

# Local Wisdom as a Cultural Engine of Interfaith Harmony: Strengthening Religious Moderation and Mitigating Racism in Tana Toraja

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## Abstract

Interfaith harmony is essential for sustaining social cohesion in plural societies, yet existing studies often treat racism as a separate social problem rather than as an outcome of weakened intergroup relations. This study addresses this gap by examining how local wisdom functions as a cultural mechanism that strengthens religious moderation and indirectly prevents racism in Tana Toraja, Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study design, the research draws on non-participant observations, semi-structured interviews with ten key informants, and community documents. Data were analyzed through iterative coding and thematic interpretation. The findings generate three main points. First, Torajan local wisdom embedded in customary rituals, social ethics, and kinship-based cooperation facilitates inclusive interfaith participation, particularly in ceremonies such as Rambu Solo. Second, religious moderation is practiced through everyday norms of respect, shared responsibilities, and economic interdependence, which regulate social boundaries without formal intervention. Third, racism is mitigated not through explicit anti-discrimination measures but through preventive cultural practices that promote caution, mutual regard, and collective

identity. These findings suggest that local wisdom operates as a practical framework for sustaining interfaith harmony and reducing discriminatory tendencies. The study contributes to scholarship by reframing racism as a relational outcome shaped by cultural mechanisms rather than solely by legal or institutional factors. It concludes that strengthening culturally grounded moderation practices is essential for building inclusive and resilient multicultural communities.

**Keywords:** Interfaith Harmony, religious moderation, local wisdom, racism prevention, Tana Toraja

### Abstrak

Harmoni antaragama merupakan elemen penting dalam menjaga kohesi sosial di masyarakat majemuk, namun studi sebelumnya cenderung memperlakukan rasisme sebagai persoalan sosial yang berdiri sendiri, bukan sebagai akibat dari melemahnya hubungan antarkelompok. Penelitian ini mengisi kesenjangan tersebut dengan mengkaji bagaimana kearifan lokal berfungsi sebagai mekanisme budaya yang memperkuat moderasi beragama dan secara tidak langsung mencegah rasisme di Tana Toraja, Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif, penelitian ini memanfaatkan observasi nonpartisipan, wawancara semi terstruktur dengan sepuluh informan kunci, serta dokumen komunitas. Data dianalisis melalui proses pengodean iteratif dan interpretasi tematik. Temuan penelitian menghasilkan tiga poin utama. Pertama, kearifan lokal Toraja yang tertanam dalam ritual adat, etika sosial, dan kerja sama berbasis kekerabatan memfasilitasi partisipasi lintas agama yang inklusif, terutama dalam upacara seperti Rambu Solo. Kedua, moderasi beragama dipraktikkan melalui norma keseharian berupa penghormatan, tanggung jawab bersama, dan saling ketergantungan ekonomi yang mengatur batas sosial tanpa intervensi formal. Ketiga, rasisme diredam bukan melalui kebijakan anti-diskriminasi yang eksplisit, tetapi melalui praktik budaya preventif yang menumbuhkan kehati-hatian, saling menghargai, dan identitas kolektif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kearifan lokal berfungsi sebagai kerangka praktis untuk menjaga harmoni antaragama dan mengurangi kecenderungan diskriminatif. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian dengan menafsirkan ulang rasisme sebagai hasil relasional yang dibentuk oleh mekanisme budaya, bukan semata oleh faktor hukum atau institusional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa penguatan praktik moderasi berbasis budaya sangat penting untuk membangun masyarakat multikultural yang inklusif dan tangguh.

**Kata kunci:** Harmoni Antaragama, Moderasi Beragama, Kearifan Lokal, Pencegahan Rasisme, Tana Toraja

### INTRODUCTION

Racism remains a persistent social problem that disrupts social cohesion in diverse and multicultural societies. This problem manifests itself through prejudice, stereotyping, exclusion, and discriminatory practices based on race, ethnicity, religion, or social identity. (Magh'firoh et al., 2021). While racism often manifests as overt social conflict, modern research increasingly recognizes that racism is also embedded in everyday interactions, institutional practices, and subtle communication patterns. These dynamics make racism difficult to detect and address, especially in societies that officially promote tolerance and diversity.

Global developments demonstrate that racism is not limited to a particular region or political system. Incidents of racial violence and discrimination occurring in both developing and developed countries reveal that formal legal equality does not always guarantee real social equality. Times of crisis, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, further expose the fragility of intergroup relations, as fear and uncertainty exacerbate racial stigma and social exclusion in many situations. This

global trend underscores the importance of approaches that go beyond the legal framework and address the social mechanisms that contribute to the production and prevention of racism in everyday life.

In a broader context, Indonesia serves as an important example. As a country with a high level of ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity, Indonesia has long upheld the values of unity and pluralism. However, the reality on the ground shows that acts of racism and discrimination persist, including in crucial sectors such as education, public representation, and popular culture (Lumentut, 2023). These cases reveal that diversity alone does not guarantee harmonious intergroup relations and that hidden forms of racism can persist behind narratives of national unity. Thus, there is an increasingly urgent need to investigate how social cohesion is practically maintained in diverse local environments and what mechanisms effectively prevent racism from escalating into open conflict.

One aspect of this research highlights the role of religious moderation as a social strategy for managing diversity in pluralistic societies. Religious moderation generally refers to an approach that promotes balance, mutual respect, and the rejection of extremism in religious life. (Aksa & Nurhayati, 2020). In the Indonesian context, religious moderation has been institutionalized through policy discourse and educational initiatives, making it an important framework for promoting interfaith harmony. However, existing research often focuses more on the normative formulation of moderation or its implementation at the policy level, thus paying less attention to how moderation is implemented in everyday social practices and local cultural contexts.

In line with this, research on local wisdom emphasizes the importance of local knowledge systems, customary norms, and cultural traditions in regulating social relations. Local wisdom encompasses values, practices, and social ethics that have developed historically within a community and been passed down from generation to generation. (Bachrong & Ansar, 2021). These cultural resources often function as informal mechanisms of social control, influencing how individuals perceive differences, manage conflict, and maintain community harmony. Despite growing interest in local wisdom, much research treats it as a symbolic cultural asset rather than examining its operational role in contemporary intergroup relations.

The intersection between religious moderation and local wisdom is an important but underexplored area of analysis. While some studies acknowledge that local culture can support interfaith harmony, few empirically examine how local wisdom functions as a concrete social mechanism that shapes everyday interactions and limits discriminatory behavior. Furthermore, racism is often viewed as a separate social problem, rather than as a relational consequence linked to the strength or weakness of interfaith and interethnic relations.

Tana Toraja, located in South Sulawesi, provides an interesting empirical context to investigate this issue. The region is widely known for its strong cultural traditions and long-standing interfaith harmony, particularly among Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and Aluk Todolo communities. Interfaith interactions in Toraja are integrated into traditional rituals, family structures, economic cooperation, and public spaces, making it a rich social environment for examining how diversity is managed in practice. (Wirawan et al., 2022).

Previous research on Toraja has largely emphasized the symbolic and ritual dimensions of harmony. Studies have analyzed the role of traditional ceremonies such as Rambu Solo and the cultural significance of Tongkonan as a unifying social institution. (Bachrong and Ansar, 2021; Pajariantanto et al., 2022). Other studies have emphasized the contribution of traditional and religious leaders in maintaining peace and promoting interfaith cooperation. (Dachlan, 2023). While these studies provide valuable insights, they tend to emphasize harmony as a cultural ideal rather than examining its impact on preventing racism and discriminatory practices. Furthermore, existing research has paid little attention to the internal social dynamics within Toraja society, particularly regarding communication patterns, stereotypical images, and interactions between local communities and ethnic immigrants. Differences between individuals raised in Toraja and those living outside the region, as well as variations between generations and socioeconomic roles, remain understudied. These dynamics are crucial because they can be a hidden source of racial prejudice and exclusion, even in contexts perceived as harmonious.

Another gap concerns the role of economic relations in shaping intergroup interactions. While cultural and religious factors are often highlighted, the ways in which economic interdependence interacts with local wisdom and religious moderation are rarely systematically analyzed. In Toraja, economic activities such as agriculture, tourism, and ritual work involve cooperation across religious and ethnic boundaries, suggesting that material relations can play a role in maintaining social cohesion. However, how these economic interactions relate to preventing racism has not been sufficiently explored in existing research.

Based on these shortcomings, this study seeks to answer the following main question: how does local wisdom act as a social mechanism to strengthen religious moderation and prevent racism in interfaith relations in Tana Toraja? Rather than viewing racism as a stand-alone phenomenon, this study views it as a possible consequence of weak intergroup relations, influenced by daily practices, communication patterns, and social structures.

This study aims to investigate how local wisdom functions in practice as a social mechanism to strengthen religious moderation and prevent racism in interfaith relations in Tana Toraja. Specifically, this study raises three interrelated questions. First, how are local wisdom values expressed and applied in everyday interfaith interactions within customary, family, and community settings? Second,

how do these culturally embedded practices shape patterns of religious moderation and regulate communication, cooperation, and social boundaries between different religious and ethnic groups? Third, how do these local mechanisms function to limit discriminatory attitudes, stereotypes, and exclusion, particularly in contexts marked by social differentiation such as generational differences, migration, and economic relations? By answering these questions, this study views racism not as a separate social pathology, but as a relational outcome shaped by the forces of intergroup interaction and culturally rooted practices of moderation. Through a qualitative case study design, this research aims to provide empirically measurable insights into how local wisdom and religious moderation intersect in everyday life, as well as contribute to broader debates on pluralism, social cohesion, and racism prevention in multicultural societies.

## METHOD

This study employed a qualitative case study design (Bungin, 2007; Cresswell, 2017; Sugiyono, 2018) to explore how local wisdom operates as a mechanism of religious moderation in preventing racism within interfaith relations. This approach enabled an in-depth and contextually grounded examination of interactional practices, cultural meanings, and normative structures that sustain interreligious harmony in a specific social environment. Tana Toraja was selected as the research site because it represents a highly informative setting marked by continuous interfaith engagement across ritual, economic, and social domains. Its diverse religious communities and strong customary institutions provide a natural context in which shared practices and interdependence shape moderation processes embedded in local wisdom.

The unit of analysis focused on interfaith interactions occurring in ritual and customary life, economic cooperation, and community forums as expressions of inclusive coexistence and observable social behavior. Racism and discrimination were conceptualized as disruptions to interfaith harmony and operationalized through indicators such as verbal discrimination, negative stereotyping, unequal participation, social exclusion, and symbolic marginalization based on ethnic, racial, or religious identity. Theological differences that did not manifest in discriminatory practices were excluded from the analytical scope. These constructs were mapped through indicators and data sources, including observations, interviews, and community documents, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Core Construct Indicator Data Source Mapping		
Core Construct	Key Operational Indicators	Primary Data Sources
Interfaith Interaction Practices	1) Joint participation in cross-faith rituals and customary ceremonies	1) Non-participant observation 2) Semi-structured interviews
	2) Inclusive interaction in community forums and civic activities	3) Community and forum documents

Core Construct	Key Operational Indicators	Primary Data Sources
<b>Religious Moderation</b>	3) Everyday cooperation across religious boundaries	
	1) Mutual respect and recognition in interfaith encounters	1) Interview narratives
	2) Role-sharing and cooperation across religious groups	2) Observation of interfaith gatherings
	3) Rejection or containment of exclusionary attitudes	3) Interfaith forum and local policy documents
<b>Local Wisdom</b>	1) Invocation of adat norms regulating intergroup relations	1) Observation of customary ceremonies
	2) Mediating role of customary institutions and leaders	2) Interviews with traditional leaders and cultural experts
	3) Integrative ritual practices sustaining coexistence	3) Customary texts and cultural documents
<b>Racism / Discrimination</b>	1) Verbal discrimination or derogatory labeling	1) Interview accounts of lived experience
	2) Negative stereotyping and symbolic marginalization	2) Observation of interactional patterns
	3) Social exclusion or unequal participation in shared spaces	3) Local media and community documents

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling based on their involvement in interethnic relations, traditional institutions, community leadership, local governance, or culturally significant practices. The study engaged ten informants comprising religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, a government representative, and cultural or social experts. Sampling continued until thematic saturation was achieved, indicated by the stability of categories related to local wisdom, moderation practices, and discriminatory interactions. This composition ensured a comprehensive dataset reflecting the multifaceted nature of religious moderation in Toraja society.

Data collection was facilitated through community networks and informal gatekeepers, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Non-participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis (Bungin, 2005; Sugiyono, 2015) were conducted to capture interfaith rituals, traditional ceremonies, tourism activities, and community gatherings. Interviews lasting 45 to 90 minutes explored interfaith dynamics, cultural norms, moderation practices, and experiences related to discrimination. All interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on eligibility criteria consistent with the research focus on local wisdom, religious moderation, interethnic interactions, and racism prevention in Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi. These criteria included active involvement in interethnic relations, traditional institutions, community leadership, local governance, or culturally valued social practices. Table 2 shows the demographics of the participants.

**Table 2.**  
**Table of Interviewees**

No.	Name (Anonym)	Background/Role	Age	Educational background	Residence
1	R1	Religious Leader	55	Bachelor of Theology	City
2	R2	Community Leader	48	Senior High School	Village
3	R3	Educator	35	Master of Education	City
4	R4	Layperson	22	Student	Village
5	R5	Youth Religious Group	27	Bachelor of Laws	City
6	R6	Traditional Leader	63	Elementary school	Village
7	R7	Government Official	45	Bachelor of Administration	City
8	R8	Women's Group Leader	52	Diploma	Village
9	R9	Business Owner	40	Senior High School	City

Data analysis followed an iterative process involving transcription, initial coding, focused coding, and thematic development, drawing on the analytical framework of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (Sugiyono, 2016). An analytical matrix was used to link empirical codes to broader conceptual themes, such as the relationship between interfaith ritual participation, local wisdom, and moderation practices that function to prevent racism. Trustworthiness was strengthened through methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, supported by an audit trail documenting analytical decisions. Reflexivity was maintained through continuous memoing to reduce interpretive bias.

Ethical considerations were upheld throughout the study by ensuring voluntary participation, confidentiality, and informed consent. To prevent deductive disclosure, identifying details were removed, and informant roles were consolidated where necessary. Anonymous coding was applied consistently to protect participant identities.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Result**

The findings of this study indicate that Toraja society exists within a social context characterized by religious plurality and diverse cultural backgrounds (Mukramin & Ismail, 2018). Based on interview data and field observations, the religious affiliations present in Toraja include Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Hinduism, and the traditional belief system of Aluk Todolo. This diversity was empirically identified through informants' narratives and through direct observation of interreligious participation in a range of social and customary

activities conducted in the research setting. The data show that religious difference constitutes an explicit and everyday condition of social life in Toraja.

One of the central empirical findings concerns interreligious practices in the performance of customary rituals, particularly the funeral ceremony of *Rambu Solo'*. Field observations reveal that individuals from different religious backgrounds are involved in both the preparatory and implementation stages of the ritual, especially in collective non-liturgical activities such as logistical coordination, guest reception, and extended family labor. This pattern is reinforced by an interview with Informant R5, who stated:

*"In Torajan culture, they are taught to respect differences in race, religion, and ethnicity. This is reflected in various Torajan cultural ceremonies, such as the Rambu Solo' ceremony, which involves people of various races and religions. It was in this ceremony that I saw how people from all faiths, including Hindus, Muslims, and even Christians, can work together and respect one another."*

In addition, interviews were also conducted by one of the informants, R7, who is an official in the government, as follows:

*"Rambu Solo' is one of the most visible forms of religious acceptance in Toraja. This is because Rambu Solo' teaches Torajans to respect and cooperate with each other, despite their different religions and beliefs."*

Taken together, these quotations indicate an empirical pattern of interreligious participation within a shared ritual space, without reported instances of rejection or open conflict during the conduct of the ceremony. Beyond ritual contexts, the findings also demonstrate that interreligious interaction occurs within familial and community settings. Interview data from customary leaders and community members suggest that the traditional house (*Tongkonan*) functions as a central space for extended family activities whose members adhere to different religions. Field observations document that family deliberations, customary meetings, and social gatherings held at the *Tongkonan* are attended by relatives across religious affiliations without segregation based on belief. Nevertheless, the data also reveal generational contrasts. A younger informant (R9) noted that while interreligious relations remain strong within customary contexts, some younger individuals tend to form closer social ties based on shared religious identity within modern social spaces, such as youth organizations and social media platforms.

In the economic sphere and in everyday cooperation, interview findings indicate that agricultural activities, trade, and tourism-related work involve individuals from diverse religious backgrounds. Informants R3 and R6 emphasized that economic cooperation is primarily grounded in kinship ties, social proximity, and practical needs. No informant reported explicit refusal of economic collaboration on the basis of religious or racial difference. These findings suggest



that interreligious economic interaction constitutes a routine practice in Toraja society.

With regard to racism and discrimination, this study did not identify empirical data indicating directly observed incidents of racism or discrimination during the data collection process. Instead, interview data highlight an emphasis on social caution and behavioral self-regulation in everyday interactions. One community informant (R8) stated:

*"I have never seen anyone being rejected because of their religion in this village, but we are also taught from a young age to be careful in our behavior so as not to offend others."*

Accordingly, the findings of this study pertain to practices and perceptions of preventive social conduct as experienced by community members, rather than to the absolute absence of discrimination. Based on the data obtained, the following table 3 summarizes the forms of moderation practices and local mechanisms used to prevent racism.

**Table 3.**

The Convergence of Local Wisdom Values and Religious Moderation Practices in Toraja

Socio-Cultural Domain	Axiological Basis of Local Wisdom (Prevention Mechanism)	Empirical Manifestation (Moderation Practice)
<b>Ritual &amp; Transcendence</b>	Tripartite Existential Philosophy ( <i>Sada Situtu, Sada Ullunna, Sada Tondo</i> ): A concept that emphasizes the essential unity between humans, the universe, and the spiritual dimension, which eliminates the barriers of theological differences in the context of humanity	Inclusivity in the <i>Rambu Solo'</i> Ceremony: Although rooted in the <i>Aluk Todolo</i> liturgy, the implementation of this death ceremony is transformed into a space for interfaith interaction, where Christians, Muslims, and Hindus are actively involved in the procession without reducing the sacredness of each belief
<b>Identity &amp; Social Stratification</b>	Ethics of Reciprocal Respect ( <i>Kasianggaran</i> ): Social norms that regulate the manners and position of individuals in the structure of society, which require respect for the dignity of others regardless of religious or racial background	Symbolism of Unification in <i>Tongkonan</i> : The <i>Tongkonan</i> traditional house is not just a physical artifact, but rather a center of communal identity orientation that accommodates the diversity of extended families across religions in one cohesive cultural entity
<b>Community Dynamics</b>	Collective Solidarity & Association ( <i>Kombongan</i> ): An institutionalized spirit of mutual cooperation, where public participation is driven by a sense of communal responsibility, not by sectarian affiliation	Cross-Border Mobilization in Celebrations: Seen in the voluntary participation of people of different religions in the logistical preparations for traditional ceremonies and the tradition of reciprocal friendship during

		religious holidays (Christmas and Eid al-Fitr)	
Economy & Livelihoods	Principle of Universal Brotherhood ( <i>Padaidi/Solata</i> ): A philosophy that views fellow members of society as brothers ("solata"), which breaks down the walls of ethnic exclusivism in professional interactions	Sectoral	Economic
		Interdependence: Creating harmonious production relations between coffee farmers and tourism actors from various religious backgrounds, as well as social stability in transmigration areas based on cultural acceptability	
Education & Conflict Management	Cultural Authority & Customary Pedagogy: Utilizing the legitimacy of customary figures as agents of moderation who narrate religious teachings through an inclusive cultural perspective	Counter-Racism	Discourse:
		Community leaders proactively use dialogue forums to deconstruct racial prejudice and religious stigma, making customary values a structural shield against radicalism	

Source: Field data findings

Discussion

The Concept of Religious Moderation in Tana Toraja

Religious moderation in Tana Toraja is best understood not as a purely normative religious stance but as a sociocultural configuration shaped by long-standing interactions between formal religions and local wisdom. Rather than emerging as a newly institutionalized initiative, moderation in Toraja has been internalized over generations through customary law, ritual practices, and everyday social relations (Pajariato et al., 2022). Although Christianity constitutes the demographic majority, it does not produce religious homogenization; instead, it coexists with Islam and Aluk Todolo within a multicultural framework that accommodates diverse belief systems.

The findings indicate that religious moderation in Toraja aligns with an embedded moderation model, one rooted in cultural traditions rather than imposed through regulatory frameworks. This supports Akhmadi’s (2019) conception of moderation as the recognition of religious rights, while demonstrating that such recognition is mediated by customary norms that stabilize interfaith relations. Tolerance in Toraja thus derives not only from civic awareness but also from cultural mechanisms that shape how religious differences are socially negotiated.

This embeddedness is reflected in the respectful attitudes of Torajan communities and visitors, who participate peacefully in Christian, Islamic, and traditional celebrations. Such practices illustrate how moderation fosters unity and shared identity across religious boundaries (Aulia, 2022). Consistent with Tandi (2023) and Haryono and Attilovita (2021), the Toraja case shows that moderation

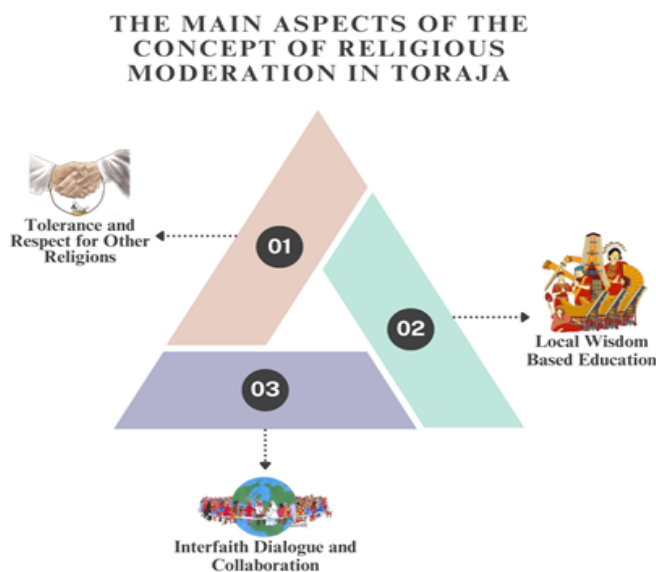
prioritizes understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect. Local wisdom plays a central role in this process, as cultural values embedded in daily life are more readily internalized than abstract doctrinal principles (Yunus, 2022; Idaman, 2012). As Ufie (2018) argues, local culture constitutes an essential source of social capital for cultivating tolerance, and the Toraja context demonstrates how such values can be operationalized in practice.

The Rambu Solo' tradition exemplifies how cultural practices serve as a foundation for religious moderation. Although rooted in Aluk Todolo, the ceremony accommodates participation from Protestant, Catholic, Muslim, and traditional communities (Hefni & Uyun, 2020; Ali & Nifasri, 2021). This inclusivity reflects the broader expectation that Torajans recognize and respect religious diversity (Ismail, 2019). As Bachrong and Ansar (2021) note, rituals such as Rambu Solo' require participants to acknowledge communal diversity and work collaboratively, thereby reinforcing tolerance. The findings confirm that the ceremony continues to function as a site of interfaith harmony, where participants collectively enact values of respect and cooperation (Saputri et al., 2023). Local leaders emphasize that Rambu Solo' embodies principles such as *sada situtu* (forest), *sada ulunna* (humanity), and *sada tondo* (one spirit), which guide Torajans to uphold unity despite religious differences.

The ceremony also illustrates how moderation shapes social behavior. Although Rambu Solo' reflects social stratification (Panggarra, 2014), it simultaneously teaches individuals to position themselves respectfully within communal hierarchies through the value of *Kasianggaran* (mutual respect). The prominence of *Kombongan* (collective cooperation) further reinforces communal solidarity, as community members routinely assist in preparing and supporting the ceremony (Lumbaa et al., 2023; Rapa' & Gulo, 2020).

Overall, religious moderation in Tana Toraja is deeply rooted in local wisdom and cultural traditions that promote coexistence among Christian, Muslim, and Aluk Todolo communities (Akbar, 2022; Yuliana et al., 2022). Rambu Solo' stands as a visible manifestation of this moderation, demonstrating how cultural practices can institutionalize tolerance and interfaith cooperation. The values of *sada situtu*, *sada ulunna*, *sada tondo*, *Kasianggaran*, and *Kombongan* collectively shape a relational ethic that sustains harmony across religious boundaries. As Samuel and Tumonglo (2023) and Hasyim et al. (2020) observe, such culturally grounded moderation fosters an inclusive environment where diverse religious communities coexist peacefully. In Toraja, religious moderation thus functions not merely as a doctrinal principle but as a lived cultural practice that strengthens social cohesion and

contributes to regional stability. Figure 1 below illustrates the aspects of religious moderation in Toraja.



**Figure 1.** The Main Aspects of the Concept of Religious Moderation in Toraja

This figure 1 illustrates that religious moderation in Toraja is formed through the dynamic interconnection between local wisdom, cultural practices, and cross religious social relations. Rather than functioning as a detached normative principle, religious moderation operates as a relational system in which customary values, ritual practices, and social solidarity mutually reinforce one another. This framework underscores that the prevention of conflict and racism in Toraja predominantly operates through socially perceived and internalized mechanisms, rather than through formal intervention or coercive policy measures.

### **Integration of Local Wisdom in Religious Moderation**

The integration of local wisdom into religious moderation in Toraja can be understood as an ongoing process of negotiation between customary value systems and formal religious practices. Toraja's strong cultural heritage and enduring traditional belief systems (Ekawati et al., 2019) create a social environment in which moderation develops primarily through cultural mechanisms rather than through institutional regulation. Within this context, local wisdom functions as a mediating force that bridges religious differences by framing social harmony as a shared collective goal.

The findings indicate that the integration of local wisdom into religious moderation is already well established, as reflected in the tolerant and harmonious social life of Torajan communities. Nevertheless, several areas require further strengthening, particularly through education, daily practice, and the development of supportive media and facilities (Rizki & Djufri, 2019). Strengthening integration begins with identifying and documenting local wisdom values that have evolved

over centuries, including customs, traditions, and social norms. This process requires sustained engagement with local communities and immersion in their cultural practices (Yudistira et al., 2022). Interfaith dialogue also plays a crucial role by enabling religious and traditional leaders to explore shared values and differences, thereby fostering mutual understanding and tolerance (Zakiyah, 2019). Joint celebrations that reflect Toraja's cultural and religious diversity further reinforce unity, while empowering local leaders enhances their capacity to mediate conflicts and promote peace. Ensuring fair law enforcement is equally essential to guarantee justice and protection for all religious and traditional groups.

Elaborating on this finding, Figure 2 illustrates ways of integrating local wisdom to religious moderation in Tana Toraja.



**Figure 2.** Steps to Integrate Local Wisdom in Religious Moderation in Toraja

As illustrated in Figure 2, these steps collectively demonstrate that integrating local wisdom into religious moderation is essential for promoting harmony, tolerance, and mutual understanding among diverse social groups (Mukrimaa et al., 2016). Such integration strengthens both cultural and religious identity while contributing to regional peace and stability. Toraja's rich cultural heritage exemplifies how local wisdom can enhance religious tolerance by aligning customary values with religious practices. The successful fusion of local wisdom and moderation has cultivated a community ethos in which diversity is embraced and religious differences do not become barriers to coexistence. Continued education, consistent application in daily life, and supportive infrastructures can further reinforce this integration. Toraja thus offers a compelling example of how local wisdom can sustain religious moderation by fostering understanding, encouraging dialogical engagement, promoting collaborative celebrations, empowering community leaders, and upholding just legal frameworks.

### **Preventing Racism Through Local Wisdom**

The prevention of racism through local wisdom in Toraja operates as a sociocultural mechanism that intervenes before prejudice escalates into open conflict. In this context, racism is understood not merely as a legal or individual issue but as a social phenomenon mitigated through the internalization of cultural values and communal practices. Torajan values emphasizing kinship, respect, and social harmony form a foundational basis for building cross-ethnic and interreligious relations (Tahir et al., 2020).

The findings show that racism prevention in Toraja relies primarily on educational and participatory approaches. Cultural education, the reinforcement of tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and the use of local language serve as instruments for cultivating collective awareness of diversity. These measures indicate that racism prevention is predominantly normative and preventive, shaping social attitudes rather than relying on punitive or reactive interventions. Several steps that can be taken to implement the prevention of racism through local wisdom in Toraja, are as follows.

A range of culturally grounded strategies contributes to racism prevention in Toraja. One important approach involves strengthening education about Torajan culture, history, and traditions, which helps community members understand and appreciate the region's cultural and ethnic diversity. This is complemented by efforts to foster the value of tolerance, as Torajan local wisdom consistently promotes cooperation and respectful interaction across social groups. Intercultural dialogue also plays a significant role; regular exchanges between different ethnic communities help reduce prejudice and mitigate intergroup tensions.

The use of local Toraja languages further reinforces cultural identity and affirms linguistic diversity, serving as a subtle yet powerful tool for strengthening social cohesion. Anti-racism education, particularly when integrated into school curricula and training programs, has been shown to shift attitudes and behaviors in constructive ways (Muhdina, 2015). Beyond formal education, active community involvement is essential. Meetings, workshops, and collaborative projects build collective awareness and generate shared responsibility for preventing racism.

Promoting respect for Toraja's cultural and ethnic diversity through festivals and public events also contributes to unity and mutual appreciation (Mukrimaa et al., 2016). Ensuring social justice for all ethnic groups is another critical component, requiring equitable access to resources, services, and opportunities. Local leaders play a pivotal role in these efforts by modeling inclusive behavior and actively promoting peace within their communities. Finally, establishing mechanisms to track and report incidents of racism is vital for addressing discriminatory acts and ensuring fair legal enforcement (Magh'firoh et al., 2021).

Strengthening religious moderation through local wisdom contributes significantly to creating an inclusive social climate. Traditional values embedded

in Torajan daily life reinforce tolerance and respect for difference (Lumentut, 2023). Within this framework, racism prevention is experienced more as a form of perceived social security than as a formal policy (Yunus, 2022). The Toraja case demonstrates that local wisdom and religious moderation can serve as effective models for addressing racism by cultivating tolerance, respect for diversity, and interfaith harmony (Aksa & Nurhayati, 2020). The principle of *padaidi/solata* (“between us/our brothers”) remains central across Toraja’s social subsystems, shaping cooperative practices and social harmonization.

Economic interactions further illustrate how local wisdom mitigates racial and religious boundaries. Historically rooted in agriculture, Toraja’s economic activities, now spanning farming, tourism, and trade are conducted collaboratively across religious and ethnic groups (Mukramin & Aminah, 2022). In transmigration settlements, multiethnic communities maintain harmonious relations by respecting cultural differences and supporting collective decisions. These examples demonstrate that eradicating racism in Toraja is a long-term process involving all societal elements. Local wisdom strengthens religious moderation and prevents racism by embedding values of tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect into everyday life. Toraja thus exemplifies how cultural traditions can serve as powerful tools for building unity, overcoming division, and fostering a just and inclusive society.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that local wisdom in Tana Toraja functions as an effective sociocultural mechanism for strengthening religious moderation and preventing racism within interfaith relations. The findings show that Torajan customary values, expressed through ritual participation, kinship-based cooperation, and everyday social ethics, shape inclusive interreligious interactions that sustain harmony between Christian, Muslim, and Aluk Todolo communities. Rather than addressing racism as an isolated phenomenon, Torajan society mitigates discriminatory tendencies through culturally embedded practices that normalize respect, regulate social boundaries, and reinforce collective identity. These insights directly answer the research questions by confirming that local wisdom operationalizes religious moderation in daily life and serves as a preventive framework against racism.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its qualitative case study design, which relies on a small number of informants and focuses on a single cultural setting. These methodological constraints restrict the generalizability of the findings and limit the ability to capture variations across different Torajan subregions or generational groups. Future research should employ comparative,

multi-site, or mixed-method approaches to examine how local wisdom interacts with religious moderation in other multicultural contexts, and to explore how younger generations reinterpret or renegotiate these cultural mechanisms in rapidly changing social environments.

Future studies could investigate how local wisdom can be integrated into formal education, interfaith programs, or community-based conflict prevention models. Theoretically, this research contributes to reframing racism as a relational outcome shaped by cultural mechanisms rather than solely by institutional structures. Practically, the Toraja case offers a model for policymakers, educators, and interfaith practitioners seeking culturally grounded strategies to strengthen social cohesion, promote religious moderation, and build inclusive multicultural societies.

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