



Universal Religious Values in Religious Moderation

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Abstract

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This article discusses the role of universal religious values in supporting religious moderation as an effort to create harmony and tolerance among religious communities. Universal values such as compassion, justice, peace, fairness, religious freedom, respect, unity, welfare, moderation, balance, tathawur wa ibtikar (moderation and innovation), are able to balance the situation of the people amid differences and conflicts. Using a literature review method from relevant journals, this article highlights how the application of these values can reduce extremism and religious conflict, as well as strengthen social cohesion in a pluralistic society. The results of the study show that religious moderation rooted in universal religious values can be an effective solution in facing the challenges of pluralism and contemporary social dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with extraordinary diversity, including various ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions that coexist peacefully and multicultural (Suhud et al., 2025). This diversity is not only a characteristic of the Indonesian people, but also one of the greatest assets that shapes the national identity. The pluralistic Indonesian society shows how diverse the backgrounds and outlooks on life are, especially in terms of the beliefs and religious practices of various community groups.

This diversity should be a strong social capital for building a harmonious life together, where every individual and group can respect and appreciate each other's differences. With mutual understanding and tolerance, society can create an atmosphere conducive to harmony and peace. Religious diversity, for example, can be a source of inspiration to enrich the moral and ethical values that underlie social interaction, thereby strengthening social *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) in a pluralistic society.

Although Indonesia is known for its rich diversity, the reality is that a pluralistic society with various religious understandings is not immune to challenges in the form of friction between religious groups. Differences in interpretation and belief often cause tensions that have the potential to trigger conflict. This occurs especially when a religious group feels that its teachings are the only absolute truth that must be followed by everyone, thus closing the space for diversity of views and dialogue between religious communities.

This kind of exclusive attitude can worsen relations between groups and cause social fragmentation that undermines the harmony that has been built up over time. When dialogue and tolerance are no longer a priority, the potential for conflict increases and threatens social stability and national unity. Therefore, it is important to develop mutual respect and open up space for constructive communication so that differences can be accepted as part of our shared wealth, not as a source of division.

Based on the background above, the main issue discussed in this paper is, first, the universal values found in religion that create balanced religious moderation. In the book on religious moderation published by Kemenag in 2019, there are several universal values (Ardhana, 2023). These values include noble values such as justice ('adalah), humanity (*insaniyyah*), compassion (*rahmat*), and peace (*ishlah*), which are the essence of teachings that transcend doctrinal and ritual differences. Second, this paper discusses the role of universal religious values in religious moderation. The role of universal religious values is fundamental in shaping a moderate attitude because these values serve as a moral compass that guides the perspectives and behavior of religious communities.

When an individual internalizes the essence of teachings such as compassion (rahmat), humanity (insaniyyah), and justice ('adalah), they will be encouraged to prioritize the dignity of fellow human beings over group ego or rigid claims of truth (Muttaqin, 2023). Third, What challenges are faced in applying universal religious values to realize religious moderation in a pluralistic society, including social, cultural, and political obstacles that hinder the creation of tolerance and mutual respect among religious communities, and what is the role of education and religious leaders in overcoming differences and encouraging interfaith dialogue so that the values of moderation can be widely accepted and practiced in a diverse society?

METHOD

In this paper, the research method used is a literature study. A literature study is a research technique conducted by analyzing and examining various written sources, such as books, academic journals, research reports, and other relevant documents, according to J. Supranto in a journal (Salmaa, 2023). A literature study is conducted to find research data or information by reading scientific journals, reference books, and published materials available in libraries. This method is used to understand concepts, theories, and previous research results related to the topic being studied. Literature studies are often used in academic research as a basis for formulating theoretical foundations and finding research gaps that need to be developed further.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Universal Values in Religion

Religious moderation is an approach that prioritizes the integration of universal values inherent in various religions with the main objective of creating a harmonious, peaceful, and inclusive society (Mukhibat et al., 2023). This approach does not only focus on ritual or religious practices, but also emphasizes the importance of actualizing the noble values of religion in various aspects of social, political, and national life. Thus, religious moderation acts as a bridge connecting spiritual beliefs with the realities of social, national, and state life, thereby promoting interfaith harmony, respect for differences, and strengthening national unity. This approach also encourages individuals and groups to avoid extremism and intolerance, and to promote fairness, balance, and mutual respect in practicing religious teachings, so that religious values can become a source of inspiration and positive strength in building mutual benefit amid diversity in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia in 2023, there are several universal religious values, among others (Jalil, 2021).

1. Diversity

Diversity, whether cultural, ethnic, or religious, is a divine decree (sunatullah) inherent in human nature and should be viewed as a source of

wealth and strength for humanity (Sirry, 2017). Religion teaches that differences are not a reason for conflict, but rather an opportunity to get to know one another, collaborate, and achieve mutual benefit. Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of respecting and preserving diversity as a gift that strengthens harmony, tolerance, and solidarity among fellow human beings, thereby building a peaceful and civilized society in accordance with the noble values contained in religious teachings (QS. Al-Hujurat [49]:13.

2. Tolerance and Pluralism

Tolerance is a fundamental attitude that demands respect and appreciation for differences, especially in the context of religious and cultural diversity. As a continuation of tolerance, pluralism not only recognizes the existence and rights of other religions, but also actively promotes justice and equality among religious communities. By accepting religious heterogeneity as a social reality that must be preserved, pluralism seeks to create and develop pluralistic social conditions for the sake of sustainable social harmony. This attitude is in line with religious teachings and human values that emphasize the importance of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

3. Freedom of Religion

Every individual has the fundamental right to choose and practice their religion without coercion, a principle that is affirmed in Article 28E paragraph (1) of the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, which guarantees freedom of religion and belief. Major religions such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, and Confucianism theologically teach the importance of mutual recognition and respect for other beliefs as the main foundation for peaceful coexistence in a multireligious society.

4. Justice

Justice is a universal principle that demands fair, impartial treatment based on truth. In the context of religious moderation, justice means ensuring that all religious adherents have equal access, opportunities, and share in worship and participation in social life. This principle is an important commitment to maintaining harmony, tolerance, and unity in a diverse society. As explained by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, justice in religion is the main foundation for realizing social harmony and peace.

5. Tolerance and Mutual Respect

Empathy and respect for fellow human beings, regardless of religious background, are important foundations for building healthy and harmonious social relationships. Various religious teachings emphasize mutual respect as the core of social interaction that can prevent conflicts arising from differences in beliefs. This attitude not only strengthens tolerance but also reinforces harmony among religious communities in a pluralistic society.

6. Unity and Solidarity

Religious moderation places unity and solidarity as the main goals in pluralistic social life. Through the harmonization of religion and culture and the spirit of mutual cooperation among religious communities, this value is manifested in the form of respectful cooperation and building bridges between differences. Thus, religious moderation not only strengthens social cohesion but also reinforces national identity in achieving common goals as a nation. According to (Haris., 2020) in his journal, an expert on religious moderation, “religious moderation is the key to maintaining harmony and strengthening national unity amid diversity.”

7. Common Good (Maṣlahah ‘Āmmah)

The main objective of religious moderation is to bring about benefits for all of humanity by making the common good the basis for every policy and action. This approach emphasizes the protection of five fundamental aspects of life, namely religion, life, intellect, lineage, and property, which are the foundations of society's sustainability and welfare. By ensuring that justice and welfare are felt equally, religious moderation is in line with religious values that prioritize a balance between individual rights and the common good, thereby creating sustainable social harmony.

8. Wasathiyah (Middle Way)

The concept of wasathiyah is the main foundation of religious moderation, which teaches a moderate stance by avoiding extremism on both the right and left sides. This approach reflects the principles of perfection and justice that must be applied in all aspects of life, including in religious understanding and practice. According to Tuan Guru Bajang (TGB) Muhammad Zainul Majdi, wasathiyah is a middle path that balances belief and tolerance, thereby creating harmony and peace in a diverse society (A. Aziz, 2025). Thus, the importance of a middle path in religious moderation is a solution to the challenges of intolerance and radicalism.

9. Tawazun (Balance)

Balance is a fundamental principle in religious moderation that guides each individual to treat everything proportionally and fairly (Syahri, 2021). This principle includes harmony between worldly needs and spiritual orientation, so that a person does not become immersed in material matters while neglecting spiritual aspects, or vice versa. In addition, balance is also seen in the fulfillment of rights and obligations, where every action and decision is based on a sense of responsibility, fairness, and not harming others. Thus, balance becomes a guideline for creating a religious life that is harmonious, wise, and beneficial to oneself and others.

10. Dynamism and Innovation (Tathawwur wa Ibtikār)

Religious moderation also emphasizes the importance of being open to change and innovation that brings benefits to humanity (Syahri, 2021). This shows that religion is not a rigid or stagnant teaching, but rather has the ability to adapt to the dynamics of life and the developments of the times. While adhering to the basic principles that form the foundation of religious teachings, religious moderation encourages the creation of new solutions that are relevant to contemporary challenges, whether in the social, cultural, technological, or economic spheres. This attitude teaches that the essence of religious teachings must always be presented in the current context so that religion remains alive, functional, and provides tangible benefits for the continuity of civilization.

The Role of Universal Religious Values in Shaping Moderate Attitudes Among Religious Communities

Universal religious values play a very strategic role in shaping moderate attitudes among religious communities. Moderation does not arise spontaneously, but is guided by a set of moral and ethical values embedded in religious teachings. The role of these values can be explained through the following dimensions:

1. As a moral guide

Religious teachings that emphasize compassion, justice, and humanity serve as a moral compass for believers. By making these values a reference point, believers are encouraged to be fair, empathetic, and uphold human dignity in every social interaction (Muttaqin, 2023).

2. Encouraging interfaith dialogue

Universal values such as humanity and justice encourage people to open up communication with other groups. This kind of dialogue not only strengthens social relations, but also provides a forum for addressing common issues, such as poverty, injustice, or humanitarian disasters (Suhud et al., 2025).

3. Building social solidarity and community cohesion

The internalization of universal religious values strengthens interfaith solidarity. Differences in beliefs, which previously had the potential to be a source of friction, can now be seen as a collective force to strengthen unity and create a harmonious pluralistic society.

4. Acting as a filter against the influence of transnational ideologies

The tide of globalization often brings with it intolerant and radical ideologies. Universal religious values serve as a shield that protects people from these influences. People who internalize the principles of humanity and peace will reject any teachings that promote violence or discrimination.

5. Strengthening community resilience

Religious moderation rooted in universal values not only shapes tolerant individuals, but also produces communities that are resilient in the face of social polarization and the threat of division. These values serve to maintain social harmony while also providing a basis for overcoming religious and social crises in the contemporary era.

Challenges in Applying Universal Religious Values for Religious Moderation

Although universal religious values have great potential in supporting religious moderation, their implementation in a pluralistic society faces various obstacles. These challenges arise from social, cultural, political, and technological aspects. These challenges can be described as follows:

1. Social and cultural obstacles

Narrow fanaticism and exclusivity remain major obstacles. Some groups tend to view their religion as the only absolute truth, leaving no room for other interpretations. This condition hinders the internalization of universal values that emphasize openness and respect for differences (Ardhana, 2023).

2. Identity politics and ideology

In the political sphere, religion is often politicized to gain legitimacy and mass support. The use of religion as an instrument of identity politics actually exacerbates differences and widens the gap between groups. This weakens the function of religion as a social glue and reduces the effectiveness of universal values in creating moderation (Suhud et al., 2025).

3. The impact of digital disruption

The digital era brings a rapid flow of information. Unfortunately, social media is often used to spread hate speech, intolerance, and radicalism. Without the filter of universal religious values, people are easily provoked by the massive spread of extreme narratives (Muttaqin, 2023).

4. Lack of inclusive religious education

Some educational institutions still teach religion using an exclusive approach. This results in universal religious values, such as tolerance and respect for human dignity, receiving less attention. As a result, the younger generation is not accustomed to moderation in their daily lives (Nurdin & Asrori, 2020).

5. Lack of role models among religious leaders

Religious leaders have a strategic role as role models. However, not all religious leaders are able to display moderate attitudes. When religious leaders are exclusive or intolerant, this has the potential to spread to their followers and weaken religious moderation.

CONCLUSIONS

Universal religious values play an important role in shaping religious moderation that can create harmony and tolerance among religious communities amid Indonesia's diverse society. Values such as compassion, justice, religious freedom, unity, and balance form the moral foundation that guides moderate attitudes, encourages interfaith dialogue, and strengthens social cohesion. However, the application of these values faces various challenges, such as narrow-minded fanaticism, the politicization of religion, digital disruption, and a lack of inclusive education and role models from religious leaders. Therefore, strengthening universal religious values through education, the active role of religious leaders, and interfaith dialogue is essential to achieve effective religious moderation. Thus, religious moderation rooted in universal values can be a strategic solution in facing social dynamics and pluralism, as well as maintaining national harmony and unity.

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