The Latent Domains of Religious Moderation Attitudes and Intercultural Competencies Within the Contexts of Multireligious and Multicultural Societies

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Abstract

Religious moderation attitudes (RMAs) and intercultural competencies (ICs) are two crucial elements that must be internalized within Indonesia's multireligious and multicultural societies. This study aimed to investigate the latent domains of RMAs and ICs and the cultivation of such latent domains to facilitate RMAs and ICs' internalization. This phenomenological study purposively recruited 224 multireligious and multicultural people living in 8 regions of Indonesia. These regions became the loci due to recommendations of prior studies. Data on RMAs and ICs' latent domains were collected through interviews and observations, and those of the cultivation of the foregoing latent domains were obtained from focus group discussion (FGD). The data analyzed using an interactive model revealed that RMAs had eight latent domains, which subsumed respect for religious freedom, openness to belief differences, awareness of pluralism, promoting harmony, active community participation, understanding extremism, cooperative religious leadership, and commitment to peace. The data then revealed latent domains of eight ICs: inclusive education, cross-cultural collaboration, reflective education, social criticism, empathy, cultural sensitivity, effective communication skills, and understanding diversity benefits. The data also showcased many strategies used by various societal parties to cultivate RMAs and ICs' latent domains effectively. These parties were religious leaders, community leaders, social and cultural institutions, society members, educational institutions, local government, and media. It is recommended that further studies be carried out to psychometrically work on these latent domains.

Keywords

Intercultural competencies; multiculturality; multireligiosity; religious moderation attitudes

Introduction

In Indonesia, explorations of cultural and religious diversities are of importance. Social harmony and inclusion could be embodied depending on the understanding of multireligiosity and multiculturality. Multireligiosity means the presence of people with various religions that can live together harmoniously. They respect and interact with one another in positive ways, although they still realize that challenges and conflict potencies lie within the frame of harmony (Qodir, 2020). Multiculturality, then, is the state or quality of a society or environment in which many civilizations, values, beliefs, and social practices are acknowledged, respected, and favorably embraced (Marinone et al., 2024). This means harmonic interactions among several groups and people from different backgrounds. The foundation of multiculturality and multireligiosity is the acceptance and respect of variances in religions, civilizations, values, and social practices (Fosnacht & Broderick, 2020). Each of the aforesaid viewpoints emphasizes the importance of tolerance, mutual understanding, and social balance in facing complex differences amid societies.

Conflicts taking place in Indonesia's multireligious and cultural societies are most often triggered by misunderstandings, prejudice, or struggle for resources and political power (Badrun et al., 2023). Differences in beliefs, cultural values, and social practices have been the main cause of the aforesaid tensions. There are many studies that have highlighted intercultural and interreligious tensions in Indonesia. From the 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s, religious riots happened in Poso, Maluku, and other regions, which were influenced by a couple of factors such as history, politics, and economics (Hefner, 2020). The complexities of the aforementioned three factors tended to trigger conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities.

Besides, the issues of blasphemy also tended to trigger conflicts among religious groups, for example, concerning the case of Jakarta's gubernatorial candidate in 2016. Interreligious tensions increased, leading to critical discussions and demonstrations in various regions of Indonesia. This case demonstrates the fragility of interreligious harmony and echoes the importance of honest communication in an effort to solve problems alike (Ramdan, 2020). Social disputes are often rooted in religious debates and expressions. In Papua and Ambon, ethnic conflicts emerged due to competition in terms of control over resources, territory, and political policies (Acharya, 2023). In the meantime, tensions across social affairs and religions also took place between conservative Islamic groups and the adherents of liberal and pluralistic notions, especially regarding dress, behavior, and religious interpretation, leading to political conflicts (Badrun et al., 2024).

Equally significant, cultural variations can cause conflict between urban and rural areas or between indigenous people and immigrants. The depth and complexity of the above-mentioned conflicts emphasize how Indonesian society has to grow in religious moderation attitudes (RMAs) and in intercultural competencies (ICs). For the sake of avoiding extremism and interfaith conflicts (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024), religious moderation (RM) exists as an approach or attitude that gives respect for many religious beliefs as a top priority, together with understanding and tolerance. Moreover, ICs refer to a person's capacity to understand, respect, and control cultural differences so that they may properly interact with others or groups from many backgrounds (Sercu, 2023). Internalizing RMAs and ICs in multireligious and multicultural communities as those living in Indonesia offers a difficult task. This is a result of the complicated and sometimes subtle dynamics of interfaith and intercultural

interactions in highly diverse surroundings. RMA and IC internalization thus depend on latent domains, which have been found as basic modes of internalization. In scientific studies, latent domains demonstrate underlying constructions with unrealized potential that can be deliberately shaped and nurtured to reach particular developmental goals. In social behavior research, for instance, these areas might be attitudes or predispositions that affect group dynamics.

Research on different facets of RMAs and ICs has historically been conducted independently to find how they affect social interactions and inter-community cooperation. While IC research usually concentrates on developing practical skills for cultural navigation and the use of moderate languages (e.g., Einfalt et al., 2022; Sercu, 2023), RMA studies usually concentrate on theological, doctrinal, and educational aspects (e.g., Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024; Nakissa, 2023). The literature has not yet, however, precisely shown how the latent domains of RMAs and ICs interact to enable individuals and groups to internalize these domains in multireligious and multicultural societies, especially in Indonesia. The present research will investigate the latent domains of RMAs and ICs in order to fill the highlighted void. This study also aims to understand how these latent domains are cultivated to support the internalization of RMAs and ICs in Indonesia's multireligious and multicultural societies. Thus, this work attempts to address the two following research questions: First, what latent domains contribute to the internalization of RMAs and ICs? Second, how are the latent domains of RMAs and ICs cultivated to facilitate the internalization process?

Literature review

Religious moderation

With daily spiritual practices carried out carefully, religious moderation, which is also known as a religious moderation attitude (RMA), indicates the balance between tolerance and the rejection of radicalism, which is embodied by the applications of wise approaches (Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). Although interreligious communication plays a role in helping RMAs create peace in the community with strong prejudice, the interpretation of rigid doctrine often sparks fierce resistance. Derived somewhat recently from Jubba et al. (2022) and Saada and Magadlah (2021), the indicators of RMAs include tolerance of diverse beliefs and religious practices, respect for varied opinions and faith traditions, active participation in interfaith dialogue and cooperation, rejection of extremism, and involvement in peace efforts stressing mutual understanding and cooperation among religious communities.

Intercultural competencies

ICs are the capacity of persons or groups to successfully interact, cooperate, and converse with others from many cultural backgrounds and with varied values (Sercu, 2023). Using the framework offered by Deardorff (2020) and Holliday (2021), ICs can be evaluated using a number of criteria. The first is cultural awareness. It entails appreciating and recognizing many values, social conventions, and customs. The second is self-awareness. It means looking at one's own presumptions, values, and stereotypes as well as considering how these affect cross-cultural contacts. The third is good multicultural communication. It calls for minimizing misconceptions, clear, exact message delivery, and sympathetic listening. The fourth is adaptation and flexibility. They help one to participate successfully in new cultural settings

and promote polite interactions with people from many backgrounds. The fifth is a good attitude towards cultural variety. It acknowledges cultural variety as a source of invention and supports equality and inclusiveness in cross-cultural interactions.

Theoretical framework

RMAs and ICs are closely linked with various psychological and social theories presented below that explain how individual attitudes and behaviors are formed and sustained in social contexts. These theories became the basis of psychological and social potencies in which such potencies could be associated with the latent domains contributing to the internalization of RMAs and ICs.

Psychological theories

Developed by Bandura, the Social Cognitive Theory stresses self-regulation mechanisms, by which people control their behavior and emotions by means of self-reflection and goal planning (Chou et al., 2023). This theory explains in the framework of RMAs how people match their behavior with social norms that support tolerance and moderation (Nakissa, 2022). Essential for creating an environment where many religious ideas are honored, this theory helps to respect religious freedom and the cultures of harmony and tolerance, therefore fostering peaceful cohabitation and collaboration inside many countries (Dong, 2024). According to another perspective, the Cognitive Dissonance Theory, people often alter their attitudes to minimize the discrepancy between ideas and behavior (Jaubert et al., 2022). This theory reveals in the framework of RMAs how people use their internal potential to change their attitudes to be more moderate and in line with societal conventions supporting tolerance (Zaduqisti et al., 2020).

By means of this process, both internal and external tensions are lessened, therefore strengthening attitudes that support religious concord. This approach highlights the importance of openness towards various religious practices and the rejection of extremist notions for the sake of maintaining social harmony. This attitude represents the willingness to accept differences in beliefs and awareness about the negative effects of extremism (Mathur, 2023). Subsequently, the Self-Determination Theory elucidates that ICs could promote intrinsic motivations, such as curiosity and interest in foreign cultures, which enable someone to get engaged in-depth and naturally (Hong & Ahn, 2023). Pursuant to this theory, intrinsic motivations make someone capable of building harmonious interactions in various cultural contexts in tandem with enhancing understanding of and awareness about different cultures (Davis & Renzetti, 2022). Furthermore, intrinsic motivations play a vital role in creating environments that respect differences and support effective cross-cultural communications through inclusive education, empathy, and the ability to understand people's different perspectives (Kirzner & Miserandino, 2023).

Sociological theories

Understanding the internalization of RMAs and ICs inside dynamic social processes requires a framework provided by symbolic interactionism, which investigates how people create and interpret meanings through social interactions and shared symbols (Ince, 2022). Emphasizing pluralism alongside cultural sensitivity helps the theory of symbolic interactionism show how

frequent contacts change people's capacity to value many religious and cultural points of view. In interfaith discourse, for instance, shared symbols and communication rules help to build mutual understanding and support the internalizing of tolerance and intercultural competency (Molana & Adams, 2019). Social norms and values are always negotiated, according to the Negotiated Order Theory, by symbolic encounters (Jacob, 2022). Within the framework of ICs, this continuous negotiation helps people absorb inclusive standards that support peaceful coexistence in many different countries. This theory shows the need for active participation and critical evaluation in creating an inclusive and fair society, thereby helping to shape involvement in community social life and social criticism (Jansen et al., 2020).

The Social Exchange Theory then holds that reciprocal exchanges of benefits define social interactions (Patterer et al., 2023). ICs stress the need for mutually beneficial social interactions for the internalizing process. This kind of interaction improves inclusive attitudes and enhances intercultural ties, therefore improving social cohesiveness. Underlining the need for cooperative interactions and efficient communication between civilizations, this theory supports the value of cross-cultural collaboration, cross-cultural communication skills, and social peacefulness (Allaberganov & Catterall, 2022). According to the Social Justice Theory, by enabling people to internalize values that sustain cultural variety, inclusion is absolutely essential in improving ICs (Killen et al., 2021). Inclusivity strengthens ICs by means of cooperative and cross-cultural learning and means displaying inclusive behavior in regular social contacts. Emphasizing the need for educational methods that support critical self-reflection and appreciation of cultural diversity, this theory encourages the development of reflective education and knowledge of diversity advantages in the framework of education (Morgan & Cieminski, 2022).

Method

This research was conducted using a phenomenological method to explore latent domains that contributed to the internalization of RMAs and ICs in the context of Indonesia's multireligious and multicultural society. The research aimed to address two main orientations extending to 1) latent domains contributing to the internalization of RMAs and ICs, and 2) the cultivation of such latent domains to facilitate internalization processes? Eight regions in Indonesia were selected as the research loci, as recommended by previous studies (Daheri et al., 2023; Harahap et al., 2023). The choice of these regions was driven by their multireligious and multicultural demographics. These regions are Padangsidempuan, Sibolga, Tarutung, South Tapanuli, and Central Tapanuli in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The remaining three regions are Sekaran in East Java, Rama Agung in Bengkulu Province, and Cigugur in West Java. The foregoing regions are characterized by a mix of various religions, including Islam, Christianity (Protestant and Catholic), Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucian, and a variety of ethnic groups such as Batak (Toba, Karo, Simalungun, Mandailing), Minangkabau, Javanese, Nias, and Chinese. This multireligious and multicultural diversity not only enriches the culture and traditions but also paves the way for the construction of RMAs and ICs' latent domains.

The participants in this study included diverse groups selected using a purposive sampling technique with several criteria: first, multicultural individuals with experiences in interacting with various religious and cultural groups and with awareness of the importance of RMAs and ICs. They were represented by members of the community and social and cultural

institutions. Second, religious leaders and community leaders actively promote the values of moderation, tolerance, and appreciation of diversity within society. Third, practitioners and representatives from educational institutions are involved in understanding the factors supporting the internalization of RMAs and ICs. Fourth, representatives from local governments with authority to shape policies and programs espousing RMAs and ICs at the community level. Pursuant to the search for participants based on these criteria and with the consent of willing individuals, the study recruited 56 participants, with a specification of eight participants representing each area.

In this study, the first objective regarding the investigation of latent domains of RMAs and ICs was addressed using interview and observation techniques. Subsequently, the second objective concerning the cultivation of RMAs and ICs' latent domains was addressed using the focus group discussion (FGD) technique. Interviews, observations, and FGD were guided by several indicators drawn from RMAs and ICs' theories, ensuring that the interview questions, FGD negotiations, and observation flowed in line with the research objectives. RMAs' Indicators included tolerance towards diversity of beliefs and religious practices, appreciation of differences in opinions and traditions of beliefs, active engagement in interfaith dialogue, rejection of extremism, and cooperation among religious communities for peace and social harmony (Jubba et al., 2022; Saada & Magadlah, 2021). Furthermore, ICs' indicators included understanding of cultural diversity, awareness and reflection on one's own culture, effective cross-cultural communication skills, adaptability, flexibility, and collaborative skills with different cultures, and a positive attitude towards cultural diversity, inclusivity and equality (Deardorff, 2020; Holliday, 2021).

The data in this study were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of collecting, condensing, displaying, and concluding data (Miles et al., 2014). With respect to data collection, as already explained, the data of this study were garnered from the techniques of interviews, observations, and focus group discussion. Concerning data condensation, the data that had been collected were then categorized into representative themes to be given codes. Regarding the display of data, the coded data were tabulated, explained alongside the display of selected transcripts, interpreted, and discussed. In terms of conclusion drawing, the data that had been presented were then resumed representatively and comprehensively.

This study followed the strict standard of ethics to ensure that the participants' rights were protected and to keep this research's integrity. The agreement of ethics had been received from the research ethics committee of Raden Intan State Islamic University of Lampung (letter number 277/In.44/LPPM/PP.00.10/03/2024). The direct ethics consideration influenced the research design in which interviews, observations, and focus group discussions were designed to focus on the participants' comfort and the minimization of stressful potency, especially when discussing sensitive topics.

Participants' agreements were officially garnered from the consent-informed letters sealed by their signatures. They signed the letters after they had been given sufficient explanations from the researcher regarding the purpose, method, risks, and benefits of this research, with an emphasis on requests for their volunteer participation. The confidentiality protocol was applied in a way that made the participants' data and identities anonymous and saved them in a safe place where the researcher was the only one who could access such data and identities. The participants were also permitted to withdraw their involvement at any time without any consequences. The foregoing way demonstrated this research's commitment to ethical flexibility. After the data collection had been done, the participants were given adequate explanations concerning the study's findings and the use of data. This way

represented the transparency and an effort to build up trust in the participants' contribution to this study.

Findings

The latent domains contributing to the internalization of religious moderation attitudes and intercultural competencies

The interview and observation data revealed several latent domains that shaped RMAs and ICs. Such latent domains were confirmed as they were found to exist in at least 5 out of 7 regions chosen as the research loci. Moreover, a majority of the coded latent domains were identified across all regions. The coded data results are presented in Table 1. Table 1 provides explanations and sample excerpts from interview transcripts.

Table 1: Coding of latent domains Shaping Religious Moderation attitudes and intercultural Competencies

Aspects of Investigation	No	Codified Latent Domains
RMAs	1	Respect for religious freedom
	2	Openness to belief differences
	3	Awareness of pluralism
	4	A culture of harmony and tolerance
	5	Participation in community social life
	6	Awareness of extremism consequences
	7	Religious leadership promoting cooperation
	8	Commitment to peace
ICs	9	Inclusive education
	10	Cross-cultural collaboration
	11	Reflective education
	12	Social criticism
	13	Empathy and perspective-taking attitudes
	14	Cultural sensitivity awareness
	15	Cross-cultural communication skills
	16	Awareness of diversity benefits

As portrayed in Table 1, the first indicator of RMAs negotiated during interviews was tolerance toward diversity of beliefs and religious practices. The data illustrated respect for religious freedom as a latent domain or social potential shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *In our community here, when everyone's beliefs and religious practices are respected, it creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding of differences. This helps us live together peacefully without excessive conflict or disagreement regarding beliefs.*
>
> (A community representative in Sibolga)

The observation results in South Tapanuli regarding the indicator of tolerance towards diversity of beliefs and religious practices indicated that openness to differences in beliefs had a significant influence as a latent domain shaping this indicator. With an accepting and appreciative attitude towards belief differences, an inclusive social environment was formed,

providing support to all individuals. This created opportunities for community members to live together harmoniously, without conflicts or discrimination related to religious differences.

The second indicator of RMAs discussed in the interviews was the attitude of appreciating differences in opinions and belief traditions. The data illustrated that pluralism awareness played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *From what I've often observed in society, awareness of diversity creates an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance. This helps us to respect differences in perspectives and belief traditions so we can live together harmoniously without excessive conflict or disagreement.*
>
> (A religious leader in Rama Agung)

The third indicator of RMAs negotiated in the interview was active engagement in interfaith dialogue. The data illustrated that awareness of harmony, culture and tolerance played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *When values of harmony and tolerance are upheld, communities tend to actively engage in dialogue with individuals from various religious backgrounds. This creates space for listening, understanding, and respecting differences in beliefs, facilitating constructive and ongoing interfaith dialogue within our community environment.*
>
> (A representative from a social and cultural institution in Padangsidempuan)

The observational findings in Central Tapanuli on the indicator of active engagement in interfaith dialogue indicated that participation in community social life existed as a latent domain shaping this indicator. The engagement in the life of social community not only supported the participants to be active in cross-religious dialogues but also strengthened inter-community relationships as a whole. Active participation in various social and cultural activities opened up opportunities for interactions with people of varied religious backgrounds. The foregoing would create spaces for making dialogues, sharing experiences, and broadening the understanding of respective religious beliefs and practices.

The fourth indicator of RMAs explored during observations was the rejection of extremism. The data from Sekaran Village indicated that awareness of the consequences of extremism played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. The negative impacts of extremist attitudes, such as violence and disruptive conflicts, motivated the community to firmly reject them. The broad support from the community to oppose extremism created a safer, more peaceful, and tolerant environment.

The fifth indicator of RMAs negotiated during interviews was cooperation among religious communities. The data illustrated that the religious leaders promoting cooperation played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *From what I've seen when religious leaders set an example and encourage cooperation among people of different faiths, it inspires the community to collaborate in building harmonious relationships. Through this cooperation, communities can address differences through dialogues and strengthen bonds of brotherhood among various religious groups.*

<div align="center">(A community representative from Cigugur)</div>

The observational results in Tarutung regarding the indicator of cooperation among religious communities indicated that a commitment to peace played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. When individuals and community groups were committed to peace, it inspired cooperation among religious communities. Through this cooperation, communities could collectively address conflicts, build respectful relationships, and create a peaceful environment for all.

The exploration continued to uncover latent domains that shaped ICs. The first indicator of ICs negotiated during interviews was an understanding of cultural diversity. The data illustrated that inclusive education played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *Most of our children attend educational institutions that adopt government curricula promoting multicultural education, where inclusive education is one of its components. Through inclusive education, our children learn to appreciate and understand cultural diversity, as well as to respect the values, social norms, and diverse traditions within our society.*
>
> (A representative from an educational institution in Central Tapanuli)

The observation results in Rama Agung on the indicator of understanding cultural diversity indicated that cross-cultural collaboration formed this indicator. In the way of intercultural collaboration, an individual not only learned to collaborate but also enhanced the respect and understanding of different cultures. As an illustration, in an intercultural project at work, a team that consisted of people of different cultures found it difficult to adapt to varieties in communicative norms. Even though it took place as it was, by adopting a compromising approach that respected each member's strengths and insights, the team could finally achieve a harmonious collaboration. As a result, a deep understanding of cultural differences in the context of the professional environment could be constructed.

The second indicator of ICs negotiated during interviews was awareness and reflection on one's own culture. The data illustrate that reflective education played a role as the latent domain forming this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *As an education practitioner, I've noticed that one component contributing to the enhancement of intercultural awareness and cultural reflection is inclusive education taught through the application of multiculturalism curriculum in schools. Hence, the younger generation is equipped with fairly ideal social competence.*
>
> (A representative from an educational institution in Tarutung)

The observation results in Padangsidempuan indicated that in society, social criticism played a crucial role in shaping the indicator of awareness and reflection on one's own culture. The social criticism approach enabled individuals to critically evaluate their cultural assumptions and enhance self-awareness regarding cultural diversity, thus enabling them to interact more wisely and appreciate cultural diversity in society.

The third indicator of ICs negotiated during interviews was effective cross-cultural communication skills. The data illustrated that empathy and perspective-taking played a role as latent domains shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *In our community, with empathy, we learn to understand and feel the emotions of others from different cultures than ours, while perspective-taking allows us to see the world from someone else's point of view. By combining both, we can communicate more effectively and be sensitive to cultural differences.*
>
> (A community leader in Rama Agung)

The fourth indicator of ICs negotiated in the interview was the skills of adaptation, flexibility, and collaboration with different cultures. The data illustrated that awareness of cultural sensitivity played a role as a latent domain shaping this indicator. Below is a data example:

> *With awareness of cultural sensitivity, we can learn to adapt to new cultural environments, become more flexible in dealing with differences, and collaborate with people from various cultural backgrounds with an attitude of respect and appreciation for existing cultural diversity.*
>
> (A Representative of Social and Cultural Institution in Sibolga)

Observations in Sekaran revealed that the skills of adaptation, flexible behavior, and collaboration with different cultures were mostly influenced by ICs. Through ICs, individuals learn to adapt to a new cultural environment in effective ways. Besides, they also became resilient in dealing with differences and capable of building harmonious collaborations with people of diverse cultures. Respecting different cultures plays an important role in creating harmonious relationships and mutual respect.

The fifth IC indicator addressed during interviews stressed the importance of a positive attitude towards cultural differences, inclusiveness, and equality. The data showcased that the understanding of the benefits of diversity served as a hidden element that constructed the fifth indicator. The related data example can be seen in the following transcript.

> *In the place where I live, the awareness of diversity's benefits can really trigger creativity and innovation. If we understand the positive value of differences, we will find it easier to build up balanced interactions and inclusivity in the middle of varied cultures.*
>
> (A community representative from South Tapanuli)

The cultivation of the latent domains of religious moderation attitudes and intercultural competencies

The cultivation of RMAs and ICs' latent domains involved several strategies. These strategies were confirmed during focus group discussions (FGD) as they were found in at least five out of the seven research sites, with most of them observed across all sites.

Table 2: Data codification related to the cultivation of latent domains shaping religious moderation attitudes and intercultural competencies

Aspect of Investigation	Latent Domain	The Cultivation of Latent Domain
RMAs	Respect for religious freedom	Religious Leaders: Educating the community to appreciate religious freedom.
	Openness to belief differences	Community Leaders: Educating the community to be open to religious differences.
	Awareness of pluralism	Social and Cultural Institutions: Organizing events that promote appreciation for diversity.
	A culture of harmony and tolerance	Society: Practicing values of tolerance and harmony in daily interactions.
	Participation in community social life	Educational Institutions: Encouraging community participation in cross-religious social activities.
	Awareness of extremism consequences	Religious Leaders: Educating followers about the dangers of extremism and the importance of moderation.
	Religious leadership promoting cooperation	Religious Leaders: Developing interfaith cooperation programs.
	Commitment to peace	Educational Institutions: Integrating peace values into the curriculum and school activities.
ICs	Inclusive education	Educational Institutions: Designing inclusive education programs to ensure equal access to education for all individuals.
	Cross-cultural collaboration	Local Government: Promoting initiatives and cross-cultural projects in the local community.
	Reflective education	Educational Institutions: Implementing reflective learning approaches in the curriculum to foster critical thinking and introspection.
	Social criticism	Media: Providing space for critical discussions and evaluation of social and cultural issues.
	Empathy and perspective-taking attitudes	Education: Integrating learning about empathy and perspective-taking into the curriculum.
	Cultural sensitivity awareness	Community Leaders: Facilitating open discussions on the importance of cultural sensitivity in interactions.
	Cross-cultural communication skills	Higher Education: Offering courses and cross-cultural communication training programs.
	Awareness of diversity benefits	Community Leaders: Leading by example in valuing and promoting diversity as a positive value.

Table 2 depicts several strategies employed by religious leaders, community leaders, social and cultural institutions, the populace, educational institutions, local governments, and the media to cultivate latent domains, thereby facilitating the internalization of RAMs and ICs. In the context of internalizing RMAs, the first latent domain negotiated during FGD was respect for religious freedom. The data exemplified below illustrated that this domain was cultivated by educating the community to appreciate religious freedom.

> *All right, in our role as religious leaders, one of our main focuses is to educate the community to respect religious freedom.*
>
> (A religious leader in Cigugur)

The second latent domain negotiated was openness to religious differences. The data exemplified below indicated that this domain was cultivated by educating the community to be open to differences.

> *Yeah, I agree. As community leaders, we strive to educate the community about the importance of openness to religious differences as a foundation for social harmony.*
>
> (A community leader in Padang Sidempuan)

The third latent domain negotiated was awareness of pluralism. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by organizing events that promoted an appreciation for diversity.

> *Our commitment as social and cultural institutions is to organize events that promote appreciation for diversity, viewing it as a primary strength in building an inclusive society.*
>
> (A representative of social and cultural institutions in Central Tapanuli)

The fourth latent domain negotiated was the culture of harmony and tolerance. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by practicing values of tolerance and harmony in daily interactions.

> *On the community side, we strive to practice values of tolerance and harmony in our daily interactions, as we believe that diversity is a gift to be preserved.*
>
> (A community member in Rama Agung)

The fifth latent domain negotiated was participation in community social life. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by encouraging community participation in cross-religious social activities.

> *We, in the education institutions, also play a role by encouraging student participation in cross-religious social activities so they can understand and appreciate religious differences.*
>
> (A teacher in Tarutung)

The sixth latent domain negotiated was awareness of the consequences of extremism. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by educating the populace about the dangers of extremism and the importance of adopting moderate attitudes.

> *Moreover, we also educate the faithful about the dangers of extremism and the importance of moderation in religion to maintain harmony and diversity.*
>
> (A religious leader in Cigugur)

The seventh latent domain negotiated was religious leadership promoting cooperation. The data indicated that this domain was cultivated by developing cross-religious cooperation programs.

> *To foster interfaith cooperation, we also develop programs that facilitate dialogue and collaboration among religions.*

(A religious leader in Sibolga)

The eighth latent domain negotiated was a commitment to peace. The data indicated that this domain was cultivated by integrating peace values into the school curriculum and activities.

> *When it comes to peace, we in the education institutions strive to integrate peace values into the curriculum and school activities so that the younger generation can grow with a deep understanding of the importance of maintaining peace amidst diversity.*
>
> (A teacher in Sekaran)

In the context of internalizing ICs, the first latent domain negotiated during FGD was inclusive education. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by designing inclusive educational programs to ensure equal access to education for all individuals.

> *We in the education institutions design inclusive education programs to ensure equal access to education for all individuals.*
>
> (A teacher in South Tapanuli)

The second latent domain addressed was intercultural collaboration. According to the following data, such a collaboration grew from support to various initiatives and projects that involved the local community within intercultural collaboration.

> *On the other hand, we from the local government encourage initiatives and cross-cultural collaboration projects in the local community as a step to strengthen intercultural cooperation.*
>
> (A representative of the local government in Padangsidempuan)

The third latent domain negotiated was reflective education. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by implementing a reflective learning approach in the curriculum to encourage critical thinking and introspection.

> *Furthermore, we also implement a reflective learning approach in the curriculum to encourage critical thinking and introspection among students so they can understand and appreciate cultural diversity.*
>
> (A teacher in Central Tapanuli)

The fourth latent domain negotiated was social criticism. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by providing space for discussions and critical evaluations of social and cultural issues.

> *The media also plays a role by providing space for critical discussion and evaluation of social and cultural issues, enabling the community to better understand various perspectives.*
>
> (A member of the media sector in Tarutung)

The fifth latent domain negotiated was empathy and perspective-taking. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by integrating learning about empathy and perspective-taking into the curriculum.

> *At the educational level, we integrate learning about empathy and perspective-taking into the curriculum because we believe that empathy is the key to understanding other people's perspectives.*
>
> (A teacher in Sibolga)

The sixth latent domain negotiated was awareness of cultural sensitivity. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by facilitating open discussions about the importance of cultural sensitivity in interactions.

> *As community leaders, we also facilitate open discussions about the importance of cultural sensitivity in everyday interactions so that the community can better appreciate cultural differences.*
>
> (A community leader in South Tapanuli)

The seventh latent domain negotiated was cross-cultural communication skills. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by providing courses and training programs in cross-cultural communication.

> *Higher education institutions also play a role by providing courses and training programs on cross-cultural communication for students so they can develop effective communication skills in intercultural contexts.*
>
> (A lecturer in Sibolga)

The eighth latent domain negotiated was awareness of the benefits of diversity. The data below indicated that this domain was cultivated by leading through examples to appreciate and promote diversity.

> *Finally, as community leaders, we lead by example in appreciating and promoting diversity as a positive value in building harmonious and inclusive relationships in our community.*
>
> (A community leader in Cigugur)

Discussion

This research was oriented toward two objectives: exploring latent domains that contribute to the internalization of RMAs and ICs and how such latent domains were cultivated to facilitate internalization processes. The data were elicited from multireligious and multicultural societies of eight regions in Indonesia: Padangsidempuan, Sibolga, Tarutung, South Tapanuli, Central Tapanuli, Sekaran, Rama Agung, and Cigugur.

The first set of data demonstrated that RMAs had eight latent domains, which entailed respect for religious freedom, openness to belief differences, awareness of pluralism, the cultures of harmony and tolerance, participation in community social life, awareness of extremism consequences, religious leadership promoting cooperation, and commitment to peace.

The eight domains of RMAs, to some degree, have interconnections fostering harmonious and tolerant religious practices within societies. Respecting religious freedom means acknowledging and accepting the varieties of beliefs and individual religious practices, leading to support inclusivity and the attitude of mutual respect within the religious circle.

This attitude has a strong relation to openness to different beliefs, in which the willingness to understand and learn from different perspectives helps develop dialogues, increase understanding, and support acceptance (Itzchakov & Reis, 2021). Awareness of pluralism stresses the importance of acknowledging varieties in religious and social life as a whole. The foregoing supports an individual to accept differences and find common ground as a basis to construct unity within differences. On the other side, the cultures of harmony and tolerance contribute to creating a peaceful life, with an emphasis on respecting various perspectives. The foregoing demonstrates that tolerance and understanding play an important role in dealing with conflicts and strengthening social cohesion (Pajarianto et al., 2022).

Participation in the community's social activities is an important aspect of RMAs. It means being actively engaged in shared activities that help create a sense of togetherness and responsibility within religious communities. By getting engaged in participation, people can be more united and have shared values so that a harmonious social life can be created (Burt et al., 2022). Besides, awareness of the danger of extremism is crucial in RMAs. Understanding the adverse effects of extremist ideology and actions makes people more vigilant. The foregoing paves the way for people to strive to prevent radicalization through education and dialogues. Religious leadership that supports cooperation also plays a vital role in constructing positive relationships, dialogues, and peace in the midst of religious communities. Good religious leadership can lead people to be more moderate and to be able to solve conflicts in peaceful ways (Garfield, 2021). Lastly, a commitment to peace emphasizes the importance of one's and community's efforts to live in balance and harmony alongside striving to solve conflicts properly. The foregoing helps create a tolerant and peaceful society (Taylor, 2020). All of the aforementioned latent domains are mutually connected and construct RMAs to create an inclusive environment, mutual respect, collaboration, and a peaceful life within differences.

Subsequently, the data indicated that ICs also had eight latent domains, which subsumed inclusive education, cross-cultural collaboration, reflective education, social criticism, empathy and perspective-taking attitudes, cultural sensitivity awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and awareness of diversity benefits. All of these latent domains are interconnected and help people get along well in diverse environments. Inclusive education teaches people to appreciate differences in schools so that they can work together with others from different cultures (Lakkala et al., 2021). Reflective education makes people more aware of themselves and helps them care more about the feelings of others. With empathy and understanding of other people's perspectives, individuals can get along better and respect cultural differences (Xiao et al., 2021).

Awareness of cultural sensitivity completes other latent domains by supporting the understanding of different values, norms, and habits within various cultures. The foregoing emphasizes the importance of sensitivity to different cultures, stereotype avoidance, behavioral adjustment, and communication strategies during cross-cultural interactions (Yanto et al., 2022). The skills of intercultural communication also play an important role. The foregoing entails the skills of communication with or without words, listening with full attention, understanding cultural symbols, and adjusting communication strategies to reach a shared understanding in the midst of different cultures (Badrun et al., 2024). Also, social criticism helps deepen cultural understanding by analyzing norms and social structures from different perspectives. The foregoing supports the creation of social justice and equality for everybody (Renault, 2020). Awareness of diversity's benefits emphasizes many benefits from the presence of diversity, such as the enhancement of creativity, supporting innovations, and widening viewpoints while solving problems (Daheri et al., 2023). All of the aforementioned

latent domains are mutually connected and potentially construct ICs, helping people interact and adapt properly in the midst of different cultures.

The second set of data shows that the important role of various parties in society contributes greatly to shaping the latent domains of RMAs and ICs, thus helping the process of internalizing their values. In the context of RMAs, religious leaders guide the community to respect religious freedom. This approach is in line with the view of Saada (2022), who supports community-based religious education. In addition, community leaders encourage an open attitude towards differences in belief, which is reinforced by the concept of "enlightened heterogeneity" from Grümme (2021) to encourage self-reflection and reduce views that simplify religious identity. Social and cultural institutions also organize events that celebrate diversity, similar to the Chicago Cultural Alliance model described by Sanders and Fulara (2012), which aims to build cross-cultural dialogues. The formation of a culture of harmony and tolerance is practiced through daily habits that emphasize these values.

Pajarianto et al. (2022) stated that the role of religion and culture is very important in creating common ground amidst differences. Educational institutions also play an active role in inviting the community to participate in interfaith activities. Mann (2020) proved this through research at Christian colleges showing that participation in multireligious community activities increased social engagement. Awareness of the dangers of extremism is conveyed by religious leaders through education about the risks of radicalism and the importance of moderation. This strategy has also been studied by Jugl et al. (2020), highlighting preventive psychosocial programs to prevent radicalization. Religious leadership plays a major role in building interfaith cooperation, which is the key to improving social morality (Day, 2021). Finally, educational institutions insert peace values into the curriculum and various activities. Gursel-Bilgin and Flinders (2020) emphasized the importance of integrated peace education in building a peaceful community life.

In terms of ICs, schools prepare inclusive education programs in order that all students have equal learning opportunities. As explained by Medina-García et al. (2020), such programs help students be more aware of diversity. Local government also supports programs that unite different cultures. De Vries (2020) revealed that projects funded by the local government could make people of different cultures more active in interactions. Besides, lessons at schools teach critical thinking and self-evaluation. Liu (2022) mentioned that the foregoing method helps students be more aware of other cultures alongside their ways of perceiving the world. Media and mass media become important places to discuss social issues. Prasad and Ioannidis (2022) explained that social media helps people echo their opinions and paves the way for them to hold open discussions. The programs that teach empathy and how to respect others are also very beneficial.

A study conducted by Aslan and Akyol (2020) demonstrated that such programs help children care more about others. Community leaders hold discussions about respecting other cultures. Viken et al. (2021) emphasized that understanding cultural differences helps create relationships with mutual respect. Universities provide intercultural communication training. Einfalt et al. (2022) elucidated that this way could help students be more skillful in communication and be more aware of themselves. Lastly, the community leaders regularly remind people of the importance of diversity. Žnidaršič et al. (2021) explained that leadership that supports diversity makes the community more solid and harmonious with positive values.

As an implication, the findings of this study help explain how promoting the values of RMAs and ICs in various fields can benefit Indonesian society, which is diverse in religion and culture. In theory, this study adds insights to academic discussions by showing that the two are interrelated and can support the creation of social harmony. In practice, the findings provide useful bases for policymakers and educators in a way that the findings reveal several latent domains of RMAs and ICs. Policymakers and educations could use such latent domains as the bases for helping societies reach harmony in differences.

Conclusion

This study identifies critical areas for promoting RMAs and ICs across various communities. It identifies eight critical domains for RMAs: respect for religious freedom, tolerance for differing beliefs, awareness of pluralism, harmony promotion, active community participation, understanding of extremism, cooperative religious leadership, and commitment to peace. These domains contribute to a more inclusive and peaceful society by fostering mutual respect and understanding across diverse religious landscapes. Similarly, for ICs, the study emphasizes domains such as inclusive education, cross-cultural collaboration, reflective education, social criticism, empathy, cultural sensitivity, effective communication skills, and recognition of diversity's benefits. These areas enable people to appreciate cultural differences and collaborate in a variety of settings. The study also describes how various societal sectors cultivate these domains effectively. Religious and community leaders, educational institutions, and local governments all play critical roles in educating and engaging communities to promote diversity and harmony. Overall, these efforts aim to create a more inclusive and cohesive society, highlighting the importance of working together to promote tolerance and intercultural dialogue.

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