

# Strengthening Religious Moderation: Learning from the Harmony of Multireligious People in Indonesia

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## Abstract

Religious moderation is an urgent entity for Indonesian people because they are multireligious. Hence, this qualitative study aimed to explore the religious moderation factors of multireligious people residing in the Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur villages of Indonesia and to analyze the people's most vital factors of religious moderation. Fifteen religious and communal leaders from the three villages were purposively involved as the participants. An interactive model was adopted to analyze the data from interviews and focus group discussions. This study found five factors of religious moderation exhibited by Sekaran people, namely the principle of togetherness, socio-religious traditions, social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic, and family. Rama Agung people showcased three factors: accepting the reality of differences, putting aside exclusivity, and upholding the harmony of life. Cigugur people demonstrated ten factors extending to family, awareness of moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of multiculturalism, good communication, socio-religious traditions, cultural ties, social relations, and interactions with cultural traditions. Furthermore, three latent and generalizable factors of religious moderation were codified as the strongest. They entailed upholding the principle of togetherness, accepting the reality of differences, and having mutual respect.

## Keywords

Indonesia; multiculturalism; multi-religiosity; religious moderation

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## Introduction

Indonesia is a country whose people are multireligious and multicultural rather than a monotonously religious State. There are six official religions adhered to by Indonesian people, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Hefner, 2020). In essence, the presence of different religions enriches the social demography of Indonesian people. As such, demography also has a negative side leading to massive conflicts (Iqbal et al., 2022). Religious conflicts can be fueled by efforts to spread a religion, which is believed to be a religious believer's obligation. Truth claims are present in every religion, which frequently go hand in hand with blaming other religions (Davids, 2017). Since each religion has its values and perspectives, the possibility of inter-religious conflicts is natural. Furthermore, intra-religious conflicts can also arise between different schools of thought within the same religion (Sandal, 2021).

Numerous religious conflicts have befallen Indonesia over the past six years. As evidenced in 2018, the Setara Institute reported 136 acts violating religious beliefs and freedoms in 20 provinces of Indonesia (Hurriyah, 2020). The preceding statement denotes that various conflicts have already existed across different religious beliefs. In 2017, the religious harmony index fell from 75.36 to 72.27. This data demonstrates that equality, tolerance, and cooperation among religious communities are still lacking (Birhan et al., 2021). Even in 2018, the religious harmony index fell to 70.90 (Hurriyah, 2020). Given the prevalence of religious conflicts, religious moderation has been famous as a coping strategy. Religious moderation promotes tolerance for differences in religious beliefs (Hanafi et al., 2022). Moderation strengthens the creation of social conduciveness in the community. Even though the Ministry of Religion of Indonesia has conceptually echoed moderation, much still needs to be dug up in society. Religious moderation must be reflected in community groups.

In several regions of Indonesia, studies have identified and investigated examples of religious moderation. Such studies depict the portrayals of religious moderation in the Sekaran village of Kediri (Jannah, 2018), the Cigugur village of Kuningan (Djuniasih & Kosasih, 2019; Marpuah, 2019; Rostiyati, 2019), and the Rama Agung village of North Bengkulu (Chandra & Sulistia, 2020; Kurniawan & Bijaksana, 2020; Yahya & Montessori, 2019). These studies tried to portray that people of different religions could live harmoniously. The people's linearity of inborn ethnicity has been the primary media of religious moderation. Sekaran people are affiliated with the Javanese ethnicity. Cigugur people are of Sundanese ethnicity, and Rama Agung people are sourced from Melayu ethnicity. Their ethnic similarities and the sense of family bound to their ethnicity pave the way for religious moderation and contribute to avoiding interreligious conflicts. However, research has yet to be conducted to investigate the factors of religious moderation that can be generalized across contexts so that some most potent and latent factors could be codified that contribute to the foundation of religious moderation and social tolerance.

In short, the above studies depict the inborn factors of religious moderation, which may not be generalizable across different communities. Further investigations need to be conducted into generalizable and latent factors of religious moderation in those villages. To continue in-depth analyses of the studies above, the present study aims to uncover the religious moderation factors of the people in Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur. Therefore, the following research questions underpin this study: 1) What factors contribute to people's

religious moderation in Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur? and 2) Which of the existing religious moderation factors are the strongest and deserve to be built on across communities?

## Concepts and principles of religious moderation

Moderation is the absence of excess, which is the act or state of being less violent or extreme (Smith, 2022). From another perspective, moderation means being free from anything excessive and creating something without elements of violence or extremism (Davids, 2017). The preceding viewpoints imply that a moderate attitude avoids extreme or outrageous behavior. The word moderation is frequently used to represent average, core, and normal states. In general, being moderate means promoting balance in terms of beliefs, morals, and character when dealing with others as individuals (Lebang, 2022). Being moderate can also mean maintaining or remaining within reasonable limits (Çokgezen, 2022).

According to Yusuf Al-Qardhawi, as cited in Hamdani (2022), moderate people can always uphold the principles of justice and balance in every behavior amid a diverse society to foster peace and tolerance without resorting to violence, exclusivism, and anarchism. This understanding explains one's moderate attitude as being in the middle rather than on the extreme left or right. A moderate attitude can also be open, tolerant, and accepting of others with their unique differences (Hook et al., 2017). The nature of every religion is moderate already, but the people's religious ways of regulating their lives need to be moderated further.

The opposite of moderation is excessiveness. Excessiveness means extreme or radical (Rahayu & Lesmana, 2020). The term extreme can also mean to go from end to end, turn around, and take the opposite action. Another popular term that is opposite to moderation is radicalism. Radicalism is an understanding that seeks harsh or drastic social or political change or assimilation (Warsah, 2021). In a religious circle, radicalism goes hand in hand with the notions of extremism, fanaticism, or even terrorism in forming religious beliefs. Being radical is frequently linked to being irrational, not moderate, violent, and excessive (Warsah, 2020).

In Islam, moderate Muslims prioritize normal behavior in carrying out Islamic teachings, tolerate differences, avoid violence, and prioritize dialogues. Moderation in religious life means behaving reasonably, moderately, and openly with anyone and being willing to collaborate with others (Jeon & Choi, 2021). Jeon and Choi (2021) elucidated some principles of moderation, which fall into the following details: (1) tolerance, openness to diversity, and respecting differences are the keys to social interactions, (2) a religiously moderate person understands that religion is sent to earth to regulate human welfare, (3) the presence of religious moderation demonstrates a solid commitment to building a just society and upholding human values, (4) religious people have to respect differences because differences are divine, and (5) oppression, marginalization, and injustice are all opposed by religious moderation, and religious people must put something in its proper place and carry out rights and obligations in proportionate ways.

## Methodology

This study employed an interpretive paradigm to uncover religious moderating factors among the people of Sekaran, Cigugur, and Rama Agung villages in Indonesia in their

interactions across and within groups. Theoretically, an interpretive paradigm is used to investigate patterns of social group interactions (Wilson, 1970). The interpretive paradigm is operationally consistent with the phenomenological approach (Matua & Van Der Wal, 2015). Key informants of this study were religious leaders of different religions in Cigugur, Sekaran, and Rama Agung.

There were fifteen key informants or participants. Of the fifteen participants, six participants were taken from Sekaran. Seven participants were taken from Rama Agung, and three were taken from Cigugur. The participants were recruited by using a purposive sampling technique. There were several criteria assigned to be the indicators of selecting the participants.

First, the participants represented religious leaders or communal leaders. Second, the participants were those who had been living and getting engaged actively in daily interactions with people in their villages. Third, the participants knew and understood in detail everything about the staging of interreligious interplays taking place in their villages. Fourth, the community trusted the participants to represent them to speak up about interreligious interactions in their villages. Fifth, the participants were voluntarily willing to be engaged in this study in a way that they had signed the given consent letters. Grounded in the fifth criterion, the fifteen participants were officially recruited as the primary sources of this study's data.

The data were garnered from focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews. The FGDs were conducted with the religious leaders in Sekaran and Rama Agung. The main reason for conducting FGDs was that there was more than one religious leader representing one religion in the villages of Sekaran and Rama Agung. The preceding condition made it easier for the researchers to engage them in whole discussions during data collection. Subsequently, interviews were conducted with the religious leaders in Cigugur. It was found that there was one religious leader for each religion in Cigugur. Such a demographic condition led the researchers to consider that interviews could be the best technique to communicate with each religious leader in Cigugur. The discourses of both FGDs and interviews were oriented toward questions about the possible factors they perceived and found that contributed to religious moderation in their communities.

The data acquired from FGDs and interviews were analyzed using an interactive model (Miles et al., 2014). This model comprised data collection, condensation, display, and conclusion drawing. Concerning data collection, the data were collected from FGDs with religious leaders of Sekaran and Rama Agung and from interviews with those of Cigugur. Regarding data display, the raw data from FGDs and interviews were grouped according to the emerging representative themes. The coded themes were critically mapped to see how they represented the factors of religious moderation and how some could contribute to being the most influential factors of religious moderation.

Regarding data display, the grouped data were presented deductively, in which a table was drawn to present the coding results, and explanations and discussions followed the table. The explanations were also scientifically strengthened by some selected excerpts and recorded verbatim by the participants. At the end of the data analysis, the overall data were concluded comprehensively and representatively.

It is worth noting that before data were collected, ethics approval was received from the research ethics committee managed by the research and community service agency at Institut

Agama Islam Negeri Curup. The approval was official with the letter 273/In.34/LPPM/PP.00.9/08/2022. Also, all participants gave their official agreement to participate in this study through signed consent letters.

## Findings

The presentation of research findings was organized in chronological order from religious moderation factors in Sekaran, those of Rama Agung, to those of Cigugur. The researchers discovered several essential themes based on the data codification results. The results of the data codification are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Data Codification Concerning the Factors of Religious Moderation in Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur

No	Names of Villages	The Factors of Religious Moderation
1	Sekaran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness</li> <li>• Socio-religious traditions</li> <li>• Social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic</li> <li>• Family as a solid foundation for building an understanding of multiculturalism</li> </ul>
2	Rama Agung	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An attitude of accepting the reality of differences</li> <li>• Putting aside the exclusivity that becomes a barrier to a religious life</li> </ul>
3	Cigugur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An attitude of upholding the harmony of life</li> <li>• Family</li> <li>• Public awareness of religious moderation</li> <li>• Mutual respect</li> <li>• Tolerance</li> <li>• Internalization of multicultural attitude</li> <li>• Good communication</li> <li>• Socio-religious traditions</li> <li>• Cultural ties</li> <li>• Social relations</li> <li>• Interactions with cultural traditions</li> </ul>

### Religious moderation factors in Sekaran

The data from the FGDs demonstrated several factors contributing to the Sekaran people's religious moderation. These factors included an attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness, socio-religious traditions, social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic, and family as a solid foundation for understanding multiculturalism.

The first factor was an attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness. Sekaran people could live together in peace with this factor. Diversity fostered solid social integration. People worked well together. A Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) figure stated that the NU residents in Sekaran were very inclusive and open to working together in various social aspects. The preceding was in line with what a figure of Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII) conveyed. According to the leader of the Hindu community, the Hindu community also lived peacefully

in Sekaran. Religious differences did not impede social interactions between the Christian and Catholic communities in Sekaran. Other Christian and Hindu leaders agreed with the discourse, as mentioned earlier.

The second factor was socio-religious traditions. *Suroan* [a hereditary tradition as a spiritual activity to avoid disaster] was one of the activities that demonstrated the Sekaran people's socio-religious tradition. Every year on the first of *Suro* [a term from the Javanese calendar], the *Suroan* activity is held with a couple of traditional and spiritual aims, such as to clean the village, avoid disaster, and keep the village safe. All people were involved in this activity.

The third factor was social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic. The anniversary of Indonesia's independence was an example of a social tradition that brought the Sekaran people together. Sekaran people had a unique activity to celebrate Indonesian Independence Day on August 17th. Each family transported *Ampengan* [homemade food] to the village hall, where prayers were performed alternately according to the people's respective religions and followed by a communal meal. To be defined, *Ampengan* is food cooked by a mother or female members of each household, and such food was dedicated to being consumed by all people Sekaran.

The fourth factor was family as a solid foundation for understanding multiculturalism. Even though there were no village rules governing inter-religious or cultural relations, the Sekaran people naturally lived in harmony. In Sekaran, there had never been any conflict across cultures. Personal conflicts were handled wisely and were not associated with different cultural communities. Efforts to create this harmony began with each family. Multicultural experiences fostered multicultural attitudes that were inclusive and tolerant. Family was a strong foundation for developing this understanding.

The composition of village officials demonstrated religious moderation. Each religion had traditionally owned a representative in the position of village official. Although there were no written rules, the balanced composition of village officials with those of various religions had been passed down from generation to generation. Attempting to understand the differences caused by different cultures and beliefs fostered positive views of other religions, strengthening the village's unity. A change of religion was not regarded as a cause for concern. It was regarded as part of personal freedom of belief.

## **Religious moderation factors in Rama Agung**

According to the data from the FGDs, several factors contributed to religious moderation in Rama Agung. These factors included accepting the reality of differences, putting aside the exclusivity that became a barrier to religious life, and upholding the harmony of life.

The first factor was an attitude of accepting the reality of differences. Rama Agung's multicultural society coexisted peacefully. Even within one family, the diversity of beliefs could be understood and appreciated. For example, one's mother was a Hindu, her niece was Buddhist, her nephew's mother attended church, and two children attended a Protestant church. Still, her family also came to help celebrate Hinduism. Religious conversion was regarded as a normal part of the understanding process. That was why, at the entrance to this village, everyone was honored by a statue representing a multiculturalism symbol of harmony.

The second factor was putting aside the exclusivity that became a barrier to religious life. The proximity of houses of worship also contributed to this harmony. The houses of worship for Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and Catholics were close to one another. This closeness describes the social closeness of Rama Agung's multicultural community. Despite their differences, no exclusivity separated their lives.

The third factor was an attitude of upholding the harmony of life. Harmony was created through natural means. Wedding receptions, funerals, and other social gatherings became modes where people could help one another and strengthen their bonds. In terms of diversity, there were no clear village rules governing communal life, but the habit of living in harmony had become the culture of the Rama Agung people.

## Religious moderation factors in Cigugur

As codified from the data of interviews with the Muslim, Catholic, and Sunda Wiwitan leaders in Cigugur, several potential factors supported the Cigugur people's religious moderation. These factors subsumed family, public awareness of religious moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of multicultural attitudes, good communication, socio-religious traditions, cultural ties, social relations, and interactions with cultural traditions.

The first factor was family. According to the findings, the family was the most potent factor of religious moderation in Cigugur. This factor is demonstrated in the following excerpt from an interview with a Christian leader in Cigugur:

*"Familiarity, kinship, and interfaith friendship have been around for a long time, and I have felt it since I was a child, even in my own family."*

(An interview with the Catholic leader)

The excerpt above describes the essence of family and kinship as the primary means of harmonization among the Cigugur people. The harmony that was created became a religious mode of moderation and tolerance.

The second factor was public awareness of religious moderation. Because Cigugur people were derived from one family, the people's religious moderation did not begin with nurture but rather with public awareness. This factor is demonstrated in the following excerpt of an interview with a Muslim leader in Cigugur:

*"Well, that is where it began from the same family. I am the same way. For example, during holidays, I enjoyed visiting my grandfather's family or Christian families. I went there and participated in a family gathering. We ate together. Then, when I celebrated Eid, I invited them as well."*

(An interview with the Muslim leader)

The excerpt above implies that religious moderation was embedded in Cigugur people's daily behavior.

The third religious moderating factor was mutual respect. Cigugur people held inter-religious moderation in the context of mutual respect. They held a mutual conception that it did not matter to have different confessions as long as having the same understanding. Interview data with a Sunda Wiwitan leader demonstrated that there was an essence that could be

understood universally. Mutual respect for differences would be internalized due to understanding this essence.

The fourth religious moderating factor was tolerance. Various manifestations of tolerance were fostered among Cigugur's multireligious community. One was to foster tolerance and unity when the Muslim community held a *walimahan* event [an Islamic term for a wedding celebration]. The data from an interview with the Muslim leader in this discourse exhibited that religious tolerance could also be seen in the community's respectful attitudes toward interfaith interactions, such as when a death procession occurs.

The fifth factor of religious moderation was the internalization of multicultural attitudes. Living amid multireligious people necessitates multicultural attitudes. Cigugur people internalized the habit of living in a multicultural environment. An interview with the Catholic leader showed how parents helped their children internalize a multicultural attitude. One was to familiarize children with life guiding them to get used to social interactions with friends or people from different religions or cultures. One such intervention could be carried out by enrolling children in public schools, where they would have opportunities to interact with peers of other religions or cultures.

The sixth factor of religious moderation was good communication. Although the Cigugur people were of a multireligious community, social communication built among the people was good and promoted mutual unity. An interview with the Muslim leader in this discourse showed that when there was an issue affiliated with different understandings sourced from different religions, the two parties who had different understandings explained to each other the laws of their religions so that when there was a familial or social event, they could understand each other the boundaries and rules that must be followed. Deliberation or discussion was another term for well-developed social communication to solve social problems.

The seventh religious moderating factor was socio-religious traditions. In Cigugur, socio-religious and familial activities were attended by all interfaith communities, although the communities involved were affiliated with multi-religions and multiculturalism. Furthermore, the realization of social tradition as a mode of religious moderation could be seen in the form of religious culture integration into religious activities.

The eighth factor in religious moderation was cultural ties. Interview data illustrated that maintaining cultural ties within the Cigugur community could improve religious moderation and tolerance among religious communities. This finding is demonstrated in the following excerpt from an interview with the Sunda Wiwitan leader.

*"This is it. Because cultural ties unite, it will first bring about moderation. It will bring the two together. For example, let us say that we invite NU friends. There is one family whose Muslim or Catholic child died. Thus, the Muslims will do tahlil [Islamic praying for the death]; the Catholics will pray the rosary; and the Sunda Wiwitan adherents came to pray in a Sunda Wiwitan way."*

(An interview with the Sunda Wiwitan leader)

The interview excerpt above demonstrated Cigugur residents' unity in fostering respect. The ninth factor of religious moderation was social relations. Despite their affiliations with various religions and cultures, the Cigugur people appeared to have good social relations. Building



close social ties improved the Cigugur community's attitudes toward religious moderation and religious tolerance. The data from an interview with the Sunda Wiwitan leader demonstrated the concept of understanding, which was the foundation for close social relations among the Cigugur community.

The ninth religious moderating factor was interactions with cultural traditions. Interacting with cultural or historical sites associated with multiculturalism and multi-religiosity could enhance religious moderation. The Cigugur community's cultural traditions had evolved into a vehicle for religious moderation.

### **The strongest religious moderation factor in Sekaran**

Among several social factors that supported religious moderation in Sekaran, the FGD results narrowed down to the two most important factors, namely an attitude of upholding the principles of togetherness and family as a solid foundation in building an understanding of multiculturalism. However, family-related factors more accurately described demographic factors, so they could not be used as a reference for the context of society in other areas. According to the findings from the FGDs, the contextuality of family as a factor of religious moderation could be more reliable across contexts. Thus, the results highlighted that the attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness was the most potent factor of religious moderation that could be promoted across contexts. Sekaran people's social lives reflected the attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness. They lived in peace. Diversity fostered strong social integration, and the people worked well together.

### **The strongest religious moderation factor in Rama Agung**

Among several factors that supported religious moderation in Rama Agung, the results from the FGDs narrowed down to the most important factor, namely an attitude of accepting the reality of differences. When interpreted more closely, the attitude of accepting the reality of differences represented a social competence known as intercultural competence.

Accepting the reality of differences as the most potent religious moderating factor was reflected in the social lives of the Rama Agung people. The multicultural people coexisted peacefully. Even within one family, the diversity of beliefs could be understood and appreciated. For example, one's mother was a Hindu, her niece was a Buddhist, her nephew's mother attended church, and her two children attended a Protestant church. Still, her family also came to help celebrate Hinduism. Religious conversions were regarded as a normal part of understanding processes.

### **The strongest religious moderation factor in Cigugur**

Among several social factors that supported religious moderation in Cigugur, the results from the FGDs narrowed down to three most important factors: family, mutual respect, and interaction with cultural traditions. The factor of the family was demographic and identical to a contextual factor. Such a factor could not serve as a framework or benchmark for a religious moderation factor that could be applied across contexts. Furthermore, interaction with cultural traditions was primarily a secondary factor because it was essentially initiated by mutual respect. Thus, the findings from the FGDs concluded that mutual respect was the most

potent and latent religious moderating factor in the Cigugur community. Mutual respect was latent because it could be taught and internalized into people's behavior in various contexts.

Mutual respect was the most potent religious moderating factor in the Cigugur community's social life. Mutual respect was manifested in the principle that it was permissible to have different confessions but have the same understanding. Cigugur people had cared for and maintained understanding attitudes amid a multireligious society. Mutual respect was also represented by the people's habits of cultivating positive thoughts to strengthen religious moderation.

Mutual respect realization mediated religious moderation. Cigugur people had a very high level of mutual respect for different religions. Furthermore, mutual respect between adherents of different religions was typically demonstrated by inviting adherents of different religions to a religious event. People of all faiths were welcome to attend but were not permitted to participate in internal rituals.

## Discussion

This study began with two objectives: 1) to investigate what factors support the religious moderation of the people in Rama Agung, Sekaran, and Cigugur, and 2) to identify the most potent factors influencing people's religious moderation in the three villages.

In Sekaran, this study discovered four factors of religious moderation: an attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness, socio-religious traditions, social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic, and family as a solid foundation in building an understanding of multiculturalism. Concerning the first factor, Sekaran people's ways of upholding togetherness represent community cohesiveness in social life despite their diverse religious and cultural affiliations. According to Jantzen (2020), the attitude of togetherness is a primary mode of forming a new identity in a community. Kramsch (2013) explained that the new identity constructed by a multicultural community is the third cultural identity. This third culture is a new and multicultural identity. Religion is a component of culture (Foucault, 1999), so the essence of multiculturalism in society also includes multireligious cases. For Sekaran people, upholding togetherness represents a mode that mediates the attitude of religious moderation though they are the adherents of diverse religions.

The second factor of religious moderation in the Sekaran community is socio-religious tradition. Suroan is one of the religious traditions commonly held in Sekaran. According to Scheitle and Cornell (2015), the socio-spiritual tradition is a social element that must be instilled, familiarized, and regenerated because cultural differences, including religious differences, need a mode of unity, such as a socio-spiritual tradition. Warsah et al.'s (2019) research support the same point that socio-religious traditions must be preserved in a multireligious society as a medium of interaction.

The third factor of religious moderation found among Sekaran people is social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic. One manifestation of this tradition is the organization of social activities to commemorate the Republic of Indonesia's Independence Day. Although they belong to different religions and cultures, Sekaran people work together and contribute to these activities. Participatory action research conducted by Datta (2019) showcased that various social activities held together can unite multi-ethnic communities.

The fourth factor of religious moderation found in Sekaran is family. Multireligious situations in one family are not uncommon in the Sekaran community. This finding is consistent with previous research on diversity tolerance in the Cigugur community conducted by Rostiyati (2019). Rostiyati investigated the origins of Cigugur's multicultural society's collective tolerance attitudes. According to her study, the multireligious community of Cigugur can coexist peacefully because of family or blood ties. The Cigugur people collectively believe they descended from Kyai Madrais and Prince Djatikusumah. Hence, religious differences do not reduce tolerance among people. Unfortunately, this study does not delve deeper into the historical aspects of significant religious differences, namely Islam, Catholicism, Christianity, Local Beliefs, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Furthermore, if blood relations are the binding rope for fostering tolerance, it cannot serve as an example for larger communities of other contexts. As a result, it must be evaluated concerning other factors that can serve as the foundation for unity in diversity.

This study goes into greater detail about the factors that encourage religious moderation among the residents of Rama Agung. This study codifies the raw data based on three basic themes representing religious moderating factors: accepting the reality of difference, putting aside the exclusivity that becomes a barrier to religious life, and upholding the harmony of life. Regarding the acceptance of differences, it is consistent with and supported by the theory of intercultural competence, which has been widely discussed in the literature by Byram and Wenger (2018), Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat (2017), Kramsch (2013), and Warsah et al. (2019). Simply put, intercultural competence is the ability to communicate and interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, including those with different religious beliefs, because religion is one of the cultural domains. Someone can develop intercultural competence if they have a fundamental attitude of accepting the reality of cultural differences.

The second factor of religious moderation among Rama Agung's people is putting aside the exclusivity that becomes a barrier to religious life. According to the theory of intercultural competence as described by Byram et al. (2002) and Deardorff (2009), overriding the discourse of exclusivity when cross-cultural interactions (including, in this case, interfaith interactions) occur is one of the fundamental ways or interaction strategies to avoid conflicting perspectives or possible misunderstandings. Because religion is a domain of belief, exclusivity willy-nilly exists in the domain of religion. When inter-religious interactions occur, people with intercultural competence will understand the conditions and contexts of differences, so they will refrain from bringing up sensitive and exclusive issues or discourses in the realm of cross-cultural and inter-religious interactions. The flow of interactions will be light and relaxed with no tension. Differences in creed can lead to a conflict of perspectives.

The third factor of religious moderation identified from the raw data in the village of Rama Agung is an attitude of upholding life's harmony. According to Warsah (2020), harmony in life is vital, particularly among multireligious communities, because multireligious communities are vulnerable to politicized conflicts. Hence, the attitude of upholding life's harmony must be internalized into individuals in the community early on through educational interventions in schools.

This study continued to uncover the religious moderation factors of the Cigugur people. The factors codified from interviews include family, public awareness of religious moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of the attitude of multiculturalism, good communication, socio-religious traditions, cultural ties, social relations, and interactions with cultural traditions. Concerning the family factor, this is consistent with the findings in Sekaran village, where multireligious conditions are common in one family among the Cigugur

people. This finding is consistent with previous research on diversity tolerance in the Cigugur community conducted by Rostiyati (2019). Rostiyati investigated the origins of tolerance attitudes sourced from the multicultural society in Cigugur. According to her, the multireligious community can coexist peacefully because of family or blood ties. The Cigugur people collectively believe they descended from Kyai Madrais and Prince Djatikusumah. Thus, religious differences do not reduce tolerance among them. Unfortunately, the previous study needs to delve deeper into religious differences' historic aspects. Furthermore, if blood relations are the binding rope for fostering tolerance, it cannot serve as an example for a larger community. Thus, other factors that can serve as the foundation for unity in diversity should be traced.

In the meantime, the factors related to public awareness of religious moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of the attitude of multiculturalism, and good communication represent some latent factors that can be internalized, regenerated, and applied across contexts where multiculturalism exists. Academicians working in the fields of multiculturalism and interculturalism, such as Arphattananon (2018) and Dunn (2017), recommend that the factors such as public awareness of religious moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of multiculturalism attitude, and well-established communication be taught to the younger generation through intervention in the form of teaching materials in schools. Considering Indonesian society is multicultural and multireligious, such a projection would be highly beneficial if applied consistently.

The factors, in conjunction with socio-religious traditions, cultural ties, social relations, and interactions with cultural traditions, serve as the modes of interactions that facilitate the involvement of multicultural people in social life and train them to respect one another. According to Scheitle and Cornell (2015), the socio-spiritual tradition is a social element that must be instilled, familiarized, and regenerated because cultural and religious differences need interactional modes. In this case, the socio-religious tradition can serve as a medium or a meeting place for people from different cultures. Warsah et al. (2019) research supports the same point that socio-religious traditions must be preserved in a multireligious society as a medium for community interactions.

The results from the FGDs with participants in Sekaran narrowed down to two most substantial factors: upholding the principles of togetherness and family as a solid foundation in building an understanding of multiculturalism. However, family-related factors more accurately describe demographic factors, so they cannot be used as a reference for the context of a society in other areas if the discourse on religious moderation is brought into other areas. The FGD findings agreed that the attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness was the most potent factor of religious moderation that could be used as a cross-context reference.

The findings from the FGDs with participants in Rama Agung pointed to one of the most important factors, namely an acceptance of the reality of differences. When interpreted more closely, accepting the reality of differences represents a social competence known as intercultural competence. Furthermore, the FGD findings with Cigugur participants narrowed down to three key factors: family, mutual respect, and interaction with cultural traditions. If interpreted more closely, family as a factor is demographic and contextual and thus cannot serve as a benchmark for a religious moderation factor that can be applied across community contexts. An interaction with cultural traditions is another factor because it is essentially initiated by mutual respect. Thus, the FGD findings conclude that mutual respect is the most powerful and latent factor of religious moderation in Cigugur. Mutual respect is latent because it can be taught and internalized into people's behavior in various contexts.

According to the research data above, the three most powerful religious moderating factors exist. They are the attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness, accepting the reality of differences, and mutual respect. These latent factors can be internalized, regenerated, trained, and applied across multicultural contexts. These factors are consistent with Byram et al.'s (2002) concept of intercultural competence. Byram et al. defined intercultural competence as a competence conceptualized for cross-cultural communication patterns.

Intercultural competence has several components. The first component is an intercultural mindset. The primary foundation of intercultural competence is attitude. In this context, an attitude refers to a curious attitude toward other cultures, openness to cultural differences, and willingness to suspend mistrust of other cultures. The second component is knowledge. This point consists of understanding social groups and the products and practices prevalent in society. It also includes general social and individual interaction processes. In this case, knowledge is divided into two categories: knowledge about social processes and products and people from different cultures. The third component is the skills of comparing, interpreting, and building relationships. In this case, skills refer to a person's abilities to interpret, explain, and connect documents, events, or practices from other cultures to documents, events, or practices from his own culture. The fourth component is acquiring and interacting skills. Because the knowledge component of intercultural competence will never be perfect, an individual must be able to acquire knowledge from interlocutors and relate it to previously acquired knowledge. The fifth component is critical cultural awareness. This point refers to the ability to critically evaluate one's cultural perspectives, practices, products, and those of other cultures.

The most substantial factors of religious moderation found in the present study have a linear perspective framework with the model of intercultural sensitivity theory as introduced by Chen and Starosta (2000). This model defines intercultural sensitivity as a person's appreciation and respect for information exchanged during cross-cultural communication. The intercultural sensitivity model has five components: involvement in cross-cultural interactions, respecting cultural differences, confidence in cross-cultural interactions, enjoying cross-cultural interactions, and attention to cross-cultural interactions. Empathy, active and ongoing involvement, open-mindedness, high self-esteem, non-judgmental attitude, and good self-monitoring during cross-cultural interactions can identify people with intercultural sensitivity.

This study contributes to identifying the most powerful factors that can support religious moderation. These factors include upholding the principle of togetherness, accepting the reality of differences, and having an attitude of mutual respect. These factors are influential because they are latent and can be internalized, regenerated, trained, taught, and applied in other social contexts.

## Conclusion

This study began with two main goals: 1) to investigate the factors of people's religious moderation in Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur, and 2) to identify the most powerful factors of religious moderation in the three villages. This study has demonstrated four factors that encourage the religious moderation of people in Sekaran. These factors include an attitude of upholding the principle of togetherness, socio-religious traditions, social traditions related to the values of the Indonesian Republic, and family as a solid foundation in building

an understanding of multiculturalism. Rama Agung people have three religious moderation factors. These factors include accepting the reality of differences, putting aside the exclusivity that becomes a barrier to religious life, and upholding the harmony of life. Subsequently, people in Cigugur have ten factors of religious moderation. These factors subsume Family, public awareness of religious moderation, mutual respect, tolerance, internalization of multicultural attitudes, good communication, socio-religious traditions, cultural ties, social relations, and interactions with cultural traditions.

In summary, the most significant factor of religious moderation in Sekaran is upholding the principle of togetherness. The most important factor of religious moderation in Rama Agung is accepting the reality of differences. Subsequently, mutual respect is the most significant factor of religious moderation in Cigugur. Mutual respect is latent because it can be taught and internalized into people's behavior in various contexts.

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