

Religion Identity and Moderation: A Social Psychology Perspective

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Religion Identity and Moderation: A Social Psychology PerspectiveMuhammad Wahid Nur Tualeka^{1*}, Akhsanul In'am², Abdul Haris³ Muhammad Arfan Muammar⁴[*wahid.tualeka@gmail.com](mailto:wahid.tualeka@gmail.com)^[1,2,3,4] University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Indonesia**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the relationship between religion identity and moderation within the context of social psychology, with a focus on the influence of religion identity on individual attitudes and behaviors in a pluralistic society. The social tensions often caused by religious differences highlight the importance of understanding the factors that influence moderation attitudes. This research uses a quantitative method with a survey involving 100 respondents from various religious backgrounds. The findings indicate that individuals with strong religious identities tend to have more moderate views. However, the study also reveals that other factors, such as education level and the intensity of interfaith interactions, also affect moderation attitudes. These findings provide new insights into the role of moderation in maintaining social cohesion and strengthening interfaith relationships in an increasingly plural society. This article is expected to contribute to the understanding of social dynamics and the development of policies that support interfaith harmony.

Keywords: religion identity, moderation, social psychology

INTRODUCTION

Religion identity is one of the most important elements in an individual's social life and has a significant impact on social interactions. Tajfel and Turner (1979), in their social identity theory, state that group identity, including religion identity, can influence individual behavior in various social contexts. Religion identity not only reflects an individual's beliefs and spiritual practices but also plays a major role in shaping viewpoints, values, and social behavior in daily life. In Indonesia, a country with a rich diversity of religions, religion identity often becomes a factor influencing social dynamics, both as a source of unity and a potential source of conflict. (Halimi et al., 2025)

In Indonesian society, where around 87% of the population is Muslim, with the rest adhering to Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and other religions (Central Statistics Agency [BPS], 2020), religious differences can create tension between religious groups but also open opportunities for the creation of harmony and moderation. In this context, religion identity can act as a catalyst for tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation between different religious groups. However, at the same time, religion identity can also trigger polarization

and social tensions if not managed well. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how religion identity relates to moderation attitudes, as well as other factors that influence moderate attitudes in this plural society. (Putra et al., 2024)

This study aims to explore the relationship between religion identity and moderation in the social context of Indonesia. (Nurhanisah & Tjoetra, 2025) Specifically, this research will analyze how religion identity shapes individual attitudes and behaviors, as well as the role of other factors, such as education and interfaith interactions, in promoting moderate attitudes. This study seeks to provide new insights into the role of religion identity in shaping moderate social attitudes, which are crucial for maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural and multireligious society. It is expected that the findings from this research can contribute to efforts in creating a more inclusive and harmonious society, where religious diversity is accepted as a strength that enriches social life.

With this diverse background, this research is important because it offers a deeper understanding of the factors that can influence moderation in

religious life. Given the existing social challenges, particularly concerning issues of intolerance and radicalization, understanding the relationship between religion identity and moderation can provide a foundation for developing policies and programs that support peace and interfaith harmony in Indonesia.

METHOD

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative design with a survey approach to explore the relationship between religion identity and moderation attitudes in a plural society. (Ardianto et al., 2025) A quantitative method was chosen because it allows for the collection of data that can be measured objectively and analyzed statistically to draw valid and reliable conclusions. The survey approach was selected because it is effective in reaching a large population and obtaining representative data. The sample for this study was randomly selected from populations in several major cities in Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta, representing the social and cultural diversity of Indonesian society. The random sampling process aims to minimize bias and provide a broader picture of the relationship between religion identity and moderation across different segments of society.

Respondents

A total of 100 respondents participated in this study. The inclusion criteria for participants were individuals aged 18 years and above from diverse religious backgrounds, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others. This age criterion was selected because adults (18 years and above) are expected to have a more mature understanding of their religion identity and can provide more reflective responses regarding moderation attitudes in social life. Using a sample with diverse religious backgrounds aims to obtain representative data on how religion identity affects moderation attitudes, particularly in a multireligious society like Indonesia. (Afifah et al., 2024)

Instrument

The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire consisting of several scales that have been proven valid and reliable in previous research.

The religion identity scale used was developed by Phinney (1992), which has been effective in measuring the extent to which individuals identify with their religious group. This scale measures important aspects of religion identity, such as religious affiliation, involvement in religious practices, and feelings related to the religious group. Additionally, the study also used a moderation scale adapted from Goleman (2011), which measures the extent to which individuals show moderate attitudes in social and religious contexts, including tolerance towards differences, openness to interfaith dialogue, and commitment to social harmony. (Samosir et al., 2024)

Analyzed

The data collected from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and religious background, and to summarize data on the levels of religion identity and moderation held by the respondents. Inferential analysis was then used to identify the relationship between the variables studied, namely religion identity and moderation, using appropriate statistical tests, such as correlation and regression tests. (Fachruddin & Yusuf, 2025) Thus, this research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how religion identity influences moderation attitudes in the broader social context, as well as factors that may mediate this relationship.

RESULTS

The results of this study indicate a significant positive relationship between religion identity and moderation in individuals' views on other religions. About 65% of respondents with strong religion identities reported moderate attitudes towards other religious groups. These findings support previous research by Hunsberger and Jackson (2005), which found that individuals with strong religion identities tend to be more open to differences and exhibit tolerant attitudes towards other groups, even in the face of differences in religious beliefs and practices. Their research showed that religion identity, as part of a person's social identity, not only creates a strong affiliation

with a particular religious group but can also shape a more moderate and open-minded perspective towards differences in a multireligious society. This is relevant to the situation in Indonesia, where religious differences are often a source of tension, (Aullia et al., 2024) but on the other hand, a strong religion identity can function to form a moderate attitude that supports social harmony.

However, while religion identity plays an important role in shaping moderate attitudes, this study also identifies that education plays a crucial role in influencing individual moderation. Respondents with higher education levels showed stronger moderate attitudes, regardless of how strong their religion identity was. This suggests that education acts as a mediator in the relationship between religion identity and moderation. This finding reinforces Goleman's (2011) view, which argues that education, particularly education that emphasizes social skills and empathy, can broaden an individual's perspective on religious and cultural differences. In-depth education can enhance individuals' ability to interact harmoniously with different groups, reduce prejudice, and strengthen tolerance, thus shaping a more moderate view of social and religious diversity. (Santosa et al., 2025)

Factors Studied	Findings	References
Religion Identity and Moderate Attitudes	65% of respondents with strong religious identities reported moderate attitudes towards other religious groups.	Hunsberger & Jackson (2005)
Influence of Education	Respondents with higher education levels exhibited stronger moderate attitudes, even if their religious identity was strong.	Goleman (2011)
Interfaith Interaction	Positive social interactions between religions, such as social activities and	Allport (1954)

Factors Studied	Findings	References
	community events, contributed to an increase in moderate attitudes among individuals.	
Education and Empathy	Education that emphasizes social skills and empathy broadens individuals' perspectives on religious and cultural differences, as well as enhances tolerance.	Goleman (2011)
Role of Social Interaction in Moderation	Positive interfaith activities can reduce prejudice and increase tolerance, thus reducing the potential for conflicts between religious groups.	Allport (1954)

Explanation:

1. Religion Identity and Moderate Attitudes: Although religion identity plays a role in influencing moderation, respondents with strong religion identities showed moderate attitudes towards other religions.
2. Influence of Education: Higher education serves as a mediator that strengthens moderate attitudes, even when religion identity is strong.
3. Interfaith Interaction: Positive social interactions play a significant role in creating moderate attitudes, reducing prejudice, and promoting interfaith harmony.
4. Education and Empathy: Education based on empathy and social skills strengthens an individual's ability to interact with different religious groups.

5. Role of Social Interaction in Moderation: Positive interfaith activities can reduce social tensions and facilitate constructive dialogue between different religious groups.

DISCUSSION

This study highlights the important role of interfaith interaction in shaping moderate attitudes. Positive social interactions between individuals of different religions, such as those in social activities or communities, significantly contribute to stronger moderate attitudes among individuals. As Allport (1954) explained in his interfaith contact theory, positive interfaith interactions can reduce prejudice and enhance tolerance. Activities such as interfaith dialogue, interfaith seminars, and joint projects provide opportunities for individuals to get to know and understand different religious beliefs, which in turn can reduce prejudice, strengthen tolerance, and reduce potential conflicts between religious groups. Joint religious activities or interfaith discussions facilitated by various communities also allow individuals to build empathy and mutual respect. This dialogue not only promotes understanding but can also reduce the potential for tension between different groups.

Furthermore, the findings of this study indicate that while religion identity contributes to the development of moderate attitudes, other factors such as education level and interfaith interaction also play a significant role. In Indonesia, which has high religious diversity, it is essential to pay attention to how education and social interactions can strengthen moderation and tolerance among different religious groups. As Goleman (2011) explains, education that focuses on empathy and social skills, teaching individuals to view differences as enrichment, can be a key strategy for creating a more inclusive and harmonious society. Therefore, improving the quality of education that emphasizes tolerance values and policies that strengthen interfaith interactions should be a priority in efforts to create a peaceful and inclusive society.

CONCLUSION

This research provides deeper insights into the relationship between religion identity and moderation in the context of social psychology. Although religion identity can often be a source of conflict in plural societies, the findings of this study suggest that individuals with strong religion identities are not necessarily extreme or intolerant. On the contrary, they can show moderate attitudes, especially when their religion identity is supported by other factors such as education and positive interfaith interactions. This illustrates that while religion identity plays an important role in shaping individuals' views and behaviors, it is not the only determining factor for whether someone will exhibit moderate attitudes.

The findings show that respondents with higher education levels, even with strong religion identities, tend to exhibit higher levels of moderation. This indicates that education plays a significant role in strengthening moderate attitudes, as education enhances understanding and social skills that help individuals manage differences and appreciate the importance of tolerance in society. Moreover, positive interfaith interactions that occur in social activities, communities, and interfaith forums are also proven to be important factors contributing to the development of moderate attitudes. These positive interactions allow individuals to become more familiar with other religious beliefs, which can reduce prejudice and strengthen tolerance.

Based on these findings, it is important for society and policymakers to encourage educational programs that promote tolerance and interfaith understanding. Such programs will provide space for individuals to expand their perspectives on other religions and introduce inclusive values that can reduce social tension. Education focused on character development and the ability to interact with different groups, particularly in religious contexts, can play a strategic role in creating a more harmonious and tolerant society. Furthermore, policies that encourage cooperation and interfaith dialogue are also essential in strengthening social harmony and enhancing moderation in society.

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