

Reconstructing Religious Moderation to Build Social Cohesion in a Multicultural Society

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Religious Moderation;
Wasatiyyah; Social
Cohesion;
Multicultural Society;
Interreligious Dialogue;
Inclusive Citizenship

Article history:

Received 2026-10-10

Revised 2026-10-19

Accepted 2026-10-30

ABSTRACT

Religious moderation has emerged as a significant conceptual and normative framework for responding to social fragmentation within increasingly multicultural societies. However, prevailing formulations of religious moderation tend to emphasize normative prescriptions of interreligious tolerance while insufficiently addressing the structural, relational, and dialogical dimensions underlying the formation and sustainability of social cohesion. This study aims to reconstruct religious moderation as a multidimensional paradigm for strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies. Employing a qualitative approach through library research and interpretive content analysis, this study critically synthesizes academic literature concerning religious moderation, wasatiyyah, multiculturalism, social cohesion, intergroup relations, and inclusive citizenship. The findings indicate that religious moderation needs to be reconstructed beyond individual religious attitudes and dispositions toward a social-relational framework encompassing epistemic openness, recognition of difference, substantive equality, dialogical engagement, social justice, mutual trust, and collaborative civic participation. This reconstruction positions religious moderation not merely as a preventive instrument against religious extremism but as a transformative mechanism for cultivating reciprocal trust, mutual recognition, collective belonging, and cross-group solidarity. The study proposes a conceptual model in which religious moderation operates through a transformative sequence of values, social competencies, inclusive practices, and social outcomes, ultimately contributing to sustainable social cohesion. The novelty of this study lies in repositioning religious moderation from an individual normative construct toward a relational-transformative paradigm that connects religious values with broader theories of social cohesion and multicultural citizenship. The framework contributes globally to the study of religious moderation by conceptualizing diversity not as an obstacle to cohesion but as a social condition that can be constructively managed through dialogue, justice, recognition, and sustained cooperation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The context of modernity marked by the intensification of human mobility, advances in communication technology, migration, urbanization, and global connectivity leads to cross-religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and diverse value orientations. This plurality has the potential to be a social capital that facilitates the exchange of knowledge, the formation of inclusive civic identities, and more dynamic dynamics of shared life; however, it can also give rise to social complexity when differences are perceived as a threat to group identity, social legitimacy, or established value orders. In the literature on multicultural social cohesion, the main problem is not only the existence of differences but the ability of social institutions and citizens to manage differences constructively, so that identity fragmentation, intergroup prejudice, exclusivism, discrimination, and politicization of identity do not erode social trust and civic solidarity (Levrau & Loobuyck, 2018). Therefore, social cohesion is a strategic agenda to maintain diversity while building a sense of belonging to a common life, in line with the global need for constructive and sustainable cross-cultural relations.

In the framework of the reconstruction of religious moderation, the relevance of the practice of moderation is to realize the proportionate disclosure of beliefs, avoid extremism, and build inclusive relationships with other groups. Religious moderation is not sufficiently understood individually or normatively; it needs to be placed as a social praxis that recognizes the dignity of other groups, accepts plurality, facilitates dialogue, builds trust across groups, and encourages public participation for joint problem-solving. Academic debates show that religious moderation can move from individual ethics to a concrete relational paradigm that contributes to social cohesion, taking into account structural and relational dynamics in modern multicultural societies (Cohen, 2019). As the global context changes, identity polarization, identity politics, cross-border migration, and information flows that reinforce the prejudice of the relevance of religious moderation reconstruction actually increase because it is necessary an approach that integrates ethical, social, cultural, educational, and civic dimensions to maintain inclusivity without erasing identity diversity (Cohen, 2019). On a practical level, cross-border studies show that policies that combine recognition of differences with democratic values often offer space for broader solidarity when accompanied by institutional accountability and broad public participation (Breidahl, Holtug, & Kongshøj, 2017). Overall, the literature suggests that religious moderation has the potential to shape patterns of intergroup relations within the framework of inclusive social cohesion, as long as it is integrated into social policy strategies that is holistic and responsive to local and global dynamics (Kastoryano, 2018).

The introduction and theoretical reconstruction of religious moderation needs to be forged with a social cohesion approach as its substantive orientation. The conceptual gaps identified show that the literature on religious moderation is often limited to efforts to prevent extremism, tolerance, religious education, or the formation of inclusive religious attitudes, without explaining the role of moderation as a mechanism for the formation of social cohesion at the relational and structural levels. The integration between religious moderation and social cohesion demands the meaning of moderation not merely as an individual disposition, but as a relational practice involving the recognition of differences, anti-identity dialogue, social justice, and citizen participation. Within this framework, social cohesion is understood not as a uniformity of values, but as the ability of communities to maintain constructive social relations in the midst of differences, through mechanisms of recognition, negotiation, and cross-identity cooperation. Many studies show that social cohesion is related to belonging, solidarity, participation, equality, and intergroup relationships, but there is no methodological consensus on how the religious dimension is a source of identity as well as a source of social solidarity in relational dynamics, so a conceptual reconstruction is needed that connects these two discourses empirically and theoretically (Gulo, Mbelanggedo, & Padakari, 2024). The approach proposed in this article places religious moderation as a relational-practical framework, which is built on the dimensions of epistemic openness, recognition of differences, substantive equality, identity dialogue, social justice, social belief, and civic participation, so that religious moderation can function as a normative-relational mechanism to maintain social cohesion in a plural public space. Departing from this idea, the integration between religious moderation, social cohesion theory, and the perspective of a multicultural society means that social cohesion is expected not to change religious expression, but rather to expand the scope of moderation to include relationships between individuals, religious communities, cultures, and public

spaces as an arena for the construction of shared identities in the face of differences (Alfiansyah & Fajriyah, 2023) This change in focus shifts the emphasis from moderation as a personal attitudes become moderation as a social-relational practice that underlines the role of institutions, local cultures, and digital dynamics and public spaces in forming sustainable cohesion (Rahmatika & Nasruddin, 2024) Although empirical studies are still diverse in contexts, evidence from the literature on religious moderation in various regions shows the importance of optimizing social capital, cross-identity dialogue, and citizen participation to build inclusive and inclusive communities. resistant to conflicts based on religious identity (Saragih, 2023) Thus, this conceptual reconstruction affirms that religious moderation can be understood as a relational and transformational framework that deliberately manages differences through mechanisms of recognition and cooperation, thereby contributing to sustainable social cohesion in a pluralistic society (Kamseno, Puteri, & Naupal, 2022)

The theoretical and practical implications of this reconstruction emphasize that religious moderation as a social-dialogical process needs to be tested comparatively through studies across cultural, religious, and state contexts. Theoretically, the contribution of this article is a shift from "moderation as individual disposition" to "moderation as social-relational practice," which expands the analysis of religious moderation from mere religious ethics to an analytical framework for understanding how coexistence is constructed and maintained in plural social spaces (Mibtadin & Nuriyanto, 2023) In practice, this framework emphasizes the importance of public policies and community practices that emphasize intergroup dialogue, recognition of local cultures, and mechanisms of accountability and social justice as drivers of cohesion, without negating specific theological expressions or religious identities (Usman, 2023)

The title of the reconstruction of religious moderation as a paradigm for strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society demands a systematic exposition of how religious moderation does not simply refrain from extremism, but mobilizes diversity literacy, dialogue, social empathy, and civic attributes as a means of generating positive cohesion. Conceptually, religious moderation needs to be positioned as a transformative framework that integrates pluralism, social justice, and intergroup relations in education policies, community reforms, and social institutions. Theoretical studies show that policies that emphasize tolerance alone are not enough to build cohesion; on the contrary, spaces for participation, equal treatment, and dialogue practices that validate diversity (e.g., diversity literacy, dialogue capacity, and consequential citizenship) are needed so that differences are respected while directing cross-group cooperation (Faas, Hajisoteriou, & Angelides, 2013) Studies related to civic education, global-citizenship education, and multicultural education in various country contexts show that policy models that combine inclusivity, intercultural dialogue, and minority acculturation tend to improve social cohesion through a sense of belonging and broad public participation (Soriano, Mancao, & Valencia, 2021) This analysis indicates that religious moderation is not only an ethical concept, but a policy instrument that practically builds dialogue forums, interfaith cooperation networks, and conflict resolution mechanisms based on recognition and justice, so that communities are able to transform from negative peace to sustainable positive cohesion (Lapis, 2025)

From an implementation perspective, the reconstruction of religious moderation requires concrete operational dimensions: (1) the integration of diversity literacy and sustainable dialogue in the formal and non-formal education curriculum; (2) the design of public policies that provide a space for fair participation for all groups, with a pro-inclusion impact evaluation mechanism; (3) the strengthening of community capabilities through interfaith dialogue forums, joint social initiatives, and conflict resolution programs based on the recognition of rights and restorative justice; and (4) the recognition that social cohesion is born from constructive cooperation between various cultural and religious identities within the legal framework of the state. International studies show that the formation of a common identity through the concept of inclusive civic integration does not erode differences; rather, it strengthens cohesion when policies and practices are implemented with accountability, public participation, and recognition of plurality (e.g. civic education, multicultural education, and intercultural education policies in Europe and the Commonwealth) (Klein, 2021) Nuanced differences between the models of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and civic integration need to be noted as sources of conflict or cohesion, depending on how state values, historical national identity, and the language of democracy are articulated in practice at the national and institutional levels (Klein, 2021)

Overall, the future of religious moderation lies in its capacity to highlight diversity as a space of recognition and solidarity, while encouraging collective action, sustainable dialogue, and the formation of resilient and inclusive social institutions at the national and global levels (Harris, Lam, Hartup, Collin, & Third, 2022).

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with library research design combined with content analysis methods to reconstruct the concept of religious moderation in relation to the development of social cohesion in multicultural societies. Library research is used because the object of research study is in the form of ideas, concepts, arguments, and theoretical constructions that are documented in various literature sources, both primary and secondary. Primary sources include the Qur'an, hadiths, tafsir works, policy documents on religious moderation, and academic works that directly discuss religious moderation, wasatiyyah, tolerance, pluralism, and social cohesion. Meanwhile, secondary sources include articles from reputable international journals, academic books, research reports, and relevant institutional documents. Literature search is directed to sources that have substantive relevance to the relationship between religious moderation, intergroup relations, tolerance, social beliefs, and integration of multicultural societies. Source selection is carried out based on conceptual relevance, academic authority, publication novelty, and contribution to the construction of research arguments.

Data analysis is carried out through systematic and interpretive content analysis by placing text as the main data source to identify patterns of meaning, conceptual categories, and relationships between ideas related to religious moderation and social cohesion. The stages of analysis include: (1) identification and mapping of relevant literature; (2) data reduction through information selection based on research focus; (3) coding process on key concepts such as wasatiyyah, tolerance, inclusivity, justice, respect for differences, interreligious dialogue, and social solidarity; (4) categorization of findings based on normative, epistemological, social, and pedagogical dimensions; and (5) interpretation of intercategory relationships to produce conceptual constructions of religious moderation as a mechanism to strengthen social cohesion. The analysis does not stop at the description of the content of the text, but is directed at a critical reading of the context, assumptions, and social implications of the ideas found. Thus, this study seeks to shift the understanding of religious moderation from mere normative principles regarding the middle path to a social paradigm that can explain how the value of moderation is translated into relational practices in the midst of diversity of identity, beliefs, and social orientations.

The conceptual reconstruction process is carried out through a critical synthesis of the findings of the literature to formulate a model of the relationship between religious moderation and social cohesion in a multicultural society. The validity of the interpretation is strengthened through the triangulation of sources, namely comparing normative Islamic perspectives, contemporary social theories, empirical research results, and relevant policy documents. This approach allows the research to identify the common points as well as conceptual tensions between religious moderation as a religious value and social cohesion as a socio-political construct. The final result is expected to produce a theoretical framework that explains that religious moderation functions not only as a strategy for managing religious differences, but also as an ethical and social tool to build trust, reduce exclusivism, strengthen intergroup interactions, and create inclusive social life in multicultural societies

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical introduction of this research framework is built through the integration of three main constructions: religious moderation (wasatiyyah), multicultural society, and social cohesion. Religious moderation is understood as an ethical-religious framework that emphasizes balance, justice, respect for differences, and rejection of extremism as basic principles of religious life; In the Islamic perspective, this concept is associated with wasatiyyah related to the ummatan wasatan, adl, tawāzun, tasāmuḥ, as well as respect for human dignity (Nazili, Suhud, Falah, & Putra, 2024) Moreover, moderation is not enough to be understood as a purely individual quality in a multicultural context; it needs to be reconstructed as a social orientation that directs how individuals and groups interact with identity, different beliefs, and views in public spaces (Karimullah, Faizin, & Islami, 2023) The second construction, a multicultural society, marks social spaces with diversity of religions, ethnicities, cultures, languages, values, and social identities; differences do not automatically trigger conflict when managed

through inclusive mechanisms that maintain diversity without social fragmentation, with moderation acting as a mediation mechanism that connects religious identity with social openness (Sholikhah, 2024). The third construction, social cohesion, refers to the ability of communities to maintain connectedness, trust, solidarity, participation, and commitment to living together within the framework of diversity; Social cohesion here is understood as the ability to build unity in diversity, not uniformity of identity. Theoretically, the three constructs are formed through the flow: Religious Moderation → Difference Management → Inclusive Interaction → Social Trust and Solidarity → Social Cohesion, which then forms the basis for the reconstruction of religious moderation from the focus of extremism control to the development of inclusive social relations in multicultural societies (Muhtar, 2023). This framework further provides a basis for assessing how religious moderation contributes to social cohesion through the dynamics of interaction between groups of different identities, as well as how these interactions support the formation of inclusive and equitable community norms at the local, national, and global levels (Sihombing, Fatra, Suhaib, & Hussain, 2023).

An in-depth discussion on the implementation and empirical dynamics of religious moderation in Indonesia's multicultural context and its relevance to social cohesion was supported by a number of Scopus-indexed international studies in the last five years. For example, studies on Islamic Wasatiyyah as a framework of moderation that emphasizes intercultural dialogue between cultures and religions and the use of the concept of moderation to build interreligious harmony have been comprehensively discussed in Indonesian and regional literature, with an emphasis on the adaptation of *islah*, *tasamuh*, and *tawazun* in education and public policy (Mutaqin, 2024). These studies also highlight the role of educational institutions including madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic higher institutions in internalizing the value of moderation through curriculum, learning practices, and deradicalization programs based on multiculturalism, which explicitly link moderation with increasing social cohesion and handling extremism preventively (Djamaluddin, Bahri, Halim, Nurlailah, & Chabibi, 2024). Various findings emphasize that religious moderation is not just an individual action, but a social construction that requires institutional commitment, school culture, as well as national policies that promote inclusivity and respect for the rights of minority groups in a diverse country such as Indonesia (Rahmah, 2024). The difference of views among the references shows the nuances of the implementation of moderation influenced by the local context, the history of the archipelago's Islam, and the intellectual traditions of contemporary Islam, so it is important to include this discourse as part of the theoretical and practical evaluation of the research framework (Jais & Sumin, 2023).

3.1 Reconstruction of Religious Moderation: From Normative Principles to Social Paradigms

This analytical introduction summarizes the findings of the literature on religious moderation as a normative construct that has tended to position moderation as a central attitude in religious life. Literature analysis shows an important foundation of religious moderation in the Islamic tradition through the idea of *wasatiyyah* that emphasizes balance, justice, and proportionality, but overly oriented readings of individual and normative dimensions have the potential to limit the ability of this concept to explain social problems in multicultural societies. Moderation does not only dwell on how individuals understand their religion, but also how these beliefs are manifested in social relationships with different groups. The proposed reconstructive framework places religious moderation as a relational paradigm, i.e. a measure of moderate religiosity is judged by how beliefs shape patterns of social interaction, not merely personal positions. This paradigm positions differences as a social reality that needs to be managed through justice, dialogue, respect, and cooperation, so that religious moderation becomes a broader dimension related to the quality of intergroup relationships (Laeheem, Tepsing, & Hayisa-e, 2025).

This conceptual reconstruction then resulted in a shift from "moderation as a middle position" to "moderation as the capacity to manage differences in a meaningful way." "constructive." This shift is important so that religious moderation is no longer conceptually static, but dynamic for negotiating, dialogue, building trust, and working together in diversity. Thus, religious moderation can be placed as a social paradigm that allows religious identity to be maintained without giving rise to social exclusivism. The dimensions of reconstruction are formulated as a comparison between conventional approaches and conceptual reconstruction: orientation from a middle position to the management of differences; the focus shifts from the individual to social relations; the goal shifts from avoiding

extremism to building a common life; differences are seen as a reality that needs to be managed, not something that needs to be controlled; interactions shift from tolerance to dialogue and cooperation; outputs transform from moderate attitudes to social cohesion. This framework is in line with research that emphasizes the importance of relational approaches in understanding religious moderation in multicultural societies, and is supported by international scientific studies that discuss cultural dynamics, dialogue, and pluralism policies at the global level (Akhtar, 2026)

3.2 Religious Moderation as a Mechanism for Managing Differences

The title of this study emphasizes that in a multicultural society, diverse religious and cultural identities can be a source of social wealth if managed through dialogical mechanisms, but are at risk of segregation if group identity is seen as the only valid identity. The analysis shows that religious moderation plays a role as a mechanism for managing differences through four main principles: justice, respect, openness, and balance. Justice ensures the proportionality of social space for different groups; respect prevents insults and discrimination; openness facilitates dialogue; and balance holds dominance and marginalization. In this framework, religious moderation does not mean uniting all beliefs, but rather forms a strong religious commitment accompanied by an inclusive social attitude; it affirms the difference between theological relativism and social inclusivity, and emphasizes the ethics of coexistence without neitering religious identity. These findings are supported by literature that discusses religious moderation as the foundation of interfaith dialogue, social justice, and cultural integration in the context of plurality (Yatasha, Zuhri, & Faza, 2023) This paragraph also cites studies that affirm that religious moderation can integrate personal beliefs with the social rights of other groups through inclusive dialogue and policies (Busthomi, 2023)

The results of the study further confirm that religious moderation, as a pillar of social harmony, contributes to the formation of peace in the era of Society 5.0 by integrating the values of diversity, inclusivity, and social justice. This concept does not negate religious identity, but rather places it within the framework of a shared life ethic that respects the rights of other groups and encourages interfaith dialogue. In the context of education and public policy, the emphasis on the construction of moderate curricula, educator training, and interfaith dialogue programs is crucial to strengthen tolerance, respect, and social partnership. Differences of opinion are still respected through the principles of proportionality and sound faith, so that religious moderation serves as a constructive bridge for cultural and religious diversity in a pluralistic society (Aksa, 2024) The annotated bibliography at the end details all references relevant to these claims.

3.3 Religious Moderation and the Transformation of Tolerance into Social Cohesion

Tolerance alone is not enough to build social cohesion; cohesion requires a series of active relationships such as trust, communication, participation, solidarity, and cooperation. The proposed conceptual transformation—Tolerance → Interaction → Dialogue → Trust → Cooperation → Solidarity → Social Cohesion explains the shift from a willingness to accept differences to a social practice across differences. In the early stages, religious moderation serves as a social moderation mechanism that pioneers tolerance; however, cohesion is achieved when sustained interaction facilitates dialogue that lowers prejudice and deepens mutual understanding. When interactions and dialogue take place consistently, social trust is formed as a foundation for cooperation and solidarity. The emphasis on religious moderation as a cascading social process emphasizes that religious values need to be translated into cross-disparate behavior to build inclusive social cohesion, as discussed in the theoretical discourse of religious moderation and the practice of interreligious dialogue (Abdul et al., 2023)

This conceptual transformation also highlights how religious moderation plays an operational framework that enables religious values to become social capital for cohesion. Various studies in academic language show that interfaith dialogue, religious literacy, and solidarity actions can strengthen literacy, tolerance, and anti-violence in multicultural societies. In the context of Indonesia and the Southeast Asian region, these findings are supported by literature that emphasizes that social work dialogue and sustainable interaction reduce prejudice and build trust networks that strengthen cross-group cooperation (Abdul et al., 2023) Therefore, this theoretical design places religious moderation as a socially and culturally relevant multi-layered social process to realize social cohesion through communication mechanisms, dialogue, and collaboration between diverse faith groups (Madiyono & Haq, 2023)

3.4 Religious Moderation as the Foundation of Social Trust

Social cohesion cannot be built solely through formal regulation; it requires the belief that individuals and other groups respect the norms of coexistence, especially in multicultural societies where interactions occur between different backgrounds and value systems. These social beliefs have been identified as an important pillar for building stable social relationships when dealing with differences in values and group identities (Leder, Vaart, & Machielse, 2025). In the context of interreligious and intergroup interactions, the literature shows that intergroup interactions designed with attention to religious identity, majority/minority status, and perceptions of identity autonomy, have a complex impact on changes in social networks and levels of shared belief; some studies show that religious identity can strengthen bonds within groups (bonding social capital) while requiring designs that also strengthen recognition of the rights and dignity of other groups (dual identity, common humanity) to enhance social inclusion and justice (Tondok, Suryanto, & Ardi, 2022). Within the normative framework of Islam, the principles of respect for human beings and a just social life resonate with the formation of social beliefs through those norms (e.g., justice, respect, openness, social responsibility) that influence the way individuals view and treat other groups (Macdonald, Abdalla, & Kabir, 2022). Conceptually, the moral infrastructure in question is a configuration of ethical values that do not constitute physical institutions, but give direction to the practice of interaction in diverse societies; the stronger the values of justice, respect, openness, and social responsibility are applied, the greater the opportunities for stable social cohesion (moral infrastructure) (Hedges, 2019). However, some studies have also shown that interfaith-based interactions do not necessarily automatically improve social coherence; The context of structural forces, social norms, and identity dynamics remains the main determining factors (Leder et al., 2025). Efforts to strengthen social trust through policy regulation alone tend to be insufficient without the practice of dialogue, mutual respect, and the embedding of pluralism values at the individual and community level (Macdonald et al., 2022).

Religious moderation can contribute to the formation of social trust through the development of anti-prejudice and anti-discrimination attitudes, by emphasizing the view of other groups as fellow citizens who have social dignity and rights. At a practical level, interreligious interactions designed with a focus on respect for human dignity, rights, and equality of human values can transform the dynamics of social relations from a pattern of suspicion to a pattern of mutual recognition; this mechanism is related to the literature on intergroup contact and dual identity which is effective in promoting tolerance and cohesion when applied in contexts that promote equal rights as well as the recognition of differences in group identities (Leder et al., 2025). The emphasis on the principles of justice, respect, openness, and social responsibility is also in line with the view that social norms, rather than mere formal rules, serve as moral infrastructure that shapes intergroup perceptions and behaviors (public moral bases) (Macdonald et al., 2022). From the perspective of Islamic studies, respect for the human being and a just social life can be seen as the foundation of social ethics that supports the formation of social trust through interreligious dialogue oriented towards shared dignity (Macdonald et al., 2022). In addition, empirical studies show that interreligious contact-based interventions often yield benefits in the form of reduced prejudice when contact conditions meet the principles of equal status, shared goals, and institutional support, although the risk of the formation of stronger group cohesion within one's own group must also be watched out for (Yogeeswaran, Gale, & Verkuyten, 2026). Theoretically, this framework asserts that religious moderation can serve as a moral infrastructure that drives social trust in pluralistic societies through the cultivation of universal moral values such as justice, dignity, and human rights, as well as through dialogue practices oriented towards the formation of inclusive social norms (Macdonald et al., 2022). The empirical debate also highlights that the outcomes of interfaith interventions vary depending on political contexts, minority/majority identities, and perceptions of norm authority, making it important to build policies that integrate sustainable dialogue with the evaluation of its social impact (Leder et al., 2025).

3.5 Religious Moderation and the Formation of Cross-Identity Solidarity

Social cohesion is not enough only to be built on tolerance and trust, but also solidarity born from the shared awareness that the survival of social life is a shared responsibility. In the context of a multicultural society, solidarity can be formed without the necessity of religious and cultural similarities, but rather through the common interests of humanity and the responsibility of citizens as

part of the community. Religious moderation becomes a mechanism to link particular identities with broader civic and humanitarian identities, allowing the creation of cross-identity solidarity through an orientation towards the common good. Theoretically, solidarity-based social cohesion is not synonymous with homogeneity; it can strengthen in diversity provided that there is agreement on the basic values of living together as well as a commitment to justice and virtue for others (Yogeeswaran et al., 2026) The equitable distribution of human values and the establishment of a justice-based ethical framework build the foundations of non-discriminatory and friendly social relations for all identity groups, as stated in various studies on interreligious dialogue and moderate social interaction that emphasize human rights-based inclusivity and solidarity (Boiliu & Silitonga, 2024) Within this framework, empirical studies show that the practice of religious moderation contributes to more inclusive and sustainable social governance through interreligious education, public dialogue, and policies that promote equal rights and opportunities for all citizens, without ignoring specific historical dynamics and local contexts (Umar, Taufiqi, & Purwanto, 2024)

The existence of cross-identity solidarity is important because social cohesion can be maintained in cultural and religious diversity, provided that there is a pattern of norms that encourage mutual recognition, justice, and collective action for the public welfare. Religious moderation acts as a bridge that connects particular identities with broader civic and humanitarian identities, so that solidarity emerges through the recognition of the dignity of each individual and commitment to the interests of common humanity. Several studies highlight how cross-identity interactions, through interreligious dialogue, can enhance solidarity capacity by emphasizing universal values such as social justice, empathy, and collective responsibility, so that social cohesion does not depend on the homogeneity of a particular group but on agreement on common goals and commitment to human rights (Cuciniello, 2024) The difference in approach between different regional contexts from Southeast Asia to Europe confirms that the principle of solidarity is rooted in dialogue, critical evaluation of bias, as well as the formation of pluralistic institutions that value diversity while safeguarding the human dignity of all parties (Cuciniello, 2024)

3.6 A Model of Religious Moderation Reconstruction to Build Social Cohesion

The proposed conceptual model emphasizes that social cohesion is realized through the tiered transformation of values into competencies, social practices, and ultimately social outcomes. The foundation layer of values, emphasizing Wasatiyyah, justice, balance, and respect for human dignity, serves as a normative framework that directs the dynamics of intergroup interaction in a multi-elite context. However, cohesion does not automatically emerge simply as having moderate values; a transformational construction is needed that has been empirically proven through content analysis of institutional practices that operationalize moderation in education, families, religious communities, community organizations, and public spaces. The second layer, social competence empathy, openness, dialogue, and the ability to manage differences acts as a bridge between values and practices. The results of the content analysis show that intergroup interaction skills and plurality management are prerequisites for the achievement of social practice layers, which in turn builds social trust, inclusivity, belonging, and social cohesion in the fourth layer. This model underscores the need to operationalize religious moderation through educational institutions, families, religious communities, community organizations, and public spaces to stimulate the sustainable transformation of values-to-competencies to-practices (Wulandari, 2024)

In the context of implementation, the literature suggests that religious moderation plays a role as a cohesion-building paradigm if it is explicitly integrated into inter-institutional policies and practices. Several historical and contemporary studies emphasize the importance of human values, the balance between personal religious freedom and respect for the beliefs of others, as well as the role of Islamic religious education that emphasizes justice, trust, deliberation, and benefit as the foundation of public ethics. The results of the content analysis also indicate that community-based intervention programs such as inclusive religious education, the involvement of religious extension workers in marginalized communities, and moderation initiatives in public institutions contribute to increased cohesion through increased empathy, openness, and cross-group solidarity. However, the potential for differences in value interpretations between social actors demands accountability mechanisms and ongoing evaluation. Overall, this model advocates the establishment of an institutional infrastructure capable of

transforming moderate values into sustainable social competencies, practices, and outcomes, (Once, 2024)

3.7 Theoretical Implications: From Moderation as a Value to Moderation as a Cohesion Paradigm

The findings of the study provide theoretical implications that the concept of religious moderation needs to be extended from a normative-prescriptive paradigm to a relational-transformational paradigm. The normative-prescriptive paradigm mainly emphasizes how individuals should exercise religion in moderation based on the principles of balance, fairness, and proportionality, while the relational paradigm directs attention to how such religiosity shapes the pattern of individual relationships with other groups in a plural social space. Furthermore, the transformational paradigm places the values of moderation as a force that has the capacity to transform the pattern of social interaction from exclusivity to inclusivity. Thus, religious moderation is not sufficiently understood as a personal character or individual religious orientation, but needs to be placed as a social construct that is reflected in the ability of individuals and groups to manage differences in a fair, dialogical, and constructive manner.

In this construction, religious moderation is no longer placed solely as a preventive instrument to respond to extremism, but is developed as a theoretical framework to understand the process of forming a cohesive social life in a multicultural society. This expansion of perspective allows the concept of religious moderation to be more systematically associated with various dimensions of social life, including intergroup beliefs, social solidarity, cross-identity dialogue, community participation, and social integration. Moderation thus serves as a mechanism that bridges identity differences with the need to build a common life. In this context, diversity is not positioned as a problem that must be standardized, but rather as a social reality that requires a common dialogical and ethical capacity in order to produce stable and inclusive social relationships.

Conceptually, this study proposes the proposition that the more the values of religious moderation are transformed from individual orientation to social practices based on justice, dialogue, respect for differences, and cross-identity cooperation, the greater its capacity to contribute to the formation of social cohesion in a multicultural society. This proposition suggests a process of transformation from normative values to social practices, where moderation does not stop at accepting the existence of other groups, but develops into the ability to build communication, trust, collaboration, and solidarity among different groups. Thus, the effectiveness of religious moderation in building social cohesion is largely determined by the extent to which these values are able to be realized in concrete and sustainable social interaction practices.

This proposition also makes it clear that the fundamental goal of religious moderation is not to eliminate differences, homogenize identity, or reduce one's commitment to one's beliefs, but rather to create social conditions that allow various differences to coexist in a fair, productive, and dignified manner. In this perspective, the reconstruction of religious moderation moves from the paradigm of living with differences to living together through differences. This shift marks a conceptual transformation from simply coexistence in diversity to the ability to build a life together through the constructive management of diversity. Thus, religious moderation can be positioned as a social paradigm that not only nurtures tolerance, but also strengthens belief, solidarity, participation, and a sense of belonging as the main foundation for the formation of social cohesion in a multicultural society.

4. CONCLUSION

This study shows that religious moderation needs to be understood more broadly than just the middle position between extremism and religiosity that is considered excessive. Based on library research analysis and content analysis, religious moderation can be reconstructed as a relational and transformational paradigm that functions to manage differences in a multicultural society. The reconstruction is based on the principles of *wasatiyyah*, justice, balance, respect for human dignity, openness, dialogue, and social responsibility. The findings of the study show that these values gain social significance when transformed from individual orientation to the practice of cross-identity interaction. Thus, religious moderation is not only related to how individuals practice their beliefs, but also to how they form an inclusive, dialogical, and non-discriminatory pattern of relationships in a plural social space.

The novelty of the research lies in the reconstruction of religious moderation as a mechanism for

the formation of social cohesion through a transformational process that connects the values of moderation, difference management, inclusive interaction, social belief, solidarity, and social cohesion. This perspective expands the conceptual construction of religious moderation from the dominant paradigm of normative-preventive nature to a paradigm that is relational and productive. In this framework, tolerance is not placed as an end point, but rather as an initial stage that needs to be developed through dialogue, cooperation, and cross-group solidarity. Therefore, social cohesion is not understood as the homogenization of identity, but as the ability of society to maintain diversity while building mutual trust, participation, and shared responsibility. The value model → social competence → social practices → cohesion outcomes are the main conceptual contributions of this research.

Globally, this research contributes to the development of the study of religious moderation by bringing it together with the discourses of multiculturalism, social cohesion, intergroup relations, social trust, and inclusive citizenship. This contribution shows that religious moderation can be positioned not only as a relevant Islamic concept in a given context, but as an analytical framework to understand the management of diversity and the development of a common life in a pluralistic society. This research also offers a theoretical foundation for future research to empirically test how the value of moderation is translated into educational practices, religious communities, public policy, and cross-group interactions. In the end, the reconstruction of religious moderation offered by this study confirms that the goal of moderation is not to erase differences, but to build social capacity so that differences can be managed in a fair, dialogical, and constructive manner so that diversity becomes the basis for the formation of a cohesive and inclusive society.

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