

ANALYSIS OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION UNDERSTANDING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN WEST JAVA

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Abstract

In Indonesia, religious moderation is crucial for it promotes tolerance and prevents the growth of extreme ideas, especially among the younger population. Despite its significance, there is a lack of study on students' comprehension of religious moderation in areas like West Java, where intolerance is more prevalent and leaves a void in discussing educational tactics to raise awareness. This study aimed to assess how West Javan students perceive religious moderation and investigate methods for improving their knowledge and utilization of its tenets. The study employed a descriptive quantitative approach; data were gathered from 1,200 students actively involved in campus organizations at five West Javan universities. Questions about national identity, religious behaviors, and religious moderation were included in surveys disseminated using Google Forms. Clustering techniques were used to group student response patterns, and descriptive statistics, such as mean analysis, were used to evaluate general tendencies. The results highlighted the necessity for focused interventions, showing that while 43% of students lack adequate understanding, 57% of students comprehend religious moderation. There are, however, still gaps in addressing misunderstandings and extremism susceptibility despite the broad acceptance of Pancasila as a unifying concept and the general support for diversity and tolerance. These findings underscored the need for specialized educational programs that enhance students' ability to foster tolerance and unity while highlighting students' potential as agents of inclusion and harmony. Future studies should therefore concentrate on evaluating the success of these initiatives, comparing different geographical areas, and investigating how social media affects students' attitudes toward religious moderation.

Keywords: Religious Tolerance, Religious Moderation, Religious Understanding, University Students

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis data terkait pemahaman moderasi agama dan upaya memperkuat pemahaman moderasi agama di kalangan mahasiswa di kampus-kampus di Jawa Barat. Melalui pendekatan interdisipliner yang melibatkan pendidikan, dialog antaragama, dan partisipasi aktif dalam kegiatan sosial, makalah ini menggambarkan berbagai strategi yang dapat diterapkan untuk mencapai tujuan tersebut. Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam studi ini adalah pendekatan kuantitatif deskriptif. Responden dalam studi ini adalah mahasiswa dari lima universitas di Jawa Barat, berjumlah total 1200 mahasiswa, yang aktif dalam organisasi mahasiswa baik secara internal maupun eksternal di kampus. Data dikumpulkan melalui survei menggunakan Google Forms, dan instrumen penelitian didistribusikan dalam bentuk kuesioner terkait wawasan moderasi agama, wawasan kebangsaan, dan wawasan religius. Data kemudian diproses menggunakan metode pengelompokan (clustering), yang membagi data menjadi kelompok-kelompok berdasarkan kesamaan data. Hasil penelitian ini menggambarkan potret menarik tentang moderasi agama di kalangan mahasiswa di Jawa Barat, yang tercermin melalui tiga aspek utama: wawasan moderasi agama, wawasan kebangsaan, dan wawasan religius. Secara keseluruhan, hasil studi ini mengonfirmasi bahwa mahasiswa di Jawa Barat mewakili potret intens moderasi agama, yang mencakup aspek wawasan moderasi agama, wawasan kebangsaan, dan wawasan religius. Temuan ini memberikan pandangan optimis mengenai peran mahasiswa dalam membangun masyarakat yang harmonis dan toleran serta menunjukkan pentingnya pendidikan dan kesadaran dalam membentuk moderasi agama di kalangan generasi muda.

Kata Kunci: *Mahasiswa, Moderasi Beragama, Pemahaman Agama, Toleransi Beragama*

INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation is a counter form rather than a radical movement and an ideal of Muslims to maintain Islam that rahmatan lil 'ālamīn, Islam's peaceful and friendly face (Yani & Hanafi, 2022). Islam can accommodate the social conditions of society without violence and bloodshed; Islam is peaceful and able to build a civilization with total progress (Wahidin et al., 2023). Presenting religion as a basis of progress that allows humanity to live more harmoniously is not built on hatred. However, it builds a sense of community and peace. The concept of moderation was put forward as a response to the emergence of radicalism that creates hatred and conflict with other groups, even building anti-NKRI (Yanti & Witro, 2020).

Indonesian Human Rights Monitor (Imparsial) revealed that West Java (West Java) has the most freedom of religion and belief violations in 2022. West Java's index of intolerance and radicalism is still high (Nurwidiawati, 2022), and the province was in the bottom three in the religious tolerance index. Its score of 68.5 is lower than the national average of 73.83 (Adawiyah et al., 2021). The campus is diverse, with students from various backgrounds coming together to pursue education, knowledge, and personal growth (Sudrajat et al., 2021). However, in recent years, the issue of intolerance has emerged as a shadow that disturbs diversity and harmony in the campus environment (Suwendi et al., 2023). Intolerance, which can be defined as attitudes or actions that do not respect or acknowledge individual differences, can negatively impact the learning atmosphere, personal development, and quality of education offered by higher education institutions (Burhanuddin & Khairuddin, 2022; Wulan & Fajrussalam, 2022).

The issue of intolerance on campus not only includes religious or ethnic problems but involves differences in political views, sexual orientation, gender, and ideology (Ardiansyah & Erihadiana, 2022). This phenomenon is not just limited to one particular country or culture but has spread globally. The diversity that should be the wealth of the campus can be hampered by attitudes that demean, belittle, or even harm certain groups or individuals. Intolerance can appear in many forms, from discriminatory acts and verbal abuse to adverse physical actions (Strauber, 2016). These intolerance forms harm the victimized individual and the academic climate (Rosdiana, 2022). The issue has sparked concerns about restrictions on freedom of speech, barriers to the exchange of ideas, and the formation of narrow views that hinder the progress of knowledge. (Fuadi et al., 2021).

The issue of intolerance on campus is strongly influenced by issues built outside the campus (Wightman, 2019). Then, it was strengthened by student groups who joined organizations outside the campus that tended to have this tolerant attitude (Fosnacht & Broderick, 2020). Students who enter the group are strengthened by building this attitude on campus with student movements.

(Dudiyono et al., 2022) This campus intolerance attitude is also directly proportional to the intolerance exposed outside the campus (Selvia et al., 2022). This movement is readily accepted in addition to the approach of religious activities; it is also strongly influenced by the intellectual traditions of students on campus, primarily related to literacy traditions and scientific traditions among students as a scholarly group. (Kharkhurin et al., 2023) In prediction, low literacy traditions and scientific traditions that are not awakened contribute to the ease of students being influenced by these interest movements because low literacy usually causes low analytical and critical power (Syahbudin et al., 2023). Critical power is primarily determined by how students read and their involvement in productive thinking efforts (Usman et al., 2023).

There are several previous studies that researchers have reviewed as part of the literature. For instance, research by Silfia Hanani and Nelmaya Nelmaya discusses strengthening religious moderation to counter intolerance among campus intellectuals. Conducted at IAIN Bukittinggi, this study highlights programs like ukhuwah-based moderation dialogue, literary movements, and religious moderation house initiatives as effective measures to combat intolerance among students. The study emphasizes the need for moderation in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies to foster understanding and awareness beyond individual or group religious and ethnic identities (Hanani & Nelmaya, 2020). Another study by Rosyida Nurul Anwar and Siti Muhayati focuses on the role of PAI (Islamic Education) in cultivating students' attitudes toward religious moderation. This research includes integrating moderate values into the curriculum, offering discussion platforms, organizing mentoring programs, and evaluating student activities. Such efforts enhance students' respect for religious diversity and collective awareness, particularly among PTU students (Anwar & Muhayati, 2021).

Further studies add depth to this discussion. Research by Muhammad Khairul Rijal, Muhammad Nasir, and Fathur Rahman found that 57% of student activists understood religious moderation, while 43% did not. The study also identified challenges, such as exclusive mindsets and radical attitudes, and called for governmental facilitation to strengthen religious moderation among students (Rijal et al., 2022). Similarly, Miftahudin et al. found that 96.7% of respondents supported Pancasila as Indonesia's ideology, with 85.7% agreeing it aligns with Islamic teachings and 52.4% supporting democracy as the nation's political system (Miftahudin et al., 2023). Irfan Nabhani et al. also explored PAI lecturers' strategies in fostering religious moderation among East Priangan students, including curriculum design, role modeling, mentoring, and Quranic learning programs. These initiatives aim to build respect for religious diversity and collective student awareness (Nabhani et al., 2023).

The literature highlights initiatives to promote religious moderation among university students, such as integrating moderate values into curricula and

fostering interfaith dialogue. However, there is a gap in understanding how local contexts, like the high levels of intolerance in West Java, influence students' views on moderation. Additionally, while Islamic education's role in promoting moderation is studied, the impact of intellectual and literacy traditions on critical thinking and vulnerability to radical ideologies remains underexplored. This gap is significant in a region with high religious and cultural diversity, suggesting a need for further research on how religious moderation can be better understood and promoted among students.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach to assess students' understanding of religious moderation. The primary objective is to provide insights that can help universities strengthen their efforts in promoting tolerance and preventing the spread of intolerant ideologies within campus environments.

The respondents in this study consisted of 1,200 students from five public universities in West Java who were actively involved in both internal and external student organizations. Data collection was conducted through surveys distributed via Google Forms. A validated questionnaire served as the main instrument, focusing on three key areas: religious moderation, national insights, and religious insights.

This study provides a new perspective by focusing on students' understanding of religious moderation in public universities, and it provides valuable information for educational institutions to promote inclusivity and reduce intolerant tendencies. Data analysis was conducted using the clustering method to group students based on similarities in their responses, and mean analysis was applied to evaluate the overall trends in the data. The findings are presented descriptively, supported by graphs and narratives, to clearly and concisely illustrate the insights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious moderation understanding among university students is essential in fostering tolerance, peace, and social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies (Setiyanto, 2024). University campuses, being melting pots of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, offer a unique space to instill and promote values of moderation, especially in regions facing high levels of religious intolerance and radicalism (Alam, 2020). Understanding religious moderation involves acknowledging religious differences and actively engaging in practices that respect and value those differences. It requires students to adopt balanced perspectives, avoiding extreme views while promoting dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding between different faiths (Rashed, 2015; Syahri et al., 2024). In academic settings, students' engagement with diverse religious ideologies and their

ability to critically assess religious teachings can significantly shape their attitudes toward moderation (Mukhibat et al., 2024).

The level of understanding of religious moderation among students varies, with some showing a high degree of awareness and others displaying limited knowledge or even extremist tendencies (Subchi et al., 2022). Several factors contribute to this disparity, including the influence of external environments such as local communities, media, and political movements. In areas like West Java, where intolerance and radicalism have been reported to be high, students may be more susceptible to extreme views. This can be further compounded by a lack of critical thinking skills or insufficient exposure to interfaith dialogues that could foster moderation. Educational institutions play a vital role in shaping students' religious understanding by integrating moderate religious values into their curricula, organizing discussions, and providing mentorship programs that challenge radical ideologies and promote peaceful coexistence (Ahyani, 2024; Puspitasari et al., 2024).

Moreover, the role of Islamic education in shaping religious moderation cannot be overstated. Islamic education offers a framework through which students can explore the core values of Islam, such as justice, tolerance, and peace, which are foundational to religious moderation (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these educational efforts is closely tied to the intellectual and literacy traditions on campus. Students who cannot critically analyze and reflect on religious teachings may be more vulnerable to extremist views. Thus, promoting religious moderation among university students requires teaching about religious tolerance and fostering intellectual engagement and critical thinking that enable students to challenge radical ideologies and embrace a more balanced and harmonious approach to religion.

Insights into Religious Moderation

The level of knowledge about religious moderation among students actively involved in both internal and external campus organizations in West Java is presented in the following chart. This chart highlights the students' understanding of critical concepts related to tolerance, diversity, and rejecting radical ideologies. The data aims to provide a clear picture of how these students perceive and practice religious moderation within their organizational and campus activities.

A thorough grasp of religious moderation is necessary to anticipate and confront the attitudes, actions, opinions, and mindsets that may give rise to religious radicalism. To promote diversity and tolerance, educational institutions might provide focused interventions by identifying knowledge gaps or areas of concern. Enhancing students' knowledge of religious moderation reduces the likelihood of radicalism and fosters a peaceful campus community that supports the ideals of solidarity and respect for one another.

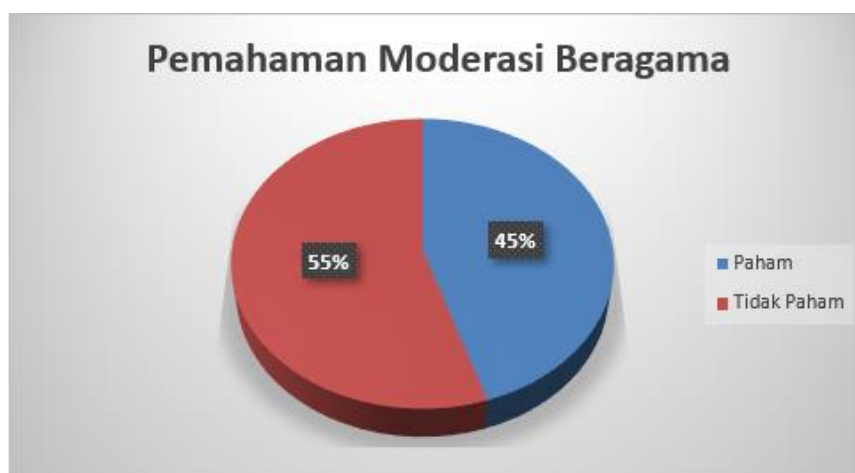


Figure 1: Diagram Understanding of Religious Moderation

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National Vision

National insight is an integral part of the commitment to care for and maintain national values and diversity in Indonesia as a multi-religious and multi-ethnic country framed in diversity. National insight is a common perspective of all elements of the nation's children. It is the basis for developing the spirit of nationality and nationalism to dedicate the best work in various aspects of national and state life. In this study, the insight into student nationality is seen from the following three statement indicators, namely: 1) Pancasila is final and does not conflict with religion; 2) Any socio-political-religious movement that wants to change Pancasila is treasonous; 3) All religious communities are equal before the laws and government of Indonesia regardless of the number of adherents, majority or minority. Related to the statement that the ideology of Pancasila is final and does not conflict with religion is shown by the following diagram:

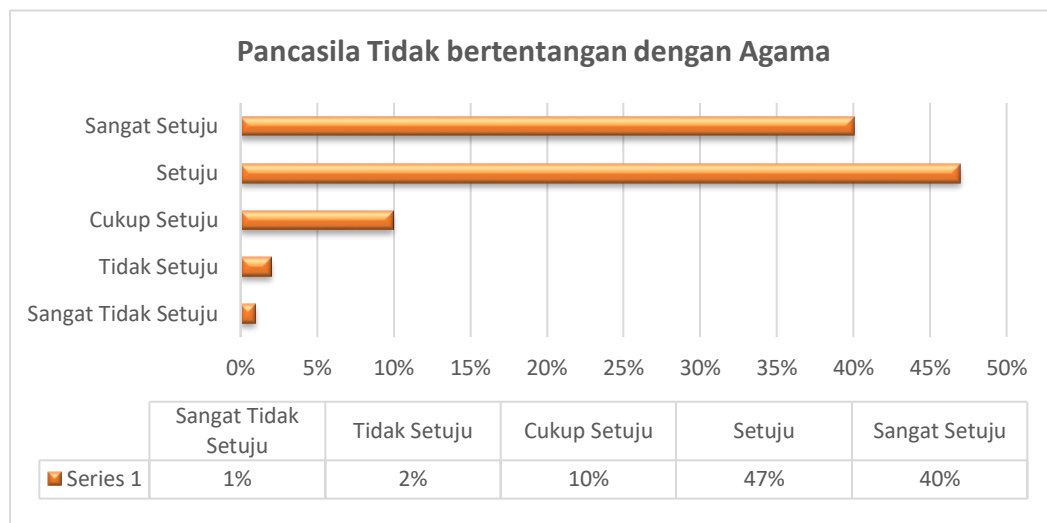


Figure 2: Graph of Survey Pancasila Statement Does Not Contradict Religion

There were 480 respondents, or 40%, who strongly agreed that the ideology of Pancasila was final and did not conflict with religion; 47%, or 564 respondents, agreed; 10%, or 120 respondents, said they quite agreed, 24 respondents or 2% disagreed, and 12 respondents or 1% strongly disagreed.

For the second statement, which reads that every religious, socio-political movement that wants to change Pancasila is an act of treason, the survey results obtained are those that strongly agree with 67% or 804 respondents, 240 respondents or 20% agree, 132 respondents or 11% say they entirely agree, 12 respondents or 1% disagree, and 1% or 12 respondents say strongly disagree.

Alienation comes from the word alien, which is the basis of the word foreign. The foreign word means alone, unknown, so the word foreign means marginalized from socializing moved from others, or isolated. Alienation or alienation is a part of human life (Mulyana, 2005). Alienation is a form of experience when people experience mental degradation, that is, when someone considers himself a stranger. People who feel alien to themselves (Chaney, Lilian, 2004). He does not consider himself a subject or the center of the world, but he acts as an actor of action due to his initiative.

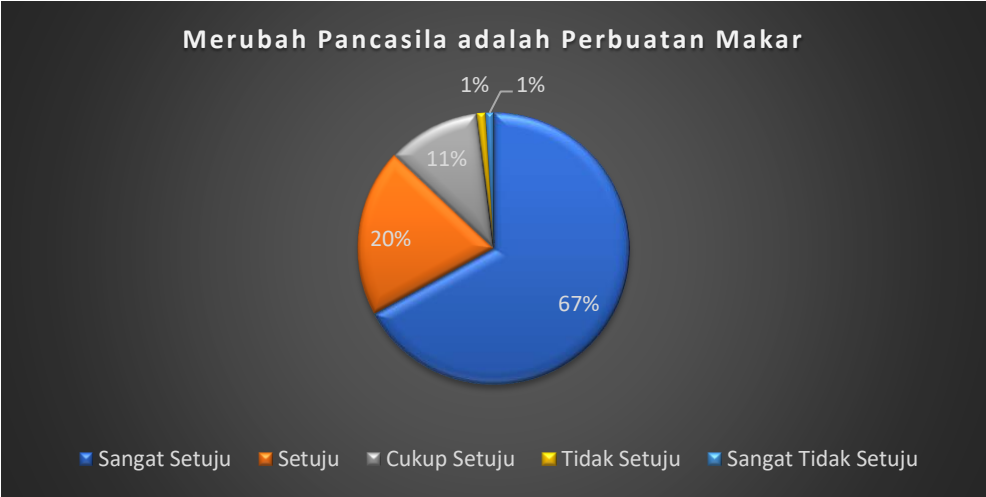


Figure 3: Diagram of Changing Statement Survey Results Pancasila is treason

For the third statement related to national insight, namely, all religious people are equal before the law and government of Indonesia regardless of the number of adherents, majority, and minority, the survey results were obtained as follows: namely, 672 respondents or 56% said strongly agree with the statement, 33% of respondents stated 396 agreed, 72 respondents or equivalent to 6% stated entirely agree and those who expressed disagreement there were 36 respondents or 3%, and strongly disagree with 2% or 24 respondents. The following is Figure 4 of the survey results of the statement that all religious people are equal before the law and government regardless of the number of adherents:

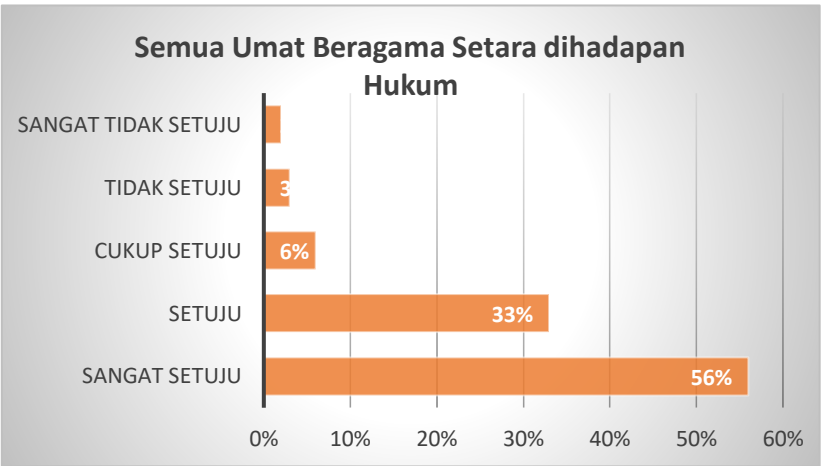


Figure 4: Graph of survey results Statement of All Religious People as Equal Before the Law

Religious Insights

Narrow religious insights cause one to fall into the trap of subjective truth claims. In addition, it will impact the ease of accepting religious doctrine without considering the good and bad aspects. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding to improve religious insight, especially relations between religious people and fellow nation's children.

No	Indicators	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Do you agree that people of different religions should not be public leaders, from village heads to presidents in Indonesia	168 14%	216 18%	108 9%	264 22%	444 37%	1200 100%
2	Religious people are not allowed to help and provide places of worship for other religions if they do not have a place of worship	84 7%	180 15%	48 4%	612 51%	276 23%	1200 100%
3	In my deep religious view, human rights and democracy are contrary to religious teachings	96 8%	84 7%	12 1%	312 26%	696 58%	1200 100%
4	In my pure religious view, tolerance and helping other religions is not allowed because it means agreeing to it	84 7%	36 3%	84 7%	240 20%	756 63%	1200 100%
5	In my religious view, a state based on religion should be applied to Indonesia because the majority of Indonesians are Muslims	12 1%	72 6%	48 4%	324 27%	732 61%	1200 100%
6	The Indonesian government is not an authoritative religious apparatus; therefore, in my religious view, it is not mandatory to obey	12 1%	12 1%	0 0%	384 32%	792 66%	1200 100%

7	If there is an opportunity for referendum democracy to choose a form of Indonesian state, then I will certainly select a country based on religion as my calling of faith	12	12	0	312	876	1200
		1%	1%	0%	26%	73%	100%
8	Religion should be based on the traditions of the society where the first religion was born, not on the traditions that grew up in Indonesia	60	120	108	132	768	1200
		5%	10%	9%	11%	64%	100%
9	Misleading religious practices that are different and worthy of being misled are not contrary to the attitude of moderation in religion	84	156	180	120	660	1200
		7%	13%	15%	10%	55%	100%

Table 1. Results of Student Religious Insights Survey

The promotion of religious moderation in West Java must be aided by higher education. Higher education programs in West Java should prioritize preparing the next generation and giving students a sense of spiritual and national understanding. The findings of the mapping of West Javan students' understanding of religious moderation above certainly support it; it is evident from several angles that there are still statements that characterize students' mindsets that can promote extreme and radical religious views and lead to an exclusive mindset.

Regarding the acceptance of local culture and wisdom, about 5% of students strongly agree that religion should be based on the community's traditions rather than adapting to local traditions in Indonesia. A further 10% agree, while 9% are uncertain. This perspective could lead to a separation between religion and local culture. Still, universally, religion should accommodate the culture in which it is practised as long as it does not conflict with core religious values. Regarding the idea that Indonesia should be a religious state due to its Muslim majority, about 7% of students expressed doubt about Pancasila as the foundation of the state, with 1% strongly agreeing and 6% agreeing with the concept of a spiritual state. This indicates a small but significant group of students who question the current state ideology and could potentially support a religious-based state.

Furthermore, the potential for radical thinking is evident in responses to attitudes toward religious differences. About 12% of students agreed that discriminatory actions against other religious groups are not opposed to religious moderation, with 7% strongly agreeing. Additionally, 7% of respondents strongly agreed that their religious views do not allow tolerance towards other religions. A concerning 8% strongly agreed that human rights and democracy contradict

spiritual teachings. Regarding interfaith cooperation, 22% believe that religious people should not help other religions build places of worship, and 28% of students feel that non-adherents of their religion should not hold public leadership roles, ranging from village heads to presidents. These responses indicate the presence of radical and intolerant viewpoints that challenge religious moderation and highlight areas for educational intervention.

Strengthening religious moderation among students in West Java requires a comprehensive approach that involves education, training, and interfaith dialogue. Universities should organize programs focusing on moderate religious understanding, conflict resolution, and interfaith cooperation, involving lecturers and religious experts from diverse backgrounds. Dialogue events, such as seminars with community leaders and academics, allow students to discuss and better understand diverse beliefs, fostering tolerance and respect. Research and academic publications on comparative religion and tolerance, alongside student participation in interfaith activities like social and humanitarian projects, are also essential in promoting moderation. Mentoring programs that pair students with individuals from different religious backgrounds can further enhance mutual understanding.

Collaboration with religious institutions for public lectures and seminars promoting moderation is crucial. Utilizing social media and digital platforms to counter radical ideologies and spread messages of tolerance will help reach a broader audience (Marwantika, 2022). Establishing centers for religious and cultural studies can serve as hubs for research and dialogue while integrating character development programs in curricula will emphasize empathy and respect (Zakiyah, 2019). Educational institutions, religious organizations, and the government must collaborate to foster religious moderation, creating a balanced flow of information and ensuring that students can serve as role models and agents of change. Continued campaigns and awards for religious moderation within universities will further strengthen this movement, enabling students to actively protect and support religious diversity in Indonesia.

The survey results reveal that only 45% of the 1,200 students demonstrated a solid understanding of religious moderation, while 55% lacked adequate knowledge. This disparity underscores the need for more effective educational approaches to religious moderation, particularly on crucial aspects such as tolerance, balance, and justice. These findings align with prior research by Hanani and Nelmaya, which emphasized the importance of ukhuwah-based dialogue programs and religious moderation initiatives to address intolerance on campuses. Similarly, Anwar and Muhayati highlighted the role of integrating moderation values into curricula and fostering discussion platforms to enhance awareness of religious diversity.

However, the survey also highlights the potential for radicalism among students. For instance, 7% of respondents agreed that their religious views do not

permit tolerance toward other religions, while 28% believed that non-adherents of their faith should not hold public leadership positions. These views pose significant challenges to efforts aimed at fostering religious moderation. With these findings, Rijal et al. identified similar obstacles, such as exclusive mindsets prone to radical tendencies, emphasizing holistic educational interventions. Strategies must include strengthening national values based on Pancasila, which, as noted by Miftahudin et al., is supported by most students as an ideology compatible with religious teachings.

The role of local culture also presents a challenge to moderation efforts. The finding that 15% of students believe religion should not need to adapt to local traditions highlights a tension between religious values and local wisdom. This aligns with the theory of cultural accommodation proposed by Nabhani et al., which stresses the importance of integrating religious values with local culture, provided they do not contradict core religious principles. Therefore, higher education institutions in West Java need to take a more active role in designing dialogue-based interfaith programs, training sessions, and mentoring initiatives to nurture a generation of moderate and tolerant individuals while addressing existing exclusive attitudes.

CONCLUSION

The portrait of religious moderation among students in West Java is illustrated in the aspects of religious moderation insight, national insight, and religious insight. The composition is that 57% of active students in organizations understand religious moderation, and 43% do not. In the aspect of national insight in the first statement, 77% strongly agreed that the ideology of Pancasila was final and did not conflict with religion, 19% agreed, 3% said they quite agreed, 1% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed. For the second statement, every religious, socio-political movement that wants to change Pancasila is an act of treason, eating those who strongly agree 70%, 24% agree, 4% say they entirely agree, 1% disagree, and 1% strongly disagree. For the third statement related to national insight, namely that all religious people are equal before the law and government of Indonesia regardless of the number of adherents, majority, and minority, then 56% strongly agreed with the statement, 33% said they agreed, 6% said they quite agreed and those who expressed disagreement 3%, and strongly disagree 2%. Concerning religious insights among student activists involved in organizations, there is still a mindset that might lead to extremist and extreme religious views, particularly in religious insight. Accepting culture and easily misinterpreting religious rituals different from his own are examples. To stop the development of attitudes, behaviors, and mindsets that give rise to religious radicalism, the government, in this case, stakeholders, are expected to be able to support students' efforts to increase their religious moderation.

The findings emphasize the importance of strengthening education on religious moderation to foster tolerance and national unity. Future research should explore the effectiveness of interventions such as workshops and curriculum enhancements, conduct comparative studies across regions to account for cultural differences, and utilize qualitative methods to understand factors influencing students' views on extremism. Additionally, examining the role of social media and external influences and broadening the scope to include non-organized students could offer a more comprehensive understanding of religious moderation in academic settings. These efforts can support stakeholders in developing targeted strategies to combat radicalism and promote inclusivity.

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