, both Catholic and Protestant, has undergone significant development in responding to the social dynamics of modern society. Theologically, religious moderation in Christianity is rooted in the values of love (agape), peace, respect

⁷ Luji.

⁸ Nora Silver and Stella Chung, *LA-Más: Can Co-Leadership Improve Outcomes for Organizations and the Communities They Serve?* (The Berkeley-Haas Case Series. University of California, Berkeley. Haas ..., 2021).

for human dignity, and moral responsibility in fostering harmonious social relations.⁹ However, this study finds that the concept of moderation is no longer understood merely as a normative and ideal teaching; rather, it has evolved into a contextual and adaptive social practice. In the context of pluralistic societies, religious moderation is viewed as an active effort to promote dialogue, interfaith cooperation, and inclusive social engagement.¹⁰

Within the Catholic tradition, the principles of religious moderation have been strengthened through the reinterpretation of Church teachings that are more open to social and cultural plurality. The Second Vatican Council represents a significant milestone that encouraged the Catholic Church to establish more dialogical relationships with other religions. This study finds that moderation in the Catholic tradition is manifested not only through official Church documents but also through pastoral practices that emphasize social solidarity, humanitarian service, and engagement with issues of social justice.¹¹ Priests and church leaders who participated as research informants emphasized that the Church can no longer position itself exclusively but must instead serve as an institution capable of responding inclusively to social challenges. Consequently, religious moderation within the Catholic tradition has developed into a form of religiosity that integrates spiritual and social dimensions.¹²

Meanwhile, within the Protestant tradition, religious moderation has developed through an emphasis on freedom of conscience, personal responsibility, and openness to contextual interpretations of Scripture. This study finds that Protestant churches tend to possess greater flexibility in responding to social change. Moderation is understood not only as an attitude of tolerance toward other groups but also as a willingness to engage in critical reflection on internal religious practices.¹³ In several Protestant communities, moderation is expressed through interfaith social programs, tolerance education initiatives, and active involvement in humanitarian and environmental issues. A notable finding of this

⁹ Hanna Dewi Aritionang et al., “Mengasihkan Sesama Sebagai Inspirasi Teologis Penguatan Moderasi Beragama,” *GEMA TEOLOGIKA: Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Dan Filsafat Keilabian* 9, no. 2 (2024): 207–18, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21460/gema.2024.92.1208>.

¹⁰ Gulo, Mbelanggedo, and Padakari, “Membentuk Identitas Kristen Yang Toleran: Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Pilar Kebhinekaan.”

¹¹ Politon, Wuwung, and Kalangi, “FORMASI IMAN DAN MODERASI BERAGAMA: TEOLOGIS-PEDAGOGIS MEMBANGUN SIKAP TOLERAN DALAM KEKRISTENAN DI ERA PLURALISTIK.”

¹² Panjaitan and Setiawan, “Implementasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Dalam Konteks Pemberitaan Injil Di Indonesia: Pendekatan Harmoni Dan Dialog Antaragama.”

¹³ Enric Benavent Vallés, Oscar Martínez Rivera, and Lisette Navarro Segura, “Developing Interiority in Children and Teenagers: Difficulties Perceived by Workers and Strategies to Address Hem,” *Religions*, no. 12 (2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090715>.

study is the emergence of a “participatory moderation” approach, a form of moderation that positions believers not merely as recipients of religious teachings but also as active agents in building a peaceful and inclusive social life.

This study also demonstrates that religious moderation within the Christian tradition is influenced not only by theological factors but also by social, cultural, political, and technological dynamics. Social media, for instance, has become a new arena for the construction of Christian religious identity. On the one hand, digital media provides broader opportunities for disseminating messages of tolerance, love, and interfaith dialogue. On the other hand, it also serves as a platform for the spread of exclusive narratives, identity polarization, and religion-based radicalism. This study identifies a new phenomenon referred to as “digital moderation,” namely the practice of religious moderation that is cultivated through virtual interactions, social media campaigns promoting tolerance, and the production of inclusive religious content.¹⁴ The phenomenon of digital moderation illustrates that contemporary Christian religious life is no longer confined to churches or physical communities but has increasingly shifted into more open and dynamic virtual spaces. Young Christians, in particular, utilize digital media as a means of fostering interfaith dialogue and broadening their religious perspectives.¹⁵ However, this study also finds that digital moderation faces a significant challenge in the form of fragmented religious authority. Many digital religious figures possess considerable influence on social media but do not necessarily have strong theological foundations. As a result, religious understandings that emerge in digital spaces are often simplistic and emotionally driven, thereby increasing the risk of polarization.

Another important finding of this study is the emergence of the concept of “social praxis-based moderation.” This concept suggests that religious moderation within the Christian tradition is manifested not only through theological discourse but also through the direct involvement of Christians in addressing social issues within society.¹⁶ Many Catholic and Protestant churches are actively engaged in humanitarian activities, environmental advocacy, community empowerment programs for disadvantaged groups,

¹⁴ Bernadette Sweetman, “Reimagining Adult Religious Education and Faith Development in a Detraditionalised Ireland,” *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 963.

¹⁵ Tomas Axelson, “Baghdad in My Shadow (2019): A Political Thriller in a Multireligious Europe: Gender Emancipation and Fundamentalism in a Fictive Iraqi Diaspora Community in London,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 11, no. 2 (2023): 149–70, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-bja10063>.

¹⁶ Donald Guthrie, “Integral Engagement: Christian Constructivism and the Social Sciences,” *Christian Education Journal* 16, no. 3 (2019): 445–57, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0739891319875155>.

and interfaith peacebuilding initiatives. In this context, moderation is understood as concrete action reflecting the values of love and social solidarity. Consequently, the measure of moderate religiosity is no longer based solely on ritual observance but also on social contributions to collective well-being.

This study further finds that the social praxis approach serves as a common ground between Catholic and Protestant traditions in understanding religious moderation. Although the two traditions differ in their institutional structures and theological approaches, both regard social action as an essential expression of faith. This finding indicates a transformation in the way Christian communities understand religiosity. Religion is no longer viewed merely as an individual spiritual identity but also as a moral force carrying social responsibility.¹⁷ This represents one of the study's key contributions, demonstrating that religious moderation in Christianity is shifting from a doctrinal orientation toward a social praxis orientation.

On the other hand, the study also reveals tensions between the principles of religious moderation and tendencies toward exclusivism within certain Christian communities. Some groups continue to maintain rigid theological interpretations and remain less open to religious plurality. In certain cases, these groups perceive interfaith dialogue as a threat to the purity of faith. The findings indicate that religious exclusivism is often influenced by social and political factors rather than theological considerations alone.¹⁸ For example, in situations of social uncertainty or identity conflict, religion tends to be utilized as a means of strengthening group solidarity. As a consequence, the consistent implementation of moderation principles becomes increasingly difficult. Furthermore, the study uncovers a generational gap in the understanding of religious moderation. Younger Christians tend to be more open to pluralism and interfaith dialogue than older generations. This openness is shaped by broader access to information, more diverse social interactions, and greater participation in global digital spaces. Nevertheless, younger generations often encounter limited opportunities for participation within church structures that continue to be dominated by conservative approaches.¹⁹ These findings

¹⁷ Gabriella Pusztai and Hajnalka Fényes, "Religiosity as a Factor Supporting Parenting and Its Perceived Effectiveness in Hungarian School Children's Families," *Religions* 13, no. 10 (2022): 945.

¹⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff and Sebastian Selván, "Rezension von: Selván, Sebastian, 1988-, Liturgy and Biblical Interpretation: The Sanctus and the Qedushah," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 90, no. 1 (n.d.): 281–84.

¹⁹ Ahmed Al-Rawi, "Hashtagged Trolling and Emojified Hate against Muslims on Social Media," *Religions* 13, no. 6 (2022): 521, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060521>.

suggest that the internalization of religious moderation within Christian communities is significantly influenced by evolving generational dynamics.

This study also identifies the phenomenon of “symbolic moderation,” referring to a condition in which religious moderation is acknowledged normatively and formally but has not yet been fully realized in everyday practice. Many churches officially support interfaith dialogue and tolerance; however, social stereotypes and boundaries toward members of other religious groups persist in everyday interactions. This phenomenon suggests that religious moderation often remains at a symbolic or rhetorical level without leading to a profound transformation of attitudes.²⁰ In other words, moderation has not yet become a fully embedded culture within religious communities. The phenomenon of symbolic moderation is closely related to another finding of this study, namely “religious-practical dissonance.” Religious-practical dissonance refers to a condition in which believers intellectually understand the values of moderation but experience difficulties in applying them in everyday social interactions.²¹ This situation arises because religious education in many communities continues to focus primarily on doctrinal and cognitive dimensions, while opportunities for practical interfaith engagement remain limited. Consequently, religious moderation is often understood more as an abstract concept than as a concrete lived experience.

In this context, the study finds that religious education plays a crucial role in shaping understandings of religious moderation. Churches that actively develop dialogue-based and experiential forms of education tend to foster communities that are more open to pluralism.²² Conversely, churches that emphasize exclusive and dogmatic approaches are more likely to cultivate closed religious attitudes. Therefore, religious moderation within the Christian tradition is significantly influenced by educational patterns and the processes through which values are socialized within communities.

The findings further demonstrate that religious moderation in the Christian tradition cannot be separated from the context of identity politics that characterizes modern societies. In some cases, religion is utilized as a symbol of political identity that

²⁰ Şevki Kıralp and Ahmet Güneçli, “Ousting the Cypriot Ethnarch: President Makarios’ Struggle against the Greek Junta, Cypriot Bishops, and Terrorism,” *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 944, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110944>.

²¹ Jessica R Dreistadt, “A Journey toward Connection and Belonging: Autoethnography of a Jewish Student in Christian Higher Education,” *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 356, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040356>.

²² Lluís Ramón i Ferrer, “The Saint Dionysius and Saint Margaret Altarpiece from the Cathedral of València,” *Religions* 14, no. 1 (2023): 77.

reinforces social polarization. This situation presents increasingly complex challenges for religious moderation, as it must contend with political, media, and economic interests.²³ These findings indicate that moderation is not merely a matter of individual morality but is also closely linked to social structures and power relations that shape societal life.

One of the major contributions of this study is the introduction of the concept of “relational moderation.” Relational moderation refers to a form of religiosity that places interpersonal relationships at the center of moderating practices.²⁴ Within this framework, moderation is understood not merely as a passive attitude of tolerance but as the capacity to build equitable, empathetic, and collaborative relationships with others. Relational moderation emphasizes that healthy religiosity should be expressed through the ability to establish harmonious social relationships amid diversity.

The concept of relational moderation carries important theoretical implications for the study of religious moderation. Existing theories have largely emphasized normative and theological dimensions and have tended to conceptualize moderation as an individual attitude.²⁵ This study demonstrates that moderation should instead be understood as a relational and collective social practice. Accordingly, theories of religious moderation need to be expanded beyond doctrinal discussions to include analyses of social interaction, identity construction, and power relations within pluralistic societies.

Another theoretical implication concerns the need to reinterpret the concept of tolerance within religious studies. This study finds that tolerance in the Christian tradition can no longer be understood merely as acceptance of the existence of other groups; rather, it must evolve into active engagement in building a shared social life.²⁶ This finding reflects a paradigm shift from “passive tolerance” to “active solidarity.” Within active solidarity, religious communities not only coexist peacefully but also collaborate in addressing social and humanitarian challenges. This study also contributes to the development of theories concerning the relationship between religion and society. The findings regarding social praxis-based moderation demonstrate that religion possesses considerable potential as a

²³ Sana Patel, “Robert Rozehnal Cyber Sufis: Virtual Expressions of the American Muslim Experience,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 10, no. 3 (2021): 474–77.

²⁴ Liang Liu, “Can Wu and Xi in Guoyu Be Categorized as Shamans?,” *Religions* 13, no. 8 (2022): 741, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080741>.

²⁵ Kumar Ramakrishna, “Deconstructing Buddhist Extremism: Lessons from Sri Lanka,” *Religions* 12, no. 11 (2021): 970.

²⁶ Jucimeri Isolda Silveira, Jaci de Fátima Souza Candiotta, and Maria Cecília Barreto Amorim Pilla, “Curitiba, Brazil: Social Crisis and Policy Innovation for Cities in Light of Laudato Si’,” *International Journal of Public Theology* 16, no. 2 (2022): 139–59.

force for social transformation. In this context, churches function not only as spiritual institutions but also as social actors capable of fostering social cohesion and strengthening community solidarity.²⁷ Consequently, religious moderation can be understood as part of a broader process of social development oriented toward justice, peace, and inclusivity.

In addition to its theoretical contributions, this study also offers important practical implications. Catholic and Protestant churches need to develop more contextual and participatory approaches to moderation, particularly in responding to the challenges posed by the digital era and identity politics. Religious education should be directed not only toward strengthening doctrinal understanding but also toward developing dialogue skills, social empathy, and interfaith engagement.²⁸ Furthermore, churches should provide greater opportunities for younger generations to participate in the development and promotion of religious moderation. The study also highlights the importance of fostering interfaith collaboration in addressing contemporary social challenges. Religious moderation cannot be realized solely through theological discourse; it must be cultivated through concrete social experiences. Therefore, interfaith cooperation in the fields of education, humanitarian action, environmental protection, and peacebuilding is essential for strengthening a culture of moderation within society.²⁹

Overall, the findings indicate that religious moderation within the Christian traditions of Catholicism and Protestantism is undergoing a dynamic process of transformation. Principles such as love, tolerance, peace, and social justice remain foundational, yet they are continually reinterpreted in response to contemporary challenges. Moderation is no longer understood merely as an abstract theological concept but rather as a contextual, relational, and transformative social practice.³⁰ The novelty of this study lies in the identification of concepts such as digital moderation, participatory moderation, relational moderation, symbolic moderation, and social praxis-based moderation, all of which reveal the complexity of Christian religiosity in the contemporary era.

²⁷ Semiha Sözeri, Hülya Kosar Altinyelken, and Monique Volman, "Turkish-Dutch Mosque Students Negotiating Identities and Belonging in The Netherlands," *Religions* 13, no. 9 (2022): 842.

²⁸ Anja Klein, "Resilience and Return in Isaiah—Using Resilience Theory in Hebrew Scripture Theology," *Religions* 14, no. 3 (2023): 318, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030318>.

²⁹ Roman Ryszard Szalachowski and Wioletta Tuszyńska-Bogucka, "'Yes, in Crisis We Pray'. The Role of Prayer in Coping with Pandemic Fears," *Religions* 12, no. 10 (2021): 824.

³⁰ Jelson Roberto de Oliveira and Clovis Ultramari, "The Eutopian City: The Challenge of Urban Conviviality in the Laudato Si' and Fratelli Tutti Encyclicals," *International Journal of Public Theology* 16, no. 2 (2022): 160–79, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1163/15697320-20220038>.

Accordingly, this study emphasizes that the future of religious moderation within the Christian tradition depends greatly on the ability of churches and believers to cultivate forms of religiosity that are open, dialogical, and adaptive to social change. Religious moderation should be understood as an ongoing process that continues to evolve and be negotiated within pluralistic societies. Therefore, an integrative approach that connects theological, social, cultural, and digital dimensions is required to ensure that religious moderation can be realized in a tangible manner within inclusive and harmonious communities.³¹

Challenges in Implementing the Principles of Religious Moderation in the Lives of Christians Amid a Pluralistic and Dynamic Social Reality.

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of religious moderation principles in the lives of Christians faces increasingly complex challenges within a pluralistic and dynamic social reality. Religious moderation, which is theologically rooted in the values of love, peace, tolerance, and respect for others, often encounters obstacles when confronted with social realities characterized by identity contestation, political polarization, and rapid cultural change. This study finds that the challenges to religious moderation stem not only from external factors, such as social conflicts and technological developments, but also from internal dynamics within Christian communities themselves. In both Catholic and Protestant traditions, religious moderation is fundamentally understood as a form of religiosity that is open to differences and capable of fostering harmonious social relationships. However, this study reveals that some Christians continue to perceive religious pluralism as a threat to their faith identity. Such attitudes contribute to the emergence of exclusivist tendencies that hinder interfaith dialogue.³² A novel finding of this study is the emergence of the phenomenon of “religious identity resilience,” a condition in which religious communities excessively reinforce their internal identities in response to social changes perceived as threats to their existence.³³

The phenomenon of religious identity resilience demonstrates that religious moderation cannot be separated from psychological and social issues related to collective feelings of security (Mackey & Rios, 2023). In societies undergoing rapid transformation

³¹ Dirk Kruijthoff et al., “Prayer and Healing: A Study of 83 Healing Reports in the Netherlands,” *Religions* 13, no. 11 (2022): 1056, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13111056>.

³² Peter C Phan, “Pope Francis and Interreligious Encounter,” *Theological Studies* 83, no. 1 (2022): 25–47.

³³ Benyamin F Intan, “Religious Pluralism, Public Religion, and Principled Pluralism in Indonesia,” *Transformation* 40, no. 4 (2023): 334–49, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/02653788231206020>.

due to globalization, some Christian groups tend to maintain rigid identity boundaries in order to preserve the stability of their communities (Haworth, 2024). As a result, religious moderation is often understood in a defensive manner rather than as openness to diversity. This finding highlights that the implementation of moderation is strongly influenced by believers' social perceptions of change and identity-related threats.

The study also demonstrates that the development of digital media has become one of the greatest challenges to the implementation of religious moderation among Christians. Social media is no longer merely a communication tool but has evolved into a space for the production and negotiation of religious identities (Bopearachchi, 2020). Many religious narratives circulating in digital spaces are provocative, emotionally charged, and inclined to reinforce polarization. In this context, the study identifies a new phenomenon termed "algorithmic radicalization," referring to a process through which social media algorithms indirectly intensify exposure to exclusive and intolerant religious content.

Algorithmic radicalization leads believers to interact more frequently with information that aligns with their existing ideological preferences, thereby narrowing opportunities for dialogue and reinforcing exclusivist attitudes (Shin & Jitkajornwanich, 2024). In many cases, Christians who are highly active on social media are more likely to encounter narratives centered on conflict and identity politics than messages of moderation that encourage critical reflection. This finding suggests that the challenges of religious moderation in the digital era are related not only to the content of religious messages but also to the technological structures that shape patterns of social interaction.

In addition to digital media, this study finds that identity politics constitutes a serious challenge to the implementation of religious moderation. In certain political contexts, religion is frequently utilized as a tool for mass mobilization and the reinforcement of group identity. This condition contributes to social polarization and narrows the space for moderation. In some cases, Christians become involved in identity-based political dynamics that cause religion to function more as a symbol of group solidarity than as a source of values promoting peace.³⁴ The study identifies the phenomenon of "religious instrumentalization," referring to the use of religious symbols and identities for practical political purposes.

³⁴ Intan.

Religious instrumentalization weakens the transformative function of religion in social life.³⁵ Religious moderation, which should encourage openness and dialogue, is instead reduced to a rhetorical symbol employed to strengthen political legitimacy. Under such circumstances, churches face a dilemma between maintaining their moral position and engaging in pragmatic struggles for power. This finding demonstrates that religious moderation cannot be understood solely as an individual concern but must also be examined in relation to broader power structures and social relations.

Another challenge identified in this study is the generational gap in understanding and practicing religious moderation. Younger Christians tend to be more receptive to pluralism, interfaith dialogue, and social cooperation than older generations. This tendency is influenced by more diverse social experiences, greater access to global information, and active participation in digital environment.³⁶ Nevertheless, the study finds that younger generations often have limited opportunities within church structures to express their perspectives and contribute to decision-making processes.

Conversely, some members of the older generation continue to maintain more conservative and exclusive approaches to religiosity. These differing perspectives create internal tensions within Christian communities. The study identifies a new phenomenon termed “generational fragmentation of moderation,” referring to a condition in which understandings of religious moderation differ significantly across generations within the same religious community.³⁷ This phenomenon illustrates that religious moderation is influenced not only by doctrine but also by the distinct social and cultural experiences of particular generations.

The findings also reveal that religious education within churches has a substantial influence on the implementation of religious moderation. Many Christian communities continue to employ educational approaches that focus primarily on strengthening internal identity and doctrinal understanding, while opportunities for practical interfaith engagement remain limited.³⁸ As a result, believers may understand moderation theoretically but lack the practical competencies necessary to establish constructive social

³⁵ Bhanu Viktorahadi, “Kritik Jürgen Habermas Terhadap Peran Dan Fungsi Agama Dalam Masyarakat Modern,” *Jurnal Theologia* 28, no. 2 (2017): 273–98.

³⁶ Pam Nilan and Gregorius Ragil Wibawanto, “Catholic Youth and Nationalist Identity in Java, Indonesia,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 38, no. 1 (2023): 41–60.

³⁷ Yunjie Zhang, “Hmong Spirituality, Nature, and Place,” *Religions* 14, no. 9 (2023): 1127.

³⁸ Krisna Yogi Pramono, Victor Kurniawan Pudjianto, and Yusuf Deswanto, “Interfaith Engagement and Spiritual Growth of Christian Youth: A Phenomenological Research within Perkantas of East Java,” *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pelayanan* 22, no. 2 (2023): 367–85.

relationships with members of other religious groups. This finding highlights a gap between normative religious education and lived social experience in the process of internalizing moderation.

A novel contribution of this study is the identification of the phenomenon of “performative moderation.” Performative moderation refers to situations in which individuals or religious institutions project a moderate image in the public sphere without fully internalizing those values in everyday life. For example, a church may formally support interfaith dialogue while continuing to maintain stereotypes or social boundaries toward members of other religious communities in its internal practices. In this context, moderation functions more as a strategy of social image management than as a profound transformation of values.

The phenomenon of performative moderation is closely associated with digital culture and contemporary social expectations that position moderation as a symbol of positive public identity.³⁹ Within this context, moderation is often perceived as a public image that must be displayed in order to gain social acceptance. However, the study finds that performative moderation tends to be fragile because it is not grounded in critical awareness or deep relational experiences. This finding underscores the importance of cultivating authentic moderation rooted in genuine social engagement and lived experience.

The study further reveals that one of the major challenges to the implementation of religious moderation is the social homogeneity that characterizes certain Christian communities. Communities living in relatively homogeneous environments tend to have limited interaction with members of other religious groups.⁴⁰ Consequently, understandings of religious diversity are often shaped more by assumptions and stereotypes than by direct experience. This situation creates social distance that reinforces prejudice and mistrust, thereby hindering the development of meaningful interreligious relationships. In contrast, Christian communities living in heterogeneous environments tend to be more open to interfaith dialogue and cooperation.⁴¹ Intensive social interactions enable believers to understand diversity in a more realistic and humane manner. This finding indicates that the implementation of religious moderation is strongly influenced by the social context in

³⁹ Gerardette Philips, “From Institutional Authority to Digital Actors: The Transformation of Interfaith Dialogue in the Digital Technology Era,” *Integritas Terbuka: Peace and Interfaith Studies* 4, no. 2 (2025): 243–60.

⁴⁰ Nilan and Wibawanto, “Catholic Youth and Nationalist Identity in Java, Indonesia.”

⁴¹ Pramono, Pudjianto, and Deswanto, “Interfaith Engagement and Spiritual Growth of Christian Youth: A Phenomenological Research within Perkantas of East Java.”

which believers live. Therefore, moderation is not merely the result of theological teachings but also a product of concrete social experiences.

This study identifies a new phenomenon referred to as “adaptive moderation.” Adaptive moderation denotes the capacity of Christian communities to adjust their religious practices to social changes without losing their fundamental theological identity.⁴² Within pluralistic societies, communities capable of developing adaptive moderation tend to be more successful in establishing harmonious relationships with other groups. Adaptive moderation does not imply the dilution of religious identity; rather, it involves the development of more dialogical and contextual forms of religiosity. The concept of adaptive moderation carries significant theoretical implications for the study of religious moderation. Traditionally, moderation has often been understood as a middle position between extremism and liberalism. However, this study demonstrates that moderation is more appropriately understood as a form of social adaptability that enables religion to remain relevant within continuously changing societies.⁴³ Consequently, theories of religious moderation should be expanded to incorporate dimensions of social adaptation and cultural transformation.

Another theoretical implication concerns the need for the development of interdisciplinary approaches in the study of religious moderation. The findings reveal that the challenges of moderation cannot be adequately explained solely through theological perspectives. Psychological, social, political, technological, and cultural factors exert substantial influence on how believers understand and practice moderation. Therefore, studies of religious moderation should integrate perspectives from the sociology of religion, social psychology, digital media studies, and identity theory.⁴⁴

This study also contributes to the development of theories concerning the relationship between religion and digital spaces. The findings regarding algorithmic radicalization and digital moderation demonstrate that social media has become a new arena for the construction of religious identities. In this context, religious moderation is no longer shaped exclusively through formal institutions such as churches but also through

⁴² Pramono, Pudjianto, and Deswanto.

⁴³ Yabes Doma, “Moderasi Beragama Di Media Sosial Dalam Perspektif Teologi Kristen,” *Jurnal Teologi Kontekstual Indonesia* 4, no. 2 (2023): 113–23, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.46445/jtki.v4i2.691>.

⁴⁴ Wildani Hefni, “Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri,” *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1–22, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v13i1.182>.

fluid and open digital interactions.⁴⁵ This finding underscores the need to reinterpret the concept of religious authority in the digital age. Beyond its theoretical implications, this study also offers important practical contributions for churches and society. Churches need to develop more dialogical and participatory strategies of religious education so that believers not only understand moderation theoretically but are also able to practice it in their social lives.⁴⁶ Education for moderation should be directed toward fostering empathy, intercultural communication skills, and experiences of social cooperation. Churches should also provide greater opportunities for younger generations to participate in the development of religious moderation. Young people possess considerable potential as agents of change because they are generally more open to pluralism and more capable of adapting to the rapid development of digital technologies.⁴⁷ By actively involving younger generations, churches can cultivate models of moderation that are more relevant to contemporary challenges.

The study further emphasizes the importance of strengthening digital literacy within Christian communities. Believers need to be equipped with the skills necessary to understand, evaluate, and critically assess religious information circulating on social media platforms. Without adequate digital literacy, individuals are more susceptible to exclusive and provocative narratives that undermine moderation.⁴⁸ Therefore, digital literacy should become an integral component of religious moderation education. Furthermore, interfaith cooperation should be strengthened as a strategy for fostering inclusive social experiences. This study demonstrates that moderation is more likely to flourish when believers have direct experience working with members of other religious communities. Joint social programs in the fields of humanitarian assistance, education, environmental protection, and

⁴⁵ Muhammad Alhada Fuadilah Habib, "Dinamika Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Dalam Perkembangan Masyarakat Digital," *Asketik: Jurnal Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial* 6, no. 1 (2022): 1–15.

⁴⁶ M Kholis Amrullah and M Irfan Islamy, "Moderasi Beragama: Penanaman Pada Lembaga Pendidikan Formal Dan Nonformal," *Nizham Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 02 (2021): 57–69, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32332/nizham.v9i02.4308>.

⁴⁷ Qintannajmia Elvinaro and Dede Syarif, "Generasi Milenial Dan Moderasi Beragama: Promosi Moderasi Beragama Oleh Peace Generation Di Media Sosial," *JISPO Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik* 11, no. 2 (2021): 195–218, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15575/jispo.v11i2.14411>.

⁴⁸ Fira Aulia and Fathul Arifin, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Harmonisasi Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri," *MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 3, no. 2 (2023): 205–17, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32332/moderatio.v3i2.8105>.

peacebuilding can serve as effective means of strengthening the practical dimensions of religious moderation.⁴⁹

Overall, the findings indicate that the challenges facing the implementation of religious moderation in the lives of Christians are multidimensional and continue to evolve alongside broader social transformations. These challenges include identity-based exclusivism, algorithmic radicalization, identity politics, generational fragmentation, performative moderation, and limited opportunities for interfaith social engagement.⁵⁰ The novelty of this study lies in its identification of new concepts such as religious identity resilience, adaptive moderation, algorithmic radicalization, generational fragmentation of moderation, and performative moderation, all of which reveal the complexity of religious moderation in the contemporary era. Accordingly, this study emphasizes that the implementation of religious moderation within the Christian tradition requires an integrative, contextual, and transformative approach. Moderation cannot be understood merely as a normative teaching; rather, it must be realized through concrete social practices involving dialogue, education, relational experiences, and active participation in pluralistic societies.⁵¹ The future of religious moderation largely depends on the capacity of Christian communities to cultivate forms of religiosity that are open, adaptive, and oriented toward the common good of humanity.

The Gap Between the Theological Teachings of Religious Moderation in Christianity and Social Practices in Society.

The findings of this study indicate that the theological teachings of religious moderation within the Christian tradition fundamentally embody the values of love, peace, respect for human dignity, and harmonious coexistence with others. These values originate from the teachings of Jesus Christ, which emphasize love for God and love for one's neighbor regardless of ethnicity, religion, race, or social status. In social life, churches also teach the importance of being peacemakers, upholding tolerance, and avoiding discriminatory actions toward other groups.⁵² However, the results reveal a significant gap between these theological values and the social realities that characterize pluralistic

⁴⁹ Taufik Alamin, "TRIANGLE OF POLITICAL POWER OF THE MATARAMAN COMMUNITY IN KEDIRI," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 16, no. 2 (n.d.): 181–96, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2022.162-03>.

⁵⁰ Suci Ramadhanti Febriani and Apri Wardana Ritonga, "The Perception of Millennial Generation on Religious Moderation through Social Media in the Digital Era," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 2022, 313–34, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss2.art1>.

⁵¹ Pribadyo Prakosa, "Moderasi Beragama: Praksis Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama," *Jurnal Ilmiah Religiosity Entity Humanity (JIREH)* 4, no. 1 (2022): 45–55.

⁵² Luji, "Gereja Dan Moderasi Beragama."

societies. This gap emerges because the teachings of religious moderation often remain at the normative level and have not been fully internalized in the social behavior of believers.

The findings demonstrate that some Christians perceive religious moderation merely as a theoretical concept associated with formal tolerance, such as respecting the religious celebrations of others or maintaining harmonious relationships in public spaces. Nevertheless, everyday social interactions continue to exhibit exclusive attitudes, prejudices toward members of other religious groups, and even tendencies to construct identity boundaries based on religion. Such attitudes are influenced by textual and less dialogical approaches to religious understanding. Some groups continue to believe that preserving faith identity requires limiting interaction with individuals of different religious backgrounds.⁵³ Consequently, religious moderation is narrowly interpreted as a form of compromise that may weaken the purity of Christian teachings. This condition indicates that the theological understanding of universal love has not yet been fully translated into inclusive social attitudes.

The study also finds that the development of digital media has widened the gap between the teachings of moderation and actual social practices. Social media frequently serves as a platform for the dissemination of intolerance, hate speech, and religious provocation.⁵⁴ Some Christians, often unintentionally, participate in the circulation of content that reinforces social polarization and exclusive identities. Such practices contradict Christian teachings that emphasize peace and reconciliation. This phenomenon demonstrates that technological transformation is not always accompanied by corresponding transformations in spirituality and social ethics. In some cases, churches remain more focused on internal congregational ministry than on promoting digital literacy and moderation education relevant to contemporary challenges.⁵⁵ As a result, believers often possess limited capacity to critically evaluate information and become more susceptible to provocative identity-based religious narratives.

Beyond the influence of digital media, the gap between the theology of moderation and social practice is also shaped by socio-political conditions. The findings indicate that religious identity is frequently exploited for practical political interests, particularly during

⁵³ Siti Mustaghfiroh, "Pengaruhutamaan Nilai Moderasi Beragama Di Era Society 5.0," *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 2, no. 2 (2022): 1–15.

⁵⁴ Theguh Saumantri, "Aktualisasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Media Sosial," *MODERATIO: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 3, no. 1 (2023): 64–75.

⁵⁵ Dedi Wahyudi and Novita Kurniasih, "Literasi Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Reaktualisasi 'Jihad Milenial' ERA 4.0," *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–20.

electoral periods or specific social conflicts.⁵⁶ In such circumstances, religion is no longer understood primarily as a source of morality and peace but rather as an instrument for mobilizing support and advancing particular group interests. Some Christians become entangled in identity politics that encourages defensive attitudes toward other communities.⁵⁷ This condition illustrates that religious moderation faces structural challenges arising from power dynamics and social competition. Therefore, the existing gap is not merely a matter of individual understanding but is also influenced by social systems that reinforce religious identity segregation.

The findings further reveal generational differences in the understanding of religious moderation. Younger Christians tend to adopt more open attitudes toward religious pluralism than older generations.⁵⁸ They are generally more willing to engage in interfaith dialogue, participate in collaborative social initiatives, and build relationships with communities of different faiths. This openness is shaped by educational opportunities, global digital interactions, and experiences of living within multicultural environments. However, the inclusive perspectives of younger generations often do not receive full support from religious institutions that continue to maintain conservative approaches.⁵⁹ As a result, tensions emerge between the inclusive values embraced by younger believers and the more exclusive patterns of teaching promoted by certain church institutions. This finding highlights the existence of ongoing social transformations that influence how believers understand the relationship between religion and society.

The study finds that churches play a strategic role in bridging the gap between the theology of religious moderation and its social practice. Churches function not only as places of worship but also as spaces for cultivating the social consciousness of believers.⁶⁰ However, the implementation of moderation-oriented education within church settings remains sporadic and has not yet become a central component of pastoral ministry. Many

⁵⁶ Firdaus M Yunus, Taslim H M Yasin, and Syamsul Rijal, "Politik Identitas Dan Politisasi Agama Dalam Konteks Pemilu Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Dialektika Sosial* 9, no. 2 (2023): 121–37.

⁵⁷ Gulo, Mbelangedo, and Padakari, "Membentuk Identitas Kristen Yang Toleran: Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Pilar Kebhinekaan."

⁵⁸ Siti Maizul Habibah, R R Nanik Setyowati, and Fatmawati Fatmawati, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Upaya Internalisasi Nilai Toleransi Pada Generasi Z," *Pancasila: Jurnal Keindonesiaan* 2, no. 1 (2022): 126–35, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.52738/pjk.v2i1.70>.

⁵⁹ Jimmi Pindan Pute and Deflit Dujerslaim Lilo, "REVITALISASI MODERASI BERAGAMA MELALUI PEMANFAATAN LITERASI DIGITAL OLEH GEN-Z," *Masakan: Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (2023): 44–59.

⁶⁰ Hendrik Belwawin and Fransina O Abineno, "Implikasi Pendidikan Keagamaan Terhadap Moderasi Beragama Di SMTK Marturia Sentani Kabupaten Jayapura Tahun 2022," *Jurnal Sosial Dan Humaniora* 8, no. 1 (2023): 19–28, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.47313/pjsh.v8i1.1909>.

churches continue to emphasize ritual practices and individual spiritual growth rather than fostering interreligious social awareness. Yet, within pluralistic societies, churches are expected to provide forms of faith education that are dialogical, contextual, and capable of addressing the challenges of intolerance. This study demonstrates that churches actively engaged in interfaith cooperation tend to nurture congregations that are more open and moderate than churches with limited social interaction with members of other religious communities.

Another significant finding is the emergence of the phenomenon of “symbolic moderation,” a condition in which believers or religious institutions project an image of tolerance in the public sphere while continuing to maintain exclusive attitudes in their internal practices.⁶¹ For example, churches may participate in interfaith activities as a form of social formality but fail to provide opportunities for meaningful theological dialogue among their congregants. Consequently, moderation becomes little more than an institutional slogan without generating genuine transformation of consciousness. This phenomenon indicates that religious moderation is often employed as a social identity marker aimed at preserving a harmonious public image rather than being embraced as a deeply internalized spiritual value.⁶² This finding represents a novel contribution to the study of religious moderation, as it highlights the distinction between the public performance of moderation and the internalization of moderating values within faith communities.

The study also finds that the practice of religious moderation within Christianity develops more effectively through socio-humanistic approaches than through purely dogmatic ones.⁶³ When churches engage in humanitarian activities such as social assistance, community education, healthcare services, and disaster relief in collaboration with interfaith communities, social relations become more harmonious. Humanitarian-based interactions help reduce prejudice and foster solidarity among religious groups.⁶⁴ In contrast, approaches that place excessive emphasis on doctrinal debates tend to reinforce identity

⁶¹ Sigit Kamseno, “Problem Paradox of Tolerance Dalam Program Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama, Satu Perspektif Filsafat: Problem Paradox of Tolerance in the Mainstreaming Program of Religious Moderation, a Philosophical Perspective,” *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 15, no. 2 (2022): 273–302, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v15i2.709>.

⁶² Muhammad Ismail, Fakultas Ushuluddin, and Dakwah Iain, “Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Dan Sikap Intoleransi Sosial” 1, no. 2 (2023): 114–24.

⁶³ Mustaghfiroh, “Pengarusutamaan Nilai Moderasi Beragama Di Era Society 5.0.”

⁶⁴ Ardhana Januar Mahardhani, “Koeksistensi Berbasis Moderasi Beragama: Konstruksi Keharmonisan Antar Umat Beragama Di Desa Gelangkulon Ponorogo,” *Asketik: Jurnal Agama Dan Perubahan Sosial* 6, no. 2 (2022): 243–58, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.30762/asketik.v6i2.457>.

boundaries and increase the potential for conflict. This finding suggests that moderation is more readily embraced when it is expressed through tangible actions that address the social needs of communities.

From a theoretical perspective, this study offers important implications for the development of religious moderation scholarship. Religious moderation has traditionally been understood primarily as a normative concept focused on maintaining balance in religious attitudes. However, the findings indicate that moderation should be understood as a social process shaped by power relations, digital media, cultural identities, and political dynamics. Consequently, theories of religious moderation cannot be confined to theological explanations alone but must also incorporate perspectives from the sociology of religion, digital communication studies, and social identity theory.⁶⁵ This study demonstrates that the success of moderation is strongly influenced by the ability of religious institutions to create contextual and transformative spaces for dialogue.

Another theoretical implication concerns the need to reinterpret the concept of love within Christianity as a foundation for social moderation. Traditionally, the concept of love has often been understood within the framework of individual spirituality, such as loving one's neighbor in personal relationships.⁶⁶ However, this study demonstrates that love should also be understood as a social responsibility to promote justice, respect diversity, and protect minority groups. Consequently, religious moderation in Christianity extends beyond passive tolerance and encompasses active engagement in creating an inclusive social order. This perspective represents a new development in the theology of moderation by positioning love as a concrete and transformative social practice.

This study also contributes a new concept, namely "relational moderation," which refers to a form of moderation cultivated through direct experiences of interaction among members of different religious communities. Relational moderation emphasizes that tolerant attitudes cannot be effectively developed through doctrinal instruction alone but must be experienced through everyday social relationships.⁶⁷ When Christians participate in social cooperation, cultural dialogue, and community-based activities alongside people of

⁶⁵ Yongki Saputra and Juliana Sriana Sinaga, "Identitas Sosial, Kompleksitas Identitas, Dan Sinodalitas: Suatu Kajian Lintas Iman Dalam Konteks Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia," *JURNAL PASTORAL KATEKETIK* 2, no. 2 (2025): 38–47.

⁶⁶ Agustin Soewitomo Putri and Elkana Chrisna Wijaya, "Konstruksi Teologia Persahabatan Melalui Pemaknaan Koinonia Dalam Bingkai Moderasi Beragama," *Jurnal Teologi Gracia Deo* 4, no. 2 (2022): 394–405.

⁶⁷ Pandu Hyangsewu, Hilman Taufiq Abdillah, and Vina Aulia, "Internalization of Harmony through Interfaith Interaction in the Kampung Toleransi Community," *JSPH (Jurnal Sosiologi Pendidikan Humanis)* 8, no. 2 (2023): 145–56, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.17977/um021v8i2p145-156>.

other faiths, mutual trust develops naturally. The findings indicate that religious moderation is more effectively fostered through lived social experiences than through sermons or formal educational programs alone.⁶⁸ The concept of relational moderation represents a novel contribution that enriches practical approaches to promoting religious moderation within pluralistic societies.

In addition, this study shows that theological education within the church environment needs a paradigm transformation. Theological education is not sufficient if it only instills doctrinal understanding; it must also develop dialogical skills, social empathy, and multicultural literacy.⁶⁹ Churches need to develop curricula that incorporate issues of pluralism, peace, human rights, and interfaith communication as integral parts of faith formation. In this way, religious moderation is not merely a moral discourse, but becomes a social character of Christian believers in everyday life. This transformation of theological education is important to respond to the challenges of an increasingly complex and diverse modern society.

The findings show that the gap between theological teachings and social practice is also influenced by the lack of role models among religious leaders. Some religious figures still use an exclusive approach in conveying teachings, making it difficult for believers to develop moderate attitudes.⁷⁰ Conversely, religious leaders who actively build dialogue and interfaith cooperation have been proven to positively influence the mindset of their congregations.⁷¹ Role modeling is an important factor because people tend to imitate the social attitudes of their leaders. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation must begin with transforming church leadership to become more open, humanistic, and contextual.

This study also finds that the practice of religious moderation is closely related to the social experiences of believers. Christians who live in heterogeneous environments tend to be more moderate compared to those living in homogeneous environments.⁷² Daily

⁶⁸ Linda Aulia Rahmah and Asep Amaludin, "Penerapan Interaksi Sosial Antar Masyarakat Melalui Moderasi Beragama Dan Sikap Toleransi Di Desa Gentasari Kecamatan Kroya Kabupaten Cilacap," *To Maega: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 4, no. 3 (2021): 341–50.

⁶⁹ R. A. Nugroho, F. J., & Sirait, "Pendidikan Teologi Dan Tantangan Komunikasi Misi Multikultural Di Era Digital," *Charistheo: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 5, no. 1 (2025): 36–44, <https://doi.org/10.54592/jct.v5i1.274>.

⁷⁰ Ismail, Ushuluddin, and Iain, "Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Dan Sikap Intoleransi Sosial."

⁷¹ Desi Sukenti and Ucep Hermawan, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama: Memahami Dialog Agama Perspektif Teori Otto Scharmer Dalam Program Kelas Penggerak Gusdurian," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 9, no. 2 (2024): 225–54.

⁷² Mahardhani, "Koeksistensi Berbasis Moderasi Beragama: Konstruksi Keharmonisan Antar Umat Beragama Di Desa Gelangkulon Ponorogo."

interaction with people of different religious backgrounds creates a more realistic understanding of diversity and reduces negative stereotypes. Conversely, limited social interaction often gives rise to prejudice and fear toward other groups.⁷³ These findings indicate that moderation is not only shaped by formal education but also by people's lived social experiences. In the context of Indonesia's multicultural society, this study emphasizes that religious moderation in Christianity must be understood as an effort to maintain a balance between faith identity and national social responsibility.⁷⁴ Christians can maintain their theological beliefs without being exclusive toward other groups. Moderation does not mean reducing faith commitment, but directing faith to become a source of peace and social solidarity. Thus, religious moderation plays an important role in strengthening national unity amid religious and cultural diversity.

Overall, this study shows that the gap between theological teachings of religious moderation in Christianity and the social practices of society is a multidimensional issue influenced by theological, social, political, cultural, and digital factors. Religious moderation should not be understood merely as a normative concept, but must be realized through transformation in education, religious leadership, social interaction, and strengthening human consciousness.⁷⁵ This study introduces novelty through the concepts of symbolic moderation and relational moderation, which emphasize the importance of social experience in shaping moderate attitudes. Thus, religious moderation in Christianity can develop not only as a theological teaching but also as a real social practice in the life of a pluralistic and dynamic society.

Conclusion

Based on the research findings, religious moderation within the Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions is a form of religiosity grounded in love, tolerance, peace, and respect for human dignity. However, its implementation in a plural society still faces various challenges, such as identity exclusivism, identity politics, digital radicalization, and generational gaps in understanding moderation. This study shows that religious moderation is no longer sufficient to be understood as a normative theological concept, but must be realized through social practices that are dialogical, participatory, and relational. The

⁷³ Saumantri, "Aktualisasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Media Sosial."

⁷⁴ Amirrudin Zalukhu, "Implementasi Nilai Moderasi Beragama Melalui Pendidikan Kristen Di Indonesia: Analisis Atas Empat Pilar Moderasi Beragama," *Fidei: Jurnal Teologi Sistematis Dan Praktika* 8, no. 2 (2025): 339–57.

⁷⁵ Sukenti and Hermawan, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama: Memahami Dialog Agama Perspektif Teori Otto Scharmer Dalam Program Kelas Penggerak Gusdurian."

novelty of this research lies in the emergence of the concepts of digital moderation, participatory moderation, relational moderation, symbolic moderation, performative moderation, and adaptive moderation, which reflect the complexity of contemporary Christian religiosity. Thus, strengthening religious moderation requires the transformation of theological education, digital literacy, role modeling by religious leaders, and interfaith cooperation in order to create an inclusive, harmonious, and socially just society.

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