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STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN MULTICULTURAL INDONESIA: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN EAST NUSA TENGGARA AND BALI

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Abstract

This study aims to analyse the understanding and implementation of religious moderation in maintaining harmony among diverse groups and strengthening national unity and integrity in a multi-ethnic society, with a focus on the regions of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali. This research employed descriptive qualitative methods, collecting data through observation, documentation, and interviews. Data triangulation techniques were then used to analyse the data systematically. Additionally, during data analysis, the author used the VosViewer application to track previous research related to the discussed themes. The results showed that the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali generally had a good understanding of religious moderation. Various efforts and strategies to promote religious moderation had been implemented, yielding positive results that needed to be sustained, especially in the context of multiethnic societies. However, intolerant attitudes were still found in some areas, especially towards Muslims who are in a minority position in Kupang and some places in Bali. This finding confirms the importance of strengthening multiculturalism-based religious moderation programmes to build social harmony amid the nation's plurality.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pemahaman dan implementasi sikap moderasi beragama dalam menjaga harmoni keberagaman serta memperkuat persatuan dan kesatuan bangsa di tengah masyarakat multi-etnis, dengan fokus pada wilayah Nusa Tenggara Timur dan Bali. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Teknik triangulasi data kemudian digunakan untuk menganalisis data secara sistematis. Selain itu, dalam melakukan analisis data, penulis juga menggunakan aplikasi VosViewers untuk melacak penelitian terdahulu terkait tema yang dibahas. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa masyarakat Nusa Tenggara Timur dan Bali pada umumnya memiliki pemahaman yang baik tentang moderasi beragama. Berbagai upaya dan strategi penguatan sikap moderasi beragama telah diimplementasikan, dengan hasil positif yang perlu terus dipertahankan, terutama dalam konteks kehidupan multi-etnis. Namun demikian, sikap intoleransi masih ditemukan di beberapa daerah, terutama terhadap Muslim yang berada dalam posisi minoritas di Kupang dan beberapa tempat di Bali. Temuan ini menegaskan pentingnya penguatan program-program moderasi beragama berbasis multikulturalisme untuk membangun harmoni sosial di tengah kemajemukan bangsa.



Background

The attitude of religious moderation is a crucial aspect that the people of Indonesia must adopt to maintain the nation's diversity.¹ The heterogeneity of the nation is a reality that must be accepted and addressed properly, and utilized as a unifying force for national unity.² National diversity, such as ethnic and cultural diversity in the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali, is a necessity.³ Therefore, religious moderation needs to be continuously socialized so that it can be implemented to maintain harmony,⁴ and peace in the life of the nation and state.⁵

Religious moderation is a moderate approach to religious perspective, attitude, and behavior, characterized by faithful adherents to their religious teachings and also respect for the beliefs of others.⁶ Subchi et al. said that religious moderation can foster the development of a nation that is plural in terms of religion and ethnicity.⁷ Religious moderation is a crucial attitude that all religious adherents should cultivate. It is carried out to cultivate a tolerant attitude and respect for people of different religions, and to prevent the development of radical attitudes.⁸

Religious moderation also means practicing religion in moderation. Moderation is an attitude that rejects harsh and extreme expressions or behavior.⁹ Moderation is

¹ Edriagus Saputra et al., "Living Hadith: Concept, Role, and Development in Indonesia," *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 148 – 62, <https://doi.org/10.30983/it.v8i2.8884>.

² Arwansyah Kirin et al., "Crying From a Religious Perspective and Its Impact on the Physical Health of the Public Servant Communities," *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences (PJLSS)* 22, no. 2 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.57239/PJLSS-2024-22.2.00769>.

³ Martyn Percy, "Anglican Cathedrals in a Secular Society: David Martin and the Sociology of English Religion," *Society* 57, no. 2 (April 16, 2020): 140 – 46, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-020-00457-8>.

⁴ Madiyono Madiyono and Mochamad Ziaul Haq, "Integritas Terbuka Sebagai Pendekatan Baru Dialog Antariman Dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama," *Integritas Terbuka: Peace and Interfaith Studies* 2, no. 1 (April 29, 2023): 1 – 16, <https://doi.org/10.59029/int.v2i1.11>.

⁵ M Mukhibat, Ainul Nurhidayati Istiqomah, and Nurul Hidayah, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia (Wacana Dan Kebijakan)," *Southeast Asian Journal of Islamic Education Management* 4, no. 1 (August 6, 2023): 73 – 88, <https://doi.org/10.21154/sajiem.v4i1.133>.

⁶ Andika Ronggo Gumuruh, "Religious Moderation in The Context of Pancasila: A Study of Role and The Impact Is Deep Maintaining Social Harmony," *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Humaniora* 9, no. 1 (June 8, 2023): 1 – 19, <https://doi.org/10.35719/islamikainside.v9i1.243>.

⁷ Imam Subchi et al., "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims," *Religions* 13, no. 5 (May 17, 2022): 451, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>.

⁸ Gumuruh, "Religious Moderation in The Context of Pancasila: A Study of Role and The Impact Is Deep Maintaining Social Harmony."

⁹ Edriagus Saputra et al., "Peran Filsafat Sebagai Mobilisasi Perkembangan Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Kajian Dan Pengembangan Umat* 7, no. 2 (December 31, 2024): 108 – 17, <https://doi.org/10.31869/jkpu.v7i2.5927>.

the opposite of being arrogant,¹⁰ and harmonious relationships between fellow human beings.¹¹ Indeed, humans were sent to Earth to be stewards, not caliphs, to ensure that all of God's creatures could live there. Moderate is aligned with the words *al-tawassut* (neutral), *al-I'tidal* (fair), and the like.¹²

Religious moderation is a moderate approach to practicing the teachings of a person's religion in a diverse society that encompasses various religions and ethnicities.¹³ Religious moderation can also be referred to as *tawasut* in Arabic, which signifies an attitude of not siding with the extreme or moderate *madzhab*.¹⁴ Rather, it favors the common good for the sake of achieving religious goals, namely Peace, harmony, brotherhood, and the pleasure of the Creator.¹⁵ The term *tawasut* is a characteristic of Islam that has a strong affinity for local values,¹⁶ encompassing both cultural and customary aspects.¹⁷ Religious moderation is an effort to moderate the behavior of religious adherents, so they are not trapped in two extremes: being too strict or too loose in understanding and practicing their religious teachings.¹⁸

Through religious moderation, religious adherents are expected to be more stable in their understanding and belief in their religion, accompanied by openness

¹⁰ Hadi Pajarianto, Imam Pribadi, and Puspa Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 4 (January 1, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i4.7043>.

¹¹ Rohmat Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (June 19, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8592>.

¹² Irawan Irawan, "Al-Tawassut Waal-I'tidal: Menjawab Tantangan Liberalisme Dan Konservatisme Islam," *Afkaruna* 14, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.18196/AIJIS.2018.0080.49-74>.

¹³ Paul Paolucci, "Marx's Method of Successive Abstractions and a Historical-Materialist Sociology of Religion," *Critical Sociology* 46, no. 1 (January 11, 2020): 19–35, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920518809843>.

¹⁴ Rahmadi Rahmadi, Akhmad Syahbudin, and Mahyuddin Barni, "Tafsir Ayat Wasathiyah dalam Al-Qur'an Dan Implikasinya Dalam Konteks Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2023): 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.18592/jiiu.v22i1.8572>.

¹⁵ Husnul Khotimah et al., "Strengthening The Concept of Religious Moderation for Teenagers Through Short Film," in *ICOE: The Annual International Conference on Education*, vol. 1 (Kediri: Faculty of Tarbiyah IAIN Kediri, 2023), 183–92.

¹⁶ Dani Sartika, "Islam Moderat Antara Konsep Dan Praksis Di Indonesia," *Tsamratul Fikri / Jurnal Studi Islam* 14, no. 2 (February 8, 2021): 183, <https://doi.org/10.36667/tf.v14i2.532>.

¹⁷ Abd Hannan, "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Madura Melalui Jejaring Sosial Keagamaan Pesantren," *Islamika Inside: Jurnal Keislaman Dan Humaniora* 8, no. 1 (June 1, 2022): 30–59, <https://doi.org/10.35719/islamikainside.v8i1.175>.

¹⁸ Elly Warnisyah Harahap, Sufriyansyah S, and Wedi Samsudi, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Islam," *Edukais : Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (December 21, 2023): 61–80, <https://doi.org/10.61595/edukais.2023.7.2.61-80>.

of views and attitudes (inclusive),¹⁹ respect for differences in interpretation of their religious teachings,²⁰ and respect for other parties who have different religious beliefs.²¹ Even with these different parties, they actively seek common ground and cooperate to build national integrity, create social harmony, and promote national peace.²²

Religious moderation is an effort undertaken by the government and religious leaders to maintain religious harmony in communities with diverse ethnicities and cultures in Indonesia, such as East Nusa Tenggara and Bali.²³ The development and socialization of religious moderation in society are crucial to be carried out among all components of the nation to minimize the problems that exist in society, by harnessing the local wisdom of the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali.²⁴ The implementation of religious moderation among the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali, characterized by their plural ethnicities and religions, can be replicated in Indonesia. Hindus and Balinese stay harmoniously with Muslims in Bali, demonstrating religious moderation. This is evident from the preliminary review; however, the author will conduct in-depth research on the religious lives of Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims in both provinces.

The culture that the people in a region always uphold is called local wisdom.²⁵ It is so-called because culture is the result of human innovation, taste, and creation, so that it becomes a life guide that is trusted for generations.²⁶ Culture as local

¹⁹ Yusuf Hanafi et al., "Students' Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (July 19, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7638>.

²⁰ Aep Saepudin et al., "Strengthening Character Education: An Action Research in Forming Religious Moderation in Islamic Education," *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research* 22, no. 12 (December 30, 2023): 84–105, <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.22.12.5>.

²¹ Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia."

²² Hanafi et al., "Students' Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes."

²³ Suprapto Suprapto, "Sasak Muslims and Interreligious Harmony: Ethnographic Study of the Perang Topat Festival in Lombok - Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 11, no. 1 (July 9, 2017): 77, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2017.11.1.77-98>.

²⁴ Putera Astomo and Tongat, "The Local Wisdom Of The Tribal Community Of Mandar In Utilizing Rivers Seen From The Perspective Of Human," *Community Practitioner* 21, no. 6 (2024): 2065–80, [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12516064](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.12516064).

²⁵ Julaikha Julaikha, Edi Safri, and Taufiqurrahman Taufiqurrahman, "Acculturation of Local Culture and Religion in the Leklek-an Tradition in the Sei Kepayang Asahan Community," *Al-Qalam* 27, no. 2 (December 1, 2021): 325, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v27i2.970>.

²⁶ Nurul Izzah and Setia Budhi, "Makna Dan Nilai Kearifan Lokal Pada Tradisi Mallasuang Manu' Masyarakat Mandar Di Kabupaten Kotabaru," *Huma: Jurnal Sosiologi* 3, no. 1 (February 19, 2024): 87–98, <https://doi.org/10.20527/h-js.v3i1.196>.

wisdom is understood as a manifestation of a wise and prudent human being who has compiled and established guidelines for the benefit of human life, in the form of objects, customs, language, and even theological issues. Local aspects of society can serve as the glue that ties a community together, fosters a sense of identity, culture, and shares community customs.²⁷

Local wisdom refers to the culture that guides a place, encompasses local knowledge, intelligence, or genius.²⁸ It is interpreted as such because it is the result of the creativity and pure reasoning of the local community, which has positive values that can be applied in community life as a guide for living.

In social activities, religious and cultural norms can coexist and be practiced to establish togetherness and interfaith harmony in the community.²⁹ Various Indonesian cultures can serve as the glue that binds community life together by being practiced in society.³⁰ Indonesia can serve as a unifying force for the nation by embracing its varied cultures and ethnic groups as a cohesive force in society.³¹

Culture, as a result of the work and creation of ancestors, is essential to be maintained and preserved because it is a legacy from the ancestors. In social and religious life, every citizen has to maintain culture and be strong in today's culture, which must be practiced and passed on to children and grandchildren.³² Every society

²⁷ Chunxuan Shen and Wenying Jiang, "Parents' Planning, Children's Agency and Heritage Language Education: Re-Storying the Language Experiences of Three Chinese Immigrant Families in Australia," *Frontiers in Psychology* 13 (January 6, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1083813>.

²⁸ Rinda Fauzian et al., "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Dalam Upaya Membentuk Sikap Moderat Siswa Madrasah," *AL-WIJIDN Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 6, no. 1 (June 27, 2021): 1 – 14, <https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v6i1.933>.

²⁹ Rafael Ruiz Andrūs, "Historical Sociology and Secularisation: The Political Use of 'Culturalised Religion' by the Radical Right in Spain," *Journal of Historical Sociology* 35, no. 2 (June 11, 2022): 250 – 63, <https://doi.org/10.1111/johs.12369>.

³⁰ Yuni Pratiwi et al., "Representing and Implementing Moral Values to Foreign Students in Indonesian Textbooks for Learners Other Than Indonesians," *International Journal of Language Education* 1, no. 1 (March 31, 2023): 58, <https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v1i1.36256>; Yulina Eva Riany, Pamela Meredith, and Monica Cuskelly, "Understanding the Influence of Traditional Cultural Values on Indonesian Parenting," *Marriage & Family Review* 53, no. 3 (April 3, 2017): 207 – 26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2016.1157561>.

³¹ Stephen H. Jones et al., "What Science Means to Me: Understanding Personal Identification with (Evolutionary) Science Using the Sociology of (Non)Religion," *Public Understanding of Science* 29, no. 6 (August 17, 2020): 579 – 96, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963662520923110>.

³² Percy, "Anglican Cathedrals in a Secular Society: David Martin and the Sociology of English Religion"; Yongping Wang, "Rupture and Continuity: Scholar-Official Clan Culture in the Six Dynasties and the Legacy of Chinese Civilization," *Frontiers of History in China* 5, no. 4 (2010): 549 – 75, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11462-010-0111-y>.

has a complex culture that can be used as an asset to build the nation and society.³³ The strategies for strengthening religious moderation can be seen in these four aspects: maintaining harmonious relationships with others, respecting differences in beliefs, being tolerant and rejecting fanaticism, and thinking ahead.³⁴

This research aims to investigate the level of understanding among the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali towards religious moderation, as well as the efforts and strategies being made to strengthen attitudes and maintain religious moderation in society. This is a step towards preserving ethnic diversity, religious harmony, and cultural customs in Indonesia.

East Nusa Tenggara and Bali are regions in Indonesia that are diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture. Based on BPS 2022 data, the population of East Nusa Tenggara is 5,466,285 people, with 53.74% identifying as Catholic, 36.82% as Christian, and 9.25% as Muslim. The remaining population consists of Hindus (0.18%) and Buddhists (0.01%). East Nusa Tenggara is an area with a heterogeneous society, comprising dozens of ethnic groups that speak more than 100 dialects and have diverse customs and traditions. Bali also boasts a diverse array of ethnic groups, languages, and cultures, comprising the Balinese, Javanese, Bugis, Malay, Chinese, and other ethnicities. The population by religion consists of a majority of Hindus (86.59%), Muslims (10.16%), Christians (1.71%), Catholics (0.84%), Buddhists (0.68%), and Confucians (0.01%). In this case, it is essential to continue making efforts to socialize and foster a moderate attitude in a pluralistic society.

Bali is known as a Hindu city; on the other hand, it is also known as the city of Wali Pitu, which differs from the tomb of Walisongo, representing a form of religious moderation. In addition, Bali is also renowned as an international tourist destination and a spiritual hub, featuring statue-shaped temples that attract visitors from diverse cultures, religions, and countries.

Based on the results of research relevant to the topic of this article, the author found several related studies: first, research from Elizabeth Hateyong and Ignasius Samson Sudirman Refo entitled "Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Higher Education Environment of STPAK ST. John the Evangelist Ambon and IAIN Ambon" mainly focuses on improving students' understanding of religious moderation in the context of Indonesia's diverse cultural and religious landscape. The theoretical framework was based on the principles of dialogue and tolerance, which are essential for maintaining social harmony in a pluralistic society, particularly in Maluku, where historical conflicts have highlighted the need for such understanding. The research

³³ Percy, "Anglican Cathedrals in a Secular Society: David Martin and the Sociology of English Religion."

³⁴ Saepudin et al., "Strengthening Character Education: An Action Research in Forming Religious Moderation in Islamic Education."

employed a participatory methodology, incorporating seminars and collaborative discussions that involved students from STPAK and IAIN Ambon, enabling them to explore the concept of religious moderation through an interactive learning experience.

The results revealed a significant increase in students' understanding of religious moderation, as they not only grasped theoretical concepts but also identified practical challenges associated with diversity within their communities. The findings suggest that the program has effectively fostered an inclusive mindset among students, preparing them to act as agents of social harmony and promote interfaith dialogue, which is crucial for strengthening community cohesion in the Maluku region.³⁵

Second, research conducted by Abd Hannan entitled "Strengthening Religious Moderation in Madura Through the Pesantren Religious Network" focuses on the dynamics of religious moderation in Madurese society, particularly through the lens of pesantren, which are Islamic boarding schools. The theoretical framework was based on social network theory, as proposed by John Arundel Barnes, emphasizing the role of pesantren as an important institution in shaping religious practices and beliefs in the region. The research employed a qualitative methodology, primarily utilizing secondary data from a literature review to gather insights on the subject matter. The results showed that pesantren serves as an important center for *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) and religious education, and influences the Islamic patterns and behaviors of Madurese people. The study highlighted that pesantren social capital and extensive religious networks play an important role in promoting and strengthening religious moderation. Furthermore, the findings revealed that the pesantren's inclusive and dynamic approach to Islam aligns with *wasathiyah* principles, which advocate for moderation and tolerance in religious practice. This research highlights the importance of leveraging existing social networks within pesantren to cultivate a more moderate and inclusive religious environment in Madura, and addresses the contemporary challenges posed by fundamentalist ideologies.³⁶

Third, research from Ramli focuses on the dynamics of religious moderation among Chinese Muslim ethnic minorities in Makassar, with an emphasis on the interaction between cultural assimilation and religious identity. The theoretical framework was based on the concept of *wasatiyah*, which promotes a balanced and

³⁵ Elizabeth Hateyong and Ignasius Samson Sudirman Refo, "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Lingkungan Perguruan Tinggi STPAK ST. Yohanes Penginjil Ambon Dan IAIN Ambon," *Jurnal Abdidas* 6, no. 1 (2025): 24–32, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31004/abdidas.v6i1.1091>.

³⁶ Hannan, "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Madura Melalui Jejaring Sosial Keagamaan Pesantren."

moderate approach to religious teachings, drawn from the Qur'an and as-Sunnah. The research methods employed include a qualitative analysis of the experiences and practices of the Chinese Muslim community, highlighting their distinctive position within the diverse cultural landscape of Makassar, a city renowned for its heterogeneity and multiculturalism. The results showed that ethnic Chinese Muslims had successfully established harmonious relationships within their community and with other religious groups, thereby fostering an environment of peace and tolerance. The findings revealed that the development of religious moderation involves various components, including cultural considerations and community engagement, which are essential for enhancing the understanding and implementation of peaceful religious practices among minority groups. This comprehensive approach not only addresses the challenges faced by Chinese ethnic Muslims but also contributes to the broader discourse on religious coexistence in multicultural societies.³⁷

This article describes the understanding of the people in East Nusa Tenggara and Bali, as well as the strategy to strengthen religious moderation in both regions. The article discusses three important discussions, namely, first, the community's understanding of religious moderation; second, the strategy of strengthening religious moderation, and third, the form of enhancing religious moderation is maintained and maintained in East Nusa Tenggara and Bali.

Research Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the practice of religious moderation in-depth within a multicultural society. The research locations focused on Kupang in East Nusa Tenggara and Denpasar in Bali, which were chosen purposively because they both represented highly diverse areas and Muslim communities as minority groups. This provides a strategic context in examining the dynamics of tolerance amid the dominance of the majority religion. A total of 20 informants participated, comprising 16 men and four women, aged 35-60 years. They included religious leaders (Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism), employees of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (in the field of Hajj and Islamic Education), as well as citizens from majority and minority groups. This variety of backgrounds aimed to gain a comprehensive perspective on the understanding and implementation of religious moderation. Data was collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation, in a semi-structured format that allowed informants to reveal personal views, including sensitive issues such as intolerance and barriers to the establishment of houses of worship. The validity of the data was strengthened through the triangulation technique, which involved combining sources, methods,

³⁷ Ramli Ramli, "Moderasi Beragama Bagi Minoritas Muslim Etnis Tionghoa Di Kota Makassar," *KURIOSITAS: Media Komunikasi Sosial Dan Keagamaan* 12, no. 2 (December 5, 2019): 135 – 62, <https://doi.org/10.35905/kur.v12i2.1219>.

and contexts, thereby allowing for cross-verification of findings from diverse backgrounds. This approach also enabled the identification of common patterns and local differences between regions. The researchers also used *the VosViewer* application to search relevant past literature, to enrich the theoretical framework, and ensure the linkage between field data and broader academic discourse.

Result and Discussion

Public Understanding of Multi-Ethnic-Based Religious Moderation in Nusa Tenggara and Bali

In general, the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali have a good understanding of religious moderation and have implemented it in religious and community activities.³⁸ However, despite all of that, there are still attitudes and behaviours that go against religious moderation since a tiny portion of the population does not understand it.³⁹

Understanding religious moderation was quite prevalent among the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali, as well as the various religious and community activities practiced by different religious and tribal groups in Kupang and Denpasar. Religious and community activities were running smoothly, and there was an atmosphere of mutual respect and assistance in various aspects of society. For example, activities to welcome Hajj pilgrims and *Musabaqoh Tilawatil Qur'an* (MTQ) involve interfaith and tribal committees. This success suggests that religious moderation is an effective approach to achieving peace.⁴⁰

The serious efforts to promote moderate attitudes in society have led to a better public knowledge of religious moderation. This is proven by the implementation of good religious moderation, which was known from an interview with a Muslim resident of Kupang, who stated that the people in Kupang were moderate in religion and society, one of which was reflected in life, where the people were very harmonious and side by side, carried out the teachings of their respective religions without any problems. Apart from that, Kupang also has houses of worship, churches, and mosques.⁴¹

³⁸ Yosep Belen Keban and Susana Soi Leton, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Dalam Penguatan Wawasan Kebangsaan Pada Era Disrupsi Di SD Inpres Ekasapta Larantuka," *NALAR: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Kebudayaan* 2, no. 1 (April 17, 2023): 1–8, <https://doi.org/10.56444/nalar.v2i1.372>.

³⁹ Hudayan Nur, the Head of the Hajj and Umrah Section, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Kupang City, *Interview*, July 2, 2024.

⁴⁰ Ummi, Officer, Islamic Education Section, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Denpasar City, *Interview*, July 11, 2024.

⁴¹ Farhan Syuhuda, a Lecturer at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kupang and Coordinator of the Presidium, KAHMI East Nusa Tenggara, *Interview*, July 2, 2024

Furthermore, a good form of understanding was a good attitude of religious moderation in organizing religious holidays, carried out with good cooperation and mutual respect, such as by offering congratulations to each other between religious adherents, in celebrating the Eid al-Fitr holiday, for example, with assistance from Christian groups in terms of maintaining religious diversity and helping to park the congregation.

Strategy for Strengthening Religious Moderation Attitudes Based on Ethnic Diversity in Nusa Tenggara and Bali

Based on the results of interviews conducted regarding efforts and strategies to strengthen religious moderation, it is evident that both the government and religious leaders have implemented these initiatives in the wider community, both within government offices and in the broader community. Activities carried out to strengthen the attitudes of religious moderation among interfaith communities in society include promoting socialization of religious moderation and inter-religious harmony.

Strengthening attitudes of religious moderation was achieved by embracing and empowering community customs and culture amidst differences. Traditional and cultural norms were used to glue and foster brotherhood between residents in the East Nusa Tenggara and Bali regions. Empowerment of customs and culture is carried out in the community through joint activities, where various traditional community activities are held together, promoting unity and inclusivity.

The strategy to strengthen religious moderation was also carried out through interfaith activities, for example, the celebration of the Birthday of the Republic of Indonesia on August 17 every year, where all elements of society participate, including every tribe and religion. Islamic religious activities, such as mass circumcisions, also involved Christians to make their events a success, even Christian children were also circumcised, which proved the efforts made by the government to strengthen attitudes of religious moderation. Other community groups' efforts to promote religious moderation included approaching the government to act fairly towards all religious adherents, such as by making it easier to establish places of worship by publishing areas that were more conducive to worship.

The next effort to promote attitudes of religious moderation is to campaign for it, primarily by visiting villages and establishing groups in the areas visited. This involved distributing materials that highlight the importance of maintaining religious freedom, promoting positive attitudes towards religion, addressing environmental concerns, and combating human trafficking.

Religious moderation was well implemented in the East Nusa Tenggara area, where religious adherents coexisted and respected one another through participation

in community and religious activities carried out together, disregarded religious and ethnic differences, and by inviting and mingling with each other in society.

The efforts to promote attitudes of religious moderation continued to be encouraged in East Nusa Tenggara and Bali through interfaith activities, such as cleanliness initiatives involving all residents of certain regions, regardless of their ethnicities and religions. Village/subdistrict environmental cleanliness activities were regularly organized and mobilized by residents, who invited other residents in the area to participate.

The efforts and strategies to foster a moderate attitude in Bali were spearheaded by Hindus, who constituted the majority, thereby providing opportunities for followers of other religions to practice their teachings without hindrance. This is an effort to increase attitudes of religious moderation by prioritizing national interests in carrying out religious and social life.

The efforts to promote religious moderation in Bali were also carried out through educational activities and training of religious teachers within the Ministry of Religion of Denpasar City. By disseminating religious moderation materials, various public figures were also available in Islamic schools to contribute to social and religious life; they participated in activities such as halal bi halal events organized by Muslims, where Muslims invited non-Muslims and engaged in mingling with one another.

Overall, activities to strengthen the attitudes of religious moderation that must be maintained are the well-ordered social and religious life of community members, as well as the establishment of cooperation and interaction among people of various religions and ethnic groups. In improving life, religious moderation is carried out using a traditional and cultural approach, by encouraging community members to coexist harmoniously in diversity. Reform is established between communities through mutual invitations, such as during wedding party activities, where food is specially prepared for invitees of various religions.

Activities to Strengthen Multi-Ethnic-Based Religious Moderation Must Continue to Be Maintained in Indonesia

Activities that strengthen attitudes of religious moderation, which must be maintained, include the creation of a harmonious and peaceful society, characterized by diversity and mutual respect in the practice of each other's religions. Such conditions are created by sustainable efforts and strategies to strengthen attitudes of religious moderation in various areas of social life.

The implementation of religious moderation is fairly effective in the Denpasar area, Bali. The community life performs well, and members of all ethnic groups and faiths accept one another when they worship their respective religions. In our daily activities, tolerance is extraordinary, especially in areas where we uphold harmony

between religious adherents. Even a researcher from another UIN (State Islamic University) studied religious harmony in our community. Three universities -UIN Jakarta, UIN Semarang, and IHDN Bali Denpasar- even participated in one activity, KKL Bersama (Fieldwork Together). Twenty students from these three universities participated in this roughly three-month-long engagement, which included a variety of cooperative initiatives in both religious and public contexts.

In Serangan District, the effort to strengthen the attitude of religious moderation had been going fairly well. A number of activities have been carried out collaboratively, and communities have worked together to make religious events successful. For example, the distribution of sacrificial meat to Hindu citizens on Eid al-Adha and *takbiran* to welcome Eid al-Fitr, which are followed and attended by community members and Hindu religious leaders like *pecalang*.

The strengthening of attitudes towards religious moderation in East Nusa Tenggara and Bali was well-founded, based on the empowerment of customs and culture. These two factors were used as tools to unite people of different religions and ethnic groups. Brotherhood is established through the practice of community customs and culture.

Religious life in Balinese society runs in harmony, with understanding and respect for each other, even within families of different religions. Even though they were a minority area, in social life, they helped each other, for example, during Ramadan fasting carried out by Muslims. The non-Muslim residents also helped make donations in the form of food, drinks, and so on, as well as Eid al-Fitr prayers. Christians also helped with safety and vehicle parking. In the same way, when Christians held religious holidays, Muslims also helped and worked together to celebrate and maintain their safety and comfort. In social life, there was also blending, even intermarriage, between followers of different religions.

Religious life is progressing smoothly in East Nusa Tenggara, with harmony among believers of all religions. Their marriage and family relationships are established, as are their Christian and Islamic relationships. The diversity between religious communities is also progressing well. When Christians build churches, Muslims help, and when Muslims build mosques, Christians often join in. In this case, they assist each other in the financial sector and collaborate on development projects. Every commemoration and celebration of religious holidays, both Islamic and Christian, as well as Catholic, also helps one another. A joint interfaith committee is formed, and the committees collaborate. The Eid al-Fitr activity involves a committee of Christians, while the Christmas celebration consists of a committee of Muslims.

Likewise, the religious life of Denpasar residents is starting to flourish, with social interactions between followers of different religions, such as the celebration of

the Muslim Sacrifice holiday in Eid al-Adha. During the distribution of sacrificial meat, everyone gets a share, as do Hindus around the Sacrificial location.

The life of religious moderation in Dauh Puri Kaja Village, a small village in Bali, is going quite well. Interaction between residents is happening smoothly, and religious and community activities are running smoothly. Respect is shown among residents, as well as in interactions between young people of different religions and ethnicities. They interact in a youth institution called Karang Taruna.

However, apart from all that, there are research findings that contradict the conditions above. From the results of field investigations, it is evident that certain attitudes among community members in both East Nusa Tenggara and Bali do not reflect a moderate religious stance. One respondent stated that Muslims in Kupang, which is a minority, experience several obstacles in carrying out religious activities and establishing places of worship.⁴² Disrespect for one another is prevalent, as are numerous disrespectful attitudes between Muslims who are minorities and followers of the main religion. In Kupang, there were also riots around 1998; several mosques were attacked, and Muslim residents were also attacked. Still, Muslims did not respond by attacking, choosing to defend themselves so that there would be no bigger riots. Based on information from respondents, the cooperation between residents has been evident in social interactions; however, in certain locations, a shift has occurred, leading to an attitude of intolerance and a lack of respect for one another. People no longer respect one another.

In some locations, there are also predominantly Christian communities that are less tolerant of other faiths. When riots occurred in Kupang C in 1998, many Muslims chose to return home, and this had an impact on the economy in Kupang, because the majority of Muslims worked as traders. One example of an intolerant attitude is the sale of pork-based dishes in public places and around Muslim settlements, even though Muslims did not like the aroma of these dishes; on the part of Christians, they still sold them, and there is no solution for it. Once Kupang Muslims brought in an ustaz from outside East Nusa Tenggara, several obstacles arose in the *da'wah* activities carried out. During the construction of mosques in several areas, issues with permits and rejections from Christians around the construction site arose. For instance, the residents rejected the Alfaidah mosque, and existing mosques, which were small, could not be enlarged due to resistance from the local community.⁴³ Similar cases also occurred in other areas in Indonesia, such as West Sumatra. Recent cases in secondary schools show the emergence of disturbing attitudes and have the

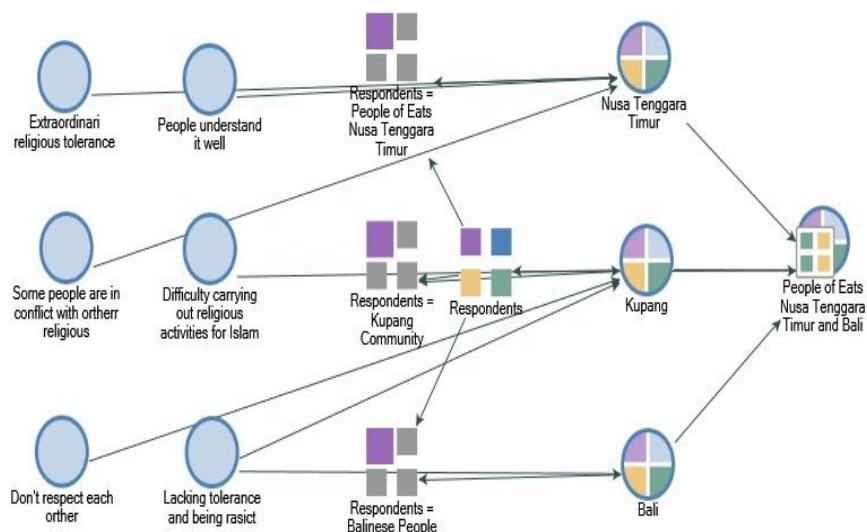
⁴² Pajarianto, Pribadi, and Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation."

⁴³ Ibrahim Kalipang, an Islamic Leader in Alak Urban Village, Kupang City, *Interview*, July 3, 2024.

potential to threaten inter-religious harmony. For example, the case of a non-Muslim student who was forced to wear the hijab at a vocational school.⁴⁴

The situation of the minority Muslim population in the Bali area is similarly challenging. It is quite difficult to get authorisation to build places of worship since Muslims in Bali are a defeatist minority. In Bali, some Muslim places of worship are referred to as prayer rooms since it is hard to get permission to build mosques, and even if there are mosques, they can't be named mosques; they have to be called prayer rooms. Other respondents said that it is well known that some Hindu communities in Bali continue to have discriminatory and intolerant attitudes towards adherents of other faiths. Bali has also seen a number of instances of intolerance, including the dismantling of several Muslim houses of worship by Hindus without their consent.

Figure 1: East Nusa Tenggara and Bali Community Interview Test Results



Source: NVivo 12 Plus Data Test Results

Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the people of East Nusa Tenggara and Bali generally have a good understanding of religious moderation. However, a small number still lack a deep understanding of this concept. This is reflected in a harmonious social life, although there are still some cases that conflict with the principle of religious moderation, especially in relations between the majority and minority groups. The efforts to promote religious moderation are carried out through traditional and cultural approaches, which play a crucial role in strengthening ties between communities. Social integration based on local wisdom

⁴⁴ Saepudin et al., "Strengthening Character Education: An Action Research in Forming Religious Moderation in Islamic Education."

values is the main strategy in instilling an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences. This measure needs to continue to be developed to prevent the radicalism and intolerance that still arise in some regions. Various activities have been undertaken to promote and foster attitudes of religious moderation, including inter-religious dialogue, inclusive religious education, and inter-religious and ethnic cooperation. However, challenges remain, particularly for Muslims as a minority who face difficulties in carrying out religious activities and establishing places of worship. Thus, it is necessary to keep bolstering religious moderation in order to make Indonesian religious life more inclusive and peaceful.

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