

# **Dynamics of Development Religious Moderation: Lessons From Multiethnic Transmigration Communities in Banggai, Central Sulawesi, Indonesia**

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Ahmad Syahid<sup>1\*</sup>, Saepudin Mashuri<sup>1</sup>, Hamka<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Irfan Hasanuddin<sup>2</sup>, Naima<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Nur Asmawi<sup>1</sup>, Adawiyah Pettalongi<sup>1</sup>, Anang Budi Santoso<sup>1</sup>, Sauqi Futaqi<sup>3</sup>, and Abdul Gafar Mallo<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, State Islamic University Datokarama Palu, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> School of Social Science, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> Islamic Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Islamic University of Darul Ulum Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup> Islamic Education, Faculty of Education and Teacher Training, Alkhairaat University, Palu, Indonesia

\*Ahmad Syahid, corresponding author. Email: ahmad\_syahid@iainpalu.ac.id

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the dynamics of multiethnic transmigration communities and religious harmony in Simpang Raya District, Banggai Regency, Indonesia. It explores the role of diverse ethnic and religious leaders in promoting sustainable religious moderation in these areas, employing a descriptive qualitative method with 35 informants selected through purposive sampling. This research reveals that leaders from diverse backgrounds promote religious moderation through various channels, including places of worship, educational institutions, cultural events, government services, and community socialization. The practice of religious moderation is fostered through approaches that emphasize participation, gender equality, partnership, and self-reliance. Educational institutions play a crucial role as strategic agents of social change, educating the younger generation about the values of religious moderation. In addition, the influence and control that religious leaders have in facilitating dialogue are crucial to promoting inclusive religious moderation. This research contributes to demographic and social studies by providing an overview and analysis of how to build diversity and peace through religious moderation in multiethnic regions.

## **Keywords**

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Figures; multiethnic; religious moderation; transmigration

## Introduction

Over the past 50 years, Indonesia has experienced significant growth in cultural and religious diversity. This multicultural society is increasingly distributed across the country's central islands, facilitated by the transmigration program (Niode et al., 2021; Tirtosudarmo, 2002; Van Der Wijst, 1985; Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019). This policy was designed to redistribute the population across various regions, particularly outside of Java. Implemented since the 1950s, its primary objective has been to alleviate population density through strategic redistribution (Widyatmoko & Dewi, 2019), as well as to enhance the nation's food security (Niode et al., 2021) on the island of Java and to utilize the natural resources available in other regions of Indonesia, such as Sumatra, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and Papua.

Central Sulawesi, one of the largest provinces on the island of Sulawesi, is a key target for Indonesia's transmigration program. This province boasts unique demographic characteristics, encompassing a rich tapestry of ethnicities, arts, languages, customs, and religions, alongside abundant natural and mineral resources. The Simpang Raya sub-district of Banggai, a notable transmigration area within the province, served as the research locus for this study. Since the 1980s, this sub-district has been home to transmigrated communities and residents from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Javanese, Balinese, Lomboknese, Buginese, and Gorontalonese. The local Saluan ethnic group further enriches this diversity, contributing to a mosaic of ethnicities, beliefs, and religions. These multiethnic communities practice Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism, maintaining their ancestral religions despite their long residence in new localities.

Research on cross-ethnic social communication within transmigration communities presents a positive outlook. Romli (2010) examined the dynamics of communication and interaction between Javanese Muslims and Lampung Muslims, highlighting their engagement across various aspects of life, including religion, economics, politics, and society. The communication between these two ethnic groups is characterized by both beneficial cooperation and healthy competition. To achieve common goals, they transcend tribal boundaries. The Javanese Islamic and Lampung Islamic communities in the South Lampung transmigration area effectively manage cultural differences and communicate harmoniously.

In multiethnic transmigration communities characterized by diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, the potential for conflict is often a significant concern. In various locations, such conflicts have arisen due to different factors. For instance, in Southeast Sulawesi, conflicts emerged from legal uncertainties regarding land ownership for migrant populations. Additionally, the lack of social platforms for multiethnic groups to interact and address their social needs exacerbated social disparities among these groups.

As observed by some researchers, differences in values and norms can potentially contribute to conflicts (Hos et al., 2022; Illana-Esteban, 2012; McDoom et al., 2019; Sambanis & Shayo, 2013). In the context of multicultural communities coexisting, fostering religious moderation is crucial for creating harmony, tolerance, and social integration among religious groups (Daheri, Warsah, et al., 2023; Kawangung & Lele, 2019; Pajariantto, 2022). It is believed that religious moderation helps reduce the potential for conflict and promotes mutual understanding, respect, and care, thereby fostering an inclusive attitude among community members. As revealed by Pajariantto (2022) and Baidhawy (2016), promoting religious moderation within transmigration communities aims to create a harmonious, multiethnic

society. Hunt and Benford (2004) explained that the strength of such a social foundation is expected to reinforce a sense of unity, a philosophy championed by the republic's founding fathers as a symbol of unity in diversity: 'Bhinneka Tunggal Ika'. In the Simpang Raya sub-district, this unity in diversity transcends symbolic and conceptual moderation, fostering sustainability and enhancing religiosity, social life, and economic development.

This research is crucial in uncovering the dynamics of interfaith leaders' roles in promoting religious moderation within a multiethnic transmigration community in Bunta, Banggai. The primary focus is to explore how interfaith leaders contribute to conflict prevention and enhance social harmony in a pluralistic transmigration community. The findings of this study can serve as a foundation for developing guidelines on religious moderation in culturally and religiously diverse areas of transmigration.

## Literature review

### Multiethnic society and social change

This research employs relevant theories of social change to elucidate the historical background of transmigration settlements and the dynamics of inclusive social and religious transformations that accompany them. Additionally, this theoretical study examines key theories pertinent to understanding multiethnic societies. Émile Durkheim's social integration theory posits that multiethnic societies can attain stability and harmony through social integration, which he termed social solidarity. This concept is divided into two types: mechanical and organic social solidarity (Kivistö, 2020; Tranow, 2019). Additionally, Martono (2012) asserted that social integration occurs when individuals from various ethnic groups feel connected through shared values, norms, and goals. The integration of Durkheim's concepts of mechanical and organic solidarity with Morgano's emphasis on shared values and goals offers a framework for fostering social cohesion in multiethnic societies. This approach highlights the importance of both commonalities and interdependence in achieving harmony and stability within diverse communities.

Karl Marx's social conflict theory, further developed by theorists such as Du Bois (2018), emphasizes the conflicts between ethnic groups that arise from competition for resources and societal inequalities. This theory emphasizes the crucial role of examining social class and power structures in understanding the dynamics within multiethnic societies. Meanwhile, social identity theory elucidates how individuals in multiethnic societies identify with specific groups, influencing their behaviors and interactions with members of other groups (Dorjee & Ting-Toomey, 2020). The integration of social conflict theory and social identity theory enables us to understand ethnic relations, emphasizing the need to address both structural inequalities and identity-based dynamics in promoting social cohesion and harmony in diverse societies.

### Concept of religious moderation

Religious moderation is an evolving discourse within the field of religious studies, adapting to diverse contexts and social environments. The academic importance of examining religious moderation in the Islamic world has increased, particularly with the contributions of prominent scholars such as Muhammad Rasyid Ridha, Muhammad al-Madani, Yusuf

Qardhawi, Wahbah al-Zuhayli, and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (Azra, 2017). These intellectuals have offered significant ideas, insights, and perspectives that support the concept and practice of moderate religion for Muslims. These scholars emphasize the crucial role of religious moderation in contemporary Islamic thought.

Etymologically, the concept of religious moderation stems from the term *wasathiyah Islamiyah*, which denotes balance, moderation, and a middle path, steering clear of extremes in religious paradigms. Qardhawi (2011) interpreted *wasathiyah* not only as a middle ground between two opposing views but also as embodying attributes such as being chosen, the best, fair, upright [*iqamah*], strong, secure, and unified. This concept highlights the multifaceted nature of *wasathiyah*, emphasizing its role in nurturing a balanced approach to religious practice.

From a semantic viewpoint, Al-Salabi (2001) outlined various interpretations of *wasathiyah*, such as being in the middle, chosen, the best, *al-'adl* [fair], and something that lies between *jayyid* [good] and *radi'* [bad]. Kamali (2015) contrasted *wasathiyah* with *ta'aruf*, which denotes excessiveness, radicalism, and extremism. The nuanced understanding of *wasathiyah* and its importance in promoting balanced and fair practices is highlighted in these definitions.

Addressing the initiative to promote religious moderation within Indonesia's diverse society (Islam, 2020), this effort aims to foster harmony among the country's religious communities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019) described religious moderation as a perspective and behavior that adheres to a middle path, avoiding extremism in religious practice, balancing understanding and behavior within one's religion, and respecting the practices of other religions (Daheri, Rohimin, et al., 2023). The significance of religious moderation in fostering a peaceful and inclusive society can be traced to the government's initiative.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs further outlined the principles and applications of religious moderation within educational settings and the broader community. The guidebook highlights four key areas for promoting religious moderation: moderation in core Islamic teachings, moderation in interactions among Muslims, moderation in interfaith relationships, and moderation within the state framework. These aspects collectively aim to maintain a balanced and harmonious approach to practice and the coexistence of religions in Indonesia. Futaqi and Mashuri (2021) explored the characteristics of religious moderation, categorizing them into four areas: indicators of moderation, values of moderation, patterns of moderate thinking, and the expansion of religious moderation studies across various scientific disciplines. Their study also emphasizes the significance of honoring noble culture and local wisdom as a marker of religious moderation. Such perspectives underscore the multifaceted nature of religious moderation and its vital role in fostering a respectful and inclusive society.

## Transmigration and its policies

The transmigration program in Indonesia was initially introduced by colonialists in 1905 as part of the Colonization program. The Indonesian Government later continued this initiative with a more nationalist approach, renaming it transmigration, to alleviate population density on the island of Java. The first group of 155 families from Bagelen, Kedu Residency, was relocated to Gedong, Lampung, where they established the village of Bagelen, named after their place of origin.

Over the past century, starting from 1905, the transmigration program has played a significant role in the nation's development. This program aims to balance various aspects of development in new regions across Indonesia, including education, health, religion, sports, arts, economics, and safety. The objectives of the Ministry of Villages, Development of Disadvantaged Regions, and Transmigration (2015) transmigration program are: 1) Enhancing the welfare of transmigrants and surrounding communities, 2) Promoting and equalizing regional development, and 3) Strengthening national unity and cohesion among different tribes and ethnic groups in the transmigration areas.

## Methodology

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to narratively describe the data. The use of qualitative methods aligns with Lichtman's (2010) perspective, which emphasizes a naturalistic social setting, dynamic processes, interactive communication, holistic coverage, in-depth study, and the critical role of the researcher as a key instrument in data collection.

The qualitative approach is particularly relevant to this research's social setting, as it not only presents related data comprehensively but also explores the meaning behind it. Researchers gather qualitative data through in-depth interviews and participant observation of various social and religious activities. This approach enables them to understand the views, experiences, religious behaviors, and interactions of individuals, particularly those of religious figures, within the multiethnic transmigration community in Simpang Raya District.

The participants in this study were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that deliberately chooses participants based on specific characteristics or criteria aligned with the study's objectives (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024). The criteria for determining informants in this study are individuals from Simpang Raya who play a role in promoting religious moderation, encompassing religious development, youth and women's development, as well as the contributions of the government and security sectors. Therefore, this research involved interfaith leaders and figures, youth leaders, women leaders, religious education teachers, local community leaders, sub-district heads, and local police. Table 1 presents the details of the research informants.

**Table 1:** List of Research Informants

No	Place of Research	Participant	Position	Religion
1.		UJ	Religious Leaders	Islam
		MN	KUA Extension Worker of Simpang Raya Sub-district	Islam
		HS	Religious Leaders of Lombok Sasak Ethnicity	Islam
		ASO	PAI Teacher	Islam
		AS	Madrasah Teacher and Supervisor	Islam
		SU	Head of Majelis Taklim Miftahul Jannah	Islam
		DJ	Youth Leader and Bachelor of PAI of UIN Palu	Islam
		MA	Javanese community leader and Mosque Imam	Islam
		EI	GPID Church Pastor	Christian
		YL	Local community leader of the Saluan ethnicity	Christian
		TS	Christian Religious Education Teacher	Christian
		BNS	Hindu Minister of Simpang Raya	Hindu

No	Place of Research	Participant	Position	Religion
2.	Rantau Jaya Village	JI	Religious Leader	Islam
		AY	Youth Leader of Muslim Balinese Ethnicity	Islam
		AH	Religious and Community Leader	Islam
3.	Dwipa Karya Village	IWP	Religious and Community Leader	Hindu
		AH	Islamic Religious Ustadz	Islam
		HA	Community Leader, Former Village Head	Islam
		NT	Youth leader and local political practitioner	Islam
		HI	PAI Teacher and Youth Leader	Islam
		MT	Christian Pastor of Dwipakarya Village	Christian
		RPS	Christian Women Leader of Dwipa Karya Village	Christian
		YS	Local community leaders of the Saluan ethnicity	Christian
		AL	Christian Religious Education Teacher	Christian
4.	Sumber Mulya Village	IKS	Hindu Customary Chairman of Simpang Raya	Hindu
		IKS	Chairman of Parisada Darsa	Hindu
		IBS	Simpang Raya	Hindu
		NKS	Hindu Religious Education Teacher	Hindu
		KY	Female leaders of Simpang Raya	Islam
5.	Simpang Raya Sub District	HSM	Religious Leaders	Islam
		SM	Religious Leaders and Teachers	Islam
		FK	Female Leaders and Head of Simra Recitation Group	Christian
		NMW	Christian Religious Education Teacher	Hindu
6.	Simpang Raya-Bunta	ASB	Hindu Religious Education Teacher	Islam
		AR	Sub-district Head of Simpang Raya	Islam
		SN	Sub-district Secretary of Simpang Raya	Islam
		IJ	KUA Simpang Raya	Christian

The selection of diverse participants ensures that the study captures comprehensive perspectives from various stakeholders directly involved in promoting religious moderation. By engaging stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, the data obtained is more thorough and provides a holistic view of the variations in fostering religious moderation within the multiethnic transmigration community of Simpang Raya, Banggai.

The researcher organizes data from interviews, field notes, and documentation into categories, describes them in units, synthesizes them, and organizes them by selecting key themes relevant to the study's focus. Conclusions are drawn to ensure that the findings are easily understandable for researchers and others. The data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, where qualitative data analysis activities are conducted interactively and continuously until data saturation is achieved (Miles et al., 2014).

This research received ethical approval from the Institute for Research and Community Service (LP2M) at the State Islamic University (UIN) Datokarama Palu, which serves as the institutional ethics committee equivalent to an Institutional Review Board (IRB). As part of the ethical approval process, the researchers submitted a comprehensive overview of the study, detailing its objectives, data collection procedures, participant recruitment and consent protocols, as well as strategies for ensuring confidentiality and responsible data management. Data collection commenced only after official approval was granted, as documented in the formal Chancellor's Decree No. 93 of 2023, which took effect on Wednesday, November 8, 2023. This research took place from November 2023 to May 2024.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals who met the criteria of religious moderation. These included government officials, traditional leaders, and religious teachers from various religions (Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism), who were actively engaged in interfaith and intercultural initiatives within the multiethnic transmigration community of Simpang Raya, Banggai Regency. The participants also included youth leaders, women's figures, and representatives from local government. Before conducting interviews, the researcher provided prospective participants with a thorough explanation of the study, including the researcher's background, the research aims, data collection methods, participant selection criteria, and measures taken to ensure data protection, confidentiality, and ethicality. Upon receiving sufficient information, participants were given a consent form to sign, with the assurance that they retained the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

To ensure data validity and participant consent, the researchers fostered a relationship of trust and created a conducive interview environment. The researchers protected participants' personal identities by using pseudonyms, and interviews were conducted in locations deemed safe and comfortable by the participants. Accordingly, this study adhered strictly to ethical research principles, demonstrating a strong commitment to respecting the rights and privacy of all participants throughout the research process and beyond.

## Results

### Description of setting research

The research site is located in Banggai Regency, approximately 450 kilometers from Palu, the capital of Central Sulawesi Province. The capital city of Banggai Regency, Luwuk, lies 155 kilometers to the north and is accessible by land via Pagimana District. The government center is situated in Desa Rantau Jaya, about 15 kilometers from Bunta District, along the land route from Tojo Una-una Regency to Banggai Regency. The territorial boundaries are as follows: to the north and east, it borders the Bunta District; to the south, it borders the Batui District; and to the west, it borders the Nuhon District.

Demographically, the majority of the migrant population in Simpang Raya District arrived through the transmigration program, which began in the 1960s. According to the latest population census published in 2020/2021, based on the 2016 database, the district's population totals 14,880, comprising 7,677 men and 7,203 women, with a sex ratio of 106.58 (Statistics Indonesia Banggai Regency, 2023).

*"Javanese and Lombok tribes mostly live in the Sumber Mulya and Beringin Jaya Village areas, while Balinese and Saluan tribes predominantly live in Rantau Jaya Village and Dwipa Karya Village. However, some residents of the Saluan tribe live in the hilly areas adjacent to Sumber Mulya Village in the hills."*

(SI, Head of Rantau Jaya Village)

According to the 2021 population census report from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Banggai Regency, Simpang Raya District is home to 70 spiritual workers, including 14 imams, 14 preachers, 17 Catholic priests, 18 Protestant Bible teachers, and 7 Hindu priests (Statistics

Indonesia Banggai Regency, 2021). This data demonstrates that all multiethnic religious communities have leaders who are adequately representative to conduct religious activities, such as weekly worship, Christmas and Easter celebrations, and provide spiritual guidance to their congregations.

An equally unique social reality in Simpang Raya District is the designation of Dwipa Karya Village as a Bhineka Tunggal Ika village. This village is envisioned as a model of religious tolerance within multiethnic transmigration communities, serving as an exemplary village for fostering harmony in religious life across these areas.

## **Historical dimensions of transmigration in multiethnic societies**

The historical record of the transmigration of multiethnic communities in Simpang Raya District, Banggai Regency, is closely linked to the national transmigration program initiated by the Indonesian Government since independence. This program in the sub-district is a continuation of the earlier initiative that began during President Soekarno's era in the 1950s and persisted through subsequent administrations.

Consequently, the history of forming a multiethnic community and transmigration in this sub-district has positively influenced Indonesian government policy. The transmigration policy effectively redistributed the population across Indonesia, alleviating population density on the islands of Java and Bali, and fostering the development of border areas, particularly outside Java. The implementation of this policy has enhanced the welfare of the Indonesian people, including those in Simpang Raya District, Banggai Regency, and Central Sulawesi. As one informant articulated:

*"For the first time, transmigration in Bunta District began around the 1960s-1970s. At that time, many jungles and swamps could not be planted because they were muddy and paved roads, but now everything has changed and progressed. The agricultural land and gardens have become productive, and the new Simpang Raya District has been established. We separated from Bunta District."*

(JL, Religious Leader Figure)

The data indicate that Simpang Raya is a sub-district formed from the expansion of the Banggai Regency area in Central Sulawesi. This expansion, which separated Simpang Raya from Bunta District, occurred under the leadership of Regent Herwin Yatim during his term from 2016 to 2020. This period brought significant advancements in the religious sector for the residents of Simpang Raya District, as noted by the following informant:

*"In the Regent Herwin Yatim's time, we received attention, we were able to build houses of worship, mosques, and other religions too. Government officials attend activities to celebrate religious holidays, such as Ramadhan safaris."*

(NT, youth leaders, and local political practitioners)

The history of transmigration in Simpang Raya District, along with the inclusive socio-religious changes aimed at fostering religious moderation, is a critical factor that significantly influences the multiethnic society. These inclusive socio-religious changes, which support the development of religious moderation, are evident in the diverse population originating from

various regions of Indonesia. This migration introduced a variety of ethnic groups and cultural identities, along with their respective religions, to the area. As one informant recounted:

*"I am Agus Slamet Barnabas, the head of Simpang Raya sub-district; I have been the Simpang Raya sub-district head for a little over a year. I found that spiritual and religious social development is extraordinary. As a multiethnic community, we recognize that the diversity of the Simpang Raya community is extraordinary. Here, there are Javanese, Balinese, Sasak Lombok tribes, and Christian Saluan residents. However, we live in harmony and peace side by side. There has never been a violent conflict with religious nuances here."*

(BS, Simpang Raya District Head)

Initially, the transmigration communities from Java, Bali, and Lombok adhered strictly to their religious beliefs. However, over time, through inclusive socio-religious activities, cultural events, and humanitarian efforts, inter-ethnic and inter-religious interactions have evolved, such as the celebration of religious holidays and the establishment of a religious harmony forum. This social environment has led to a shift in the religious understanding and practices of the transmigration community in Simpang Raya District, making them more moderate and open to accepting religious differences and the worship rituals of other faiths. Educational institutions have also played a role in this social change. While religious moderation initially took place in informal social settings, such as places of worship and religious assemblies, it has since been incorporated into the school curriculum. Religious education in schools now emphasizes the learning process by reinforcing a moderate understanding and practice of religion.

The role of schools in driving social change, particularly in religious and social contexts, is increasingly emphasized. Teachers have frequently needed to enhance their understanding and practice of religious moderation. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2022), all religious educators are expected to act as agents of religious moderation. Their responsibilities extend beyond the classroom, requiring them to serve as sources of inspiration and role models for moderate religious understanding within the broader society. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has also issued guidelines for religious moderation in all schools. Recently, student profiles in all schools have been updated to reflect their identities as Pancasila students and Rahmatan Lil Alamin students.

Alongside the advancement of educational institutions, stakeholder involvement has also grown. The creation of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) to address the diversity within the Simpang Raya community has strengthened community solidarity. Numerous dialogue forums have been held in various locations. These religious leaders are active participants in fostering social harmony, especially among interfaith groups, rather than merely serving as observers.

## **Development of religious moderation by Islamic religious figures**

Insights into the progress of religious moderation in Simpang Raya District are collected from religious leaders, community leaders, women leaders, educators, and youth. This insight encompasses the psychological experiences, the enhancement of inclusive Islamic education, and aspirations for the collective well-being of all religious communities. Notable religious

leaders include KH. Juwaeni is an Islamic figure residing in Rantau Jaya Village. Ustad Jumali, a religious and community leader in Beringin Jaya Village, is also a Koran teacher and elder of the Javanese community.

Besides Islamic religious leaders, the research subjects encompass educators such as ustaz and ustazah teaching at Islamic boarding schools and madrasas, Islamic religious education teachers in schools, mosque preachers, women's assemblies, and other religious activities that contribute to the strengthening of inclusive Islamic education in Simpang Raya District. Beyond their educational duties, female leaders engage in interfaith social and humanitarian initiatives, organizing regular religious activities in their villages, including PHBI and monthly recitations.

*"As a religious community, Islam teaches about tolerance, mutual help, and respect. We are also often involved in and deliver sermons at religious studies forums, dialogue events, and other religious activities. What is important for Muslims is that they must cooperate with all parties to ensure harmony and peace. Religious life can be harmonious if all religious communities respect and cooperate."*

(JI, Islamic religious leader)

As mentioned earlier, Islamic religious leaders have played a crucial role in promoting a tolerant, multiethnic society. In educational settings, religious teachers play a key role in fostering inclusive religious learning for multiethnic students across various educational levels, thereby shaping students' tolerant character.

In addition to religious leaders who also serve as educators, Muslim women play a crucial role. Their involvement is particularly significant as they are primary educators within their families, especially for their children, making their participation vital for the next generation. Women in the coaching program also actively participate in public activities. As noted by one informant, the chairman of the Talim Council (*Majlis Ta'lim*), as follows:

*"Here, the activities are routine: the women's group assembly reads Yasin and reads Asmaul Husna before the recitation, sometimes filled with lectures by religious figures, and routine activities every Friday, except during the month of fasting. There are sufficient savings, according to ability, for the implementer's consumption. Forum activities are carried out from village to village, sometimes on Friday Kliwon or Friday Legi, coordinated by Islamic Religious Counselors and KUA Simpang Raya."*

(SN, Islamic religious leader)

Although religious activities may appear straightforward, women's participation in social interactions is crucial for fostering a sense of community. Women actively engage in various interfaith activities and cultural festivals at both the sub-district and district levels. The involvement of Muslim women is critical, as they play a significant role in the development of children at home and in the daily religious practices within their communities.

## **Guidance of religious moderation by Hindu religious figures**

Religious moderation in the Simpang Raya area also involves the active participation of Hindu religious leaders. These leaders play a crucial role in imparting the teachings of the

Sacred Vedic Heritage, which serve as a guiding philosophy for moderate religious perspectives. Hindus observe various Holy Days and Ngaben processions, which receive government support and are embraced with tolerance by other religious communities. The execution of traditional processions and cultural events is centered in the traditional house, serving as a means to preserve the ethnic identity originating from Bali.

Hinduism introduced the concept of Tat Twam Asi, which emphasizes that religious life should be based on mutual belonging. This sense of unity is cultivated through determination, attitudes, behaviors, and actions, reflecting the belief that all beings are interconnected. He articulated as follows:

*"I have seen here that tolerance is not only for the indigenous people of the Saluan tribe, but the transmigration of most of the Javanese, Balinese, and Lombok tribes has been assimilated here for many years. Intermarriage has enriched the community, fostering coexistence and development. In fact, the arrival of the transmigration community has become a driving force for the Indigenous community. Overall, the situation has improved significantly."*

(SRA, Head of Parisada Darsa Hindu Simpang Raya District)

In Simpang Raya society, Hindu religious figures, as a minority group, play a crucial role in two significant ways. Firstly, their contribution to promoting religious moderation demonstrates the recognition and openness of the multiethnic transmigration communities. The voices of Hindu religious teachers are acknowledged, and their active participation is highly valued in fostering harmony within the transmigration community. Secondly, the involvement of minority religious figures bolsters their standing and enhances trust within society.

Hindu religious education is pivotal in reinforcing its teachings in schools. As one Hindu teacher remarked:

*"Religious teachers in schools play a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes towards tolerance of other religions, ethnicities, and worship practices. Hindu religious lessons, which emphasize commendable morals, teach students to live harmoniously and respect religious and cultural differences. In Simpang Raya, my students come from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Hindus, Christians, Muslims, and members of the Saluan tribe. They study, socialize, and form friendships peacefully. I have never seen conflicts among students over issues related to ethnic immigrants and local tribes at school."*

(SA, Hindu Religious Education Teacher)

The data presented indicates that Hindu religious education teachers in the Simpang Raya area share a unified vision of promoting religious moderation. They implement an inclusive approach to teaching, which has significantly influenced students' understanding, awareness, and attitudes towards engaging in interfaith and intercultural dialogue with tolerance and respect. This approach is evident in the culture of mutual respect for religious, ethnic, and local traditional differences, ensuring that conflicts between students of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds are nonexistent in this region.

## Development of religious moderation by Christian religious leaders

The cultivation of tolerant and open-minded religious understanding and attitudes has facilitated harmonious interactions among multiethnic transmigration communities, fostering respect for differences and preventing conflicts among adherents of different religions. This emphasis on tolerance and inclusiveness is also a key concern for Christian religious leaders. According to one Christian religious leader:

*"I have observed harmony in Simpang Raya District, previously known as Bunta District, since I moved here in 2002. Although there was some minor unrest a few years ago, it did not have a significant impact. The local wisdom of the people in Bunta, Simpang Raya, and Nuhon Districts has effectively addressed these issues, preventing any harmful consequences or detrimental effects."*

(EE, Pastor of the GPID Church in Beringin Jaya Village)

In Simpang Raya District, women activists and Christian religious educators make significant contributions to worship, religious, and social activities within their congregations. Through various spiritual and socio-religious lectures, they facilitate an educational process that fosters inclusive religious understanding and attitudes towards individuals of different faiths. Christian religious leaders deliver sermons during church services and other daily activities, emphasizing the importance of social engagement to foster interfaith relations.

Church congregations engage in multiple forms of spiritual formation weekly, including rotating prayer meetings held in the homes of different members. Likewise, Christian religious educators play a crucial role in imparting religious values, promoting tolerance, mutual respect, love, and cooperation in social and humanitarian endeavors, regardless of differences in faith.

*"Christian leaders' awareness and development of religious moderation also help create a safe social environment where communities from various religions can worship and practice the teachings of their respective religions comfortably, without interference, pressure, and discrimination in this sub-district. One of the informants confirmed that in Simpang Raya District, there has never been any social conflict, let alone violence, because there are no religious or ethnic sentiments that lead to acts of murder."*

(YL, local Christian Saluan community figure)

The village government and various religious communities collaborate to support each other in conducting rituals and religious celebrations across different faiths. The government actively promotes the development of religious practices and activities that enhance religious moderation, as detailed below:

*"In December 2022, for example, religious harmony was fostered, and I also gave remarks on religious activities to welcome Christmas and the New Year 2023 by saying that mutual security should be maintained. Previously, no one from the sub-district had stepped in directly. However, during my administration, they said it was extraordinary that the district head, being able to attend Christmas celebrations, the sub-district head*

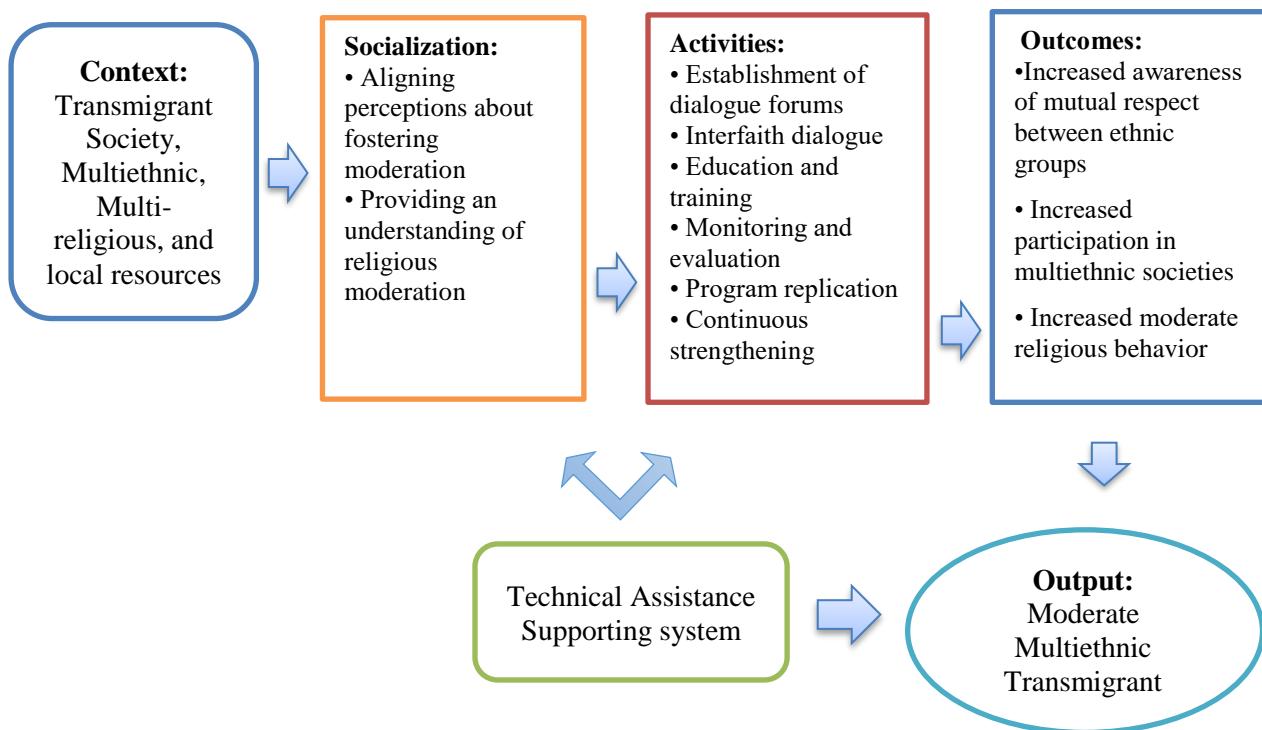
*permanently joined in, especially the extensive activities at the Church that we carried out."*

(BS, Head of Simpang Raya District)

## Religious moderation development pattern

The evolution of religious moderation within the multiethnic transmigration community in Simpang Raya District, Banggai Regency, exhibits a distinct pattern. This pattern has emerged from the ongoing cultural dynamics and guidance within the Simpang Raya community. It encompasses various aspects and involves numerous institutions, with several key actors contributing to the promotion of religious moderation. The roles of these institutions, along with those of religious leaders and local figures, are detailed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Pattern of Religious Moderation Development



The transmigrant community in Simpang Raya is characterized by its ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. Initially inhabited by the Saluan Indigenous Tribe, the area has long been a destination for transmigration. With the implementation of the transmigration policy, the social composition of the community has evolved, welcoming various ethnic groups, including the Javanese, Balinese, and Lomboknese. This influx has enriched the social dynamics of Simpang Raya District, as individuals from diverse backgrounds interact and coexist in daily life. Presently, the area not only receives ethnic groups through the transmigration program but also attracts other ethnicities who migrate due to economic opportunities, employment, or marriage. Consequently, Simpang Raya exemplifies a multiethnic and multireligious society, where diversity is an integral aspect of social life.

Based on the pattern above, several stages of development are undertaken to establish a moderate multiethnic transmigrant community in Simpang Raya District. Firstly, the approach to fostering religious moderation among multiethnic transmigrant communities is

constructed through diversity management. This stage employs various strategies, including community participation, gender inclusivity, partnerships, and self-reliance. In promoting religious moderation, a participatory approach is implemented to enhance the involvement of all societal elements. This method is effective in instilling the principles of Islamic moderation through various activities (Lubis & Harahap, 2022). However, fostering religious moderation cannot rely solely on cultural community participation; it necessitates collaboration with numerous strategic partners. Such partnerships are crucial not only within the community but also in reinforcing collaborative education, referred to as pedagogical partnership (de Bie et al., 2023).

A voluntary or self-reliance approach within the community further supports the efforts to foster religious moderation through participation and collaboration. This approach is evident in the Simpang Raya community's various programs, including cultural events, religious holiday celebrations, social services, and other initiatives. These approaches are bolstered by diversity management, which includes decision-making processes informed by deliberation and the involvement of community leaders, religious leaders, and government officials. It also emphasizes transparency and openness to all ethnicities and religions. The implementation of this diversity management pattern through deliberation is exemplified by activities at the Village Hall, involving religious leaders, community leaders, community representatives, village officials, NGO representatives, and educational institution representatives. Such participation is intended to reinforce the community's role in maintaining social cohesion by instilling the values of religious moderation and tolerance. Furthermore, the involvement of community leaders, religious leaders, and government officials is evident in the partnerships within the Simpang Raya community. These include collaborations with schools, socio-religious institutions, sub-district and village governments, corporate CSR initiatives, and the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

These partnerships extend beyond cultural relations, underpinned by a shared understanding that fostering religious moderation is a collective agenda essential for maintaining harmony and the integrity of the Indonesian nation. These three approaches are employed alternately. Secondly, the framework for fostering religious moderation is established through technical assistance, which serves as a tool for implementing diversity approaches and management. This technical assistance encompasses various strategies and methods designed to effectively disseminate the values of religious moderation within the community. Initially, the concept focuses on inclusive approaches and diversity management strategies tailored to local socio-cultural conditions. Subsequently, this concept is communicated to the community with two primary objectives: first, to align perceptions regarding religious moderation coaching to ensure a shared understanding of its implementation; and second, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the essence of religious moderation, enabling its application in daily life.

To achieve these objectives, a range of strategic activities is undertaken to enhance the understanding and application of religious moderation within society. These activities include creating dialogue forums that bring together various stakeholders, organizing interfaith dialogues to foster harmonious communication, and providing education and training for individuals and groups on the principles of religious moderation. Additionally, periodic monitoring and evaluation are conducted to assess the effectiveness of the implemented programs, replicate successful programs to broaden their positive impact, and provide continuous reinforcement to ensure the sustained development and maintenance of religious moderation values within the community.

Thirdly, the outcomes of religious moderation coaching are evident through various tangible results. The socialization and coaching activities in Simpang Raya have had a significant impact on the local community. One notable outcome is the heightened public awareness of respecting ethnic and religious differences. This mutual respect reflects a deeper understanding of diversity values, thereby reducing the potential for conflict and strengthening social bonds in multiethnic communities. Additionally, this coaching has fostered increased active community participation in social life, particularly in multiethnic settings. The community is more engaged in various activities, including interfaith dialogues, cross-cultural collaborations, and local initiatives that promote social harmony. This participation demonstrates a growing collective awareness that diversity is a valuable asset to be preserved and managed effectively, fostering a peaceful and harmonious society.

Moreover, the coaching has led to more moderate religious behavior within the community. The application of moderation values in religion is increasingly evident in daily life, as seen in the prioritization of tolerance, the upholding of justice, and the rejection of extremism in all its forms. Consequently, the community not only grasps the theoretical concept of religious moderation but also applies it in their social interactions. Overall, the outcomes of this religious moderation coaching contribute to fostering a more inclusive, harmonious, and respectful society. These results underscore that systematic and sustainable coaching efforts can have a profoundly positive impact on the social and religious life of the Simpang Raya community.

## Discussion

This study demonstrates that the multiethnic transmigration community in Simpang Raya District, Banggai Regency, has successfully cultivated religious moderation amidst social diversity, a result of Indonesia's transmigration policy. This community navigates conditions that necessitate adaptation and collaboration among various ethnic groups, including the indigenous population of Simpang Raya. The convergence of these diverse groups has led to significant social heterogeneity; however, this diversity has not resulted in prolonged conflict, mainly due to the emotional bonds that unite the community (Hos et al., 2022). Typically, multiethnic communities in transmigration areas are susceptible to conflict, particularly due to issues such as uncertain land ownership and limited social spaces for intergroup interaction. Economic disparities and cultural differences often exacerbate social tensions. Nevertheless, in Simpang Raya, the potential for conflict has been mitigated through a strategy of religious moderation, which underscores the importance of cultural adaptation and intergroup relations as foundations for social integration (Marchetti & Tocci, 2020).

One strategy for fostering religious moderation and social integration in Simpang Raya is to cultivate strong emotional bonds rooted in shared experiences of facing challenges in a new environment. These bonds are not solely based on kinship or cultural similarities but also on a shared sense of destiny in navigating social and economic changes. This phenomenon aligns with Émile Durkheim's concept of social solidarity, where social integration is built on shared experiences and collective awareness formed through daily interactions (Mishra & Rath, 2020; Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021). In transmigrant communities, successful social integration often depends on the ability of individuals and groups to construct social bridges that bridge existing differences. Interactions in economic activities, education, and participation in social and cultural life in Simpang Raya contribute to the formation of a new collective consciousness, enabling harmonious coexistence despite diverse backgrounds. Thus, the

process of social integration in transmigrant communities involves not only adapting to a new environment but also transforming solidarity from mechanical to organic, as initially described by Durkheim (1912).

As society continually evolves with modern advancements, the life of the Simpang Raya community mirrors these broader societal changes. What was once a strong collective consciousness in traditional society has diversified with increasingly varied divisions of labor. The development of social institutions, government bodies, and industries has rendered the Simpang Raya community more dynamic. Despite their professional commitments, community members continue to engage in cross-cultural and interfaith dialogues. This evolution is also evident in the domains of religion and education. Educational institutions serve as catalysts for social change within the Simpang Raya community. Social institutions, such as education and religion, play a crucial role in shaping social consciousness (Durkheim, 1912). Schools are increasingly relied upon to drive social change, particularly in socio-religious contexts. Initially, religious moderation was fostered in informal social spaces such as places of worship and religious assemblies, but it has since been integrated into the school curriculum. Religious education in schools emphasizes the reinforcement of moderate religious understanding and practice, thereby strengthening social integration in Simpang Raya.

Moreover, religious leaders play a pivotal role in promoting religious moderation within this multiethnic society, acting as guides, advisors, and moral guardians (Karim & Saili, 2015). They advocate for tolerance among Muslim, Christian, and Hindu communities, supported by shared values in their respective theological teachings. The recognition of universal values inherent in each religion enhances interfaith relations, with religious leaders striving for peace and harmony (Alatas, 2021; Faris & Abdalla, 2017). Typically, these individuals are religious leaders who also serve as local figures and educators. Each community strategically places these religious leaders to promote religious moderation within social life (Muridan et al., 2022; Widana & Wirata, 2023). Muslim, Christian, and Hindu groups share a common understanding of the importance of maintaining tolerance and harmony among different religious communities. Despite recognizing the ethnic diversity in transmigration areas, the theological foundations of all religions converge on universal values. These shared theological principles underpin the efforts to sustain interfaith relations.

The collaborative efforts of the government and religious leaders are crucial in ensuring stability, promoting national unity, and fostering open-mindedness in the face of increasing ethnic diversity (Pitoyo & Triwahyudi, 2017). They wield significant social power and influence over society, with religious leaders in Indonesia playing a key role in shaping political and religious policies and advocating for religious moderation (Parhusip, 2024). In Simpang Raya, the approach to developing religious moderation emphasizes participation, partnership, gender inclusivity, and community autonomy. This strategy enhances awareness and encourages moderate religious behavior through innovative social activities (Futaqi & Mashuri, 2022; Sakalli et al., 2021).

To maintain and strengthen social integration through religious moderation in Simpang Raya, it is crucial to cultivate collective awareness for the common good. According to Marx's theory, class consciousness typically opposes the dominance of prevailing cultures and identities (Ware, 2019). However, in the context of Simpang Raya, class consciousness focuses on fostering harmony by emphasizing cooperation, social solidarity, and shared objectives. Inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue plays a crucial role in reinforcing the understanding that all groups share a common interest in building a stable and prosperous community.

Consequently, the dominance of specific identities in Simpang Raya can be effectively and sustainably managed to maintain social integrity.

The development of social integration through religious moderation, involving various stakeholders in the transmigrant and multiethnic communities of Simpang Raya, has a profound long-term impact on multiple aspects of social, economic, and cultural life. By emphasizing tolerance, inclusivity, and cooperation among different religions and ethnicities, religious moderation not only mitigates conflict but also fosters stability and sustainability within the community. The long-term effects of religious moderation in the multiethnic transmigrant community of Simpang Raya are extensive, encompassing social cohesion, economic development, education, the role of social institutions, the prevention of radicalism, and cultural enrichment. With a sustainable approach to maintaining interreligious and interethnic harmony, Simpang Raya can serve as a model for other regions in cultivating an inclusive, peaceful, and sustainable society.

## Conclusion

The study's main findings reveal that individuals from diverse backgrounds in Simpang Raya significantly contribute to promoting religious moderation through various avenues, including places of worship, educational institutions, cultural events, government service centers, and direct community engagement. These individuals transcend specific groups or religions, embracing a holistic and inclusive approach to religious moderation. The concept developed in this study is grounded in four key approaches: participation, gender, partnership, and independence.

The effectiveness of these figures in fostering religious moderation is closely linked to their ability to cultivate collective consciousness (Durkheim) and class consciousness (Karl Marx). By fostering emotional bonds within society, they create a shared consciousness that enhances social harmony, peace, and interfaith tolerance. Educational institutions play a crucial role as strategic agents of social change, educating the younger generation on the values of religious moderation. Additionally, the influence and control wielded by religious leaders, along with their role in facilitating dialogue, are crucial to promoting inclusive religious moderation.

In Simpang Raya District, religious leaders serve not only as spiritual guides but also as agents of social change, fostering a tolerant and open society. However, this research contributes to demographic and social studies by providing an overview and analysis of how to build diversity and peace through religious moderation in multiethnic regions. The study has limitations, including an insufficient analysis of external factors that affect religious moderation, reliance on qualitative methods without quantitative comparisons, and a limited portrayal of long-term attitude changes in a multiethnic transmigration community.

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