

Exploring the Dynamics of Faith and Social Integration: A Cross-Institutional Analysis of Religious Moderation Among Students in Medan State University and North Sumatra University

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Abstract

This research aims to evaluate religious moderation among Medan State University (UNIMED) and North Sumatra University (USU) students in the context of their social life. The method used is a descriptive quantitative method. The population consists of students from the USU Faculty of Cultural Sciences and the UNIMED Faculty of Social Sciences, each around 4,000 people. A 912 sample was determined using the Slovin formula and randomly selected via Googleform distributed by each faculty. Data collection was carried out through closed questionnaires regarding Religious Moderation. Testing the questionnaire on 30 respondents showed the validity of all questionnaire items with a correlation above 0.361 at a confidence level of 0.05. The instrument's reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha equation with a result of 0.937, indicating an excellent level of reliability. Data analysis was carried out using the average formula. The research results show that the religious moderation of students in North Sumatra is quite good. Questionnaire data from 912 USU and UNIMED students shows that almost all dimensions of religious moderation are in the very high category, with an average score for National Commitment of 4.437%, Tolerance of 4.274%, Non-Violence of 4.441%, and Accommodation to Local Culture of 4.425 %. These results show excellent religious moderation among students at both universities.

Keywords

Moderation; Religion; Social Life; Student

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1. INTRODUCTION

North Sumatra is the province with the largest population, ranking 4th in Indonesia by population 15,305,230 soul, consisting of Islam 63.36%, Protestant 26.66%, Catholic 7.33%, Buddhist 2.43%, Confucian 0.11%, Hindu 0.10%, Parmalim 0.01%. North Sumatra consists of 13 tribes with the Batak 44.75%, Javanese 32.41%, Nias 7.05%, Malay 5.97%, Chinese 3.63%, Minangkabau 2.58%, Aceh 1.03%, Banjar 0.77%, Indian 0.56%, Sundanese 0.27%, Foreign Nationals 0.23%, Papua 0.09%, and Other Tribes 0.66% (<https://sumut.bps.go.id/>). In particular, regarding religious diversity, namely Islam,



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Catholicism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism, the Indonesian people continue to respect and recognize ancestral beliefs or religions found throughout Indonesia. (Akhmadi, 2019).

In the history of the development of Indonesian civilization, specifically regarding the dynamics of religious life, the Indonesian people have only sometimes been able to manage this diversity well. (Utoyo, 2016) This can be seen from various events, for example, the conflict in Ambon in 1999-2002 and the ethnic riots in Poso in 2000. This shows that there are tensions between certain religious groups in several regions. This tends to be caused by extreme attitudes towards the correctness of interpretations believed by religious adherents, the emergence of interpretations and heretical sects and even the emergence of an apathetic attitude towards the sanctity of religion by deifying human reason or logic (Igrima, 2021).

A 2017 survey conducted by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISEAS) shows a large number of Indonesian Muslims support the implementation of sharia law as a legal code to be followed by all Indonesians both at the national level (39% of respondents) and the local level (41% of respondents). This also shows that 36 per cent of Indonesian Muslims agree with the statement that Islam should be the only official religion in Indonesia. Two other recent surveys conducted by Alvara Research Consulting found that one in every five students supports the establishment of a caliphate over a secular government in Indonesia (Arifianto, 2019).

The student movement in 1998, characterized by the term reform, showed that Indonesian students were one of the locomotives of the national movement. Student forces succeeded in stopping the regime at that time. This shows that the presence of students in Indonesia greatly influences the policies set by the government. This can happen because students can join elements of society (Khoirul et al., 2020). Regarding religious moderation, students are one of the most effective drivers. Students need to be aware of religious moderation properly and realize a concept that emphasizes prioritizing the middle way, not the extreme right or left. A study (Arifianto, 2019) shows that students without internet access relatively show more tolerant and moderate attitudes than those with internet access. The Internet as an information medium can be an effective and efficient means for exchanging and disseminating information without being hindered by distance, time differences and geographical factors for someone who wants to access information (Samosir, 2018). However, on the other hand, there is also a positive impact from using the Internet, according to Yunasari, who stated that the majority of students show a lot of understanding of religious moderation when surfing the social world with issues of religious moderation and being able to intelligently filter and absorb news or issues that are widely spread through social media (Yanasari, 2021).

The COVID-19 situation has encouraged students to be active in cyberspace, so they have indirectly been exposed to the vastness of social media. Some Indonesian observers have a negative view of the

impact of new media on activism and civic engagement, finding that most people use new social media such as Facebook (Hamayotsu, 2013). The spread of hoax news and social friction often occurs on social media, so it greatly influences social life. Reporting like this can massively damage the value of religious moderation (Bailon & Lelkes, 2023). The internalization of religious moderation is a process that involves various factors, including the important role of parents, the environment, relationships, and religious and educational institutions (Anto et al., 2024). Parents have a big impact because they are the first role models in shaping children's religious values. By modelling moderation in religious practices, parents provide an important foundation for children to internalize these values (Wang et al., 2020).

The surrounding environment also plays a role in the internalization of religious moderation. Daily interactions with friends, neighbours, and society can strengthen or change a person's views on religious moderation. Association with friends who adhere to the values of religious moderation can form a positive perception of interfaith Tolerance and harmony (Marjani, 2023). In addition, religious and educational institutions, such as religious schools or places of worship, also play a significant role. They are a place to gain a deeper understanding of moderate religious teachings. Through targeted religious activities and religious education, these institutions can assist individuals in understanding the essence of religious moderation and integrating it into everyday life (Cuevas & Dawson, 2021). Therefore, educational institutions must always innovate in the world of education so that the negative impacts of using social media can be overcome. Education is a conscious and planned effort to create a learning atmosphere and learning process so that students actively develop their potential to have religious, and spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble morals, and skills needed by themselves and society. (Naibaho, 2023).

As time passes, Indonesian people must have a spirit of religious moderation. This spirit of moderation must be based on understanding correct religious moderation (Abror, 2020). This form of religious moderation prioritizes an attitude of Tolerance that does not fall into the trap of extremism, intolerance and acts of violence (Sitorus, 2022). This spirit of moderation seeks to find common ground on various religious teachings, practices and rituals so that no nuance of debate defends extreme interpretations of the truth of its teachings that denigrate other people's religions/beliefs, resulting in confrontation between and among religious adherents. (Sinaga, 2022).

This research aims to determine the level of religious moderation of Medan State University students and North Sumatra University students in their social life. The selection of Medan State University (UNIMED) and North Sumatra University (USU) students as research objects related to religious moderation was based on several strategic considerations. First, these two universities have a fairly representative student population from various religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds in North Sumatra. Thus, the research results can provide a more holistic picture of religious moderation

in the region. Second, students are a group that is intensely involved in the process of forming identity and social values. This study aims to identify how much religious moderation is internalized in students' thinking and behaviour. By selecting UNIMED and USU, researchers could access the diversity of religious views and practices in higher education settings that play an important role in shaping students' perspectives on moderation. In particular, this research also aims to find out which indicators have high and low scores from the dimensions of religious moderation, which can then be used as material for consideration for stakeholders and related parties in making decisions and policies related to religious moderation and religious radicalism, for example, in terms of preparing educational curricula to include the values of religious moderation, promotion of Tolerance and interfaith understanding. Encourage educational institutions to integrate the values of religious moderation with lecture materials, provide training to relevant lecturers and academics to understand and convey the values of religious moderation to students, and encourage the dissemination of religious teachings that support peace and harmony.

2. METHOD

This research uses a descriptive quantitative method to describe the understanding and behaviour of religious moderation by students at public state universities in North Sumatra, namely students at the University of North Sumatra and Medan State University. This research was conducted at the North Sumatra General State University at the Faculty of Culture, University of North Sumatra (USU) and the Faculty of Social Sciences, State University of Medan (UNIMED), with the reason that these two universities have students with very diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, culture and religion. The selection of research locations at universities in Medan was based on research from the Institute, which conducted research on tolerant and intolerant cities in 2018, with research results stating that the city of Medan was intolerant. (Yumasdaleni, 2021).

The population of this research is students from the Faculty of Cultural Sciences, University of North Sumatra, numbering approximately 4,000 people, and students from the Faculty of Social Sciences, UNIMED, numbering approximately 4,000 people. From the number of students, a sample was determined using the Slovin formula Riduwan (2005), with the formula:

$$n = N / (1 + (N \times e^2)).$$

n: is the number of samples sought.

N is the population

. e is the predetermined precision value or significance level.

In general, the level of significance for social sciences is determined at 0.01 (10%) with a population of 8,000 people; the sample is set = $8,000 / (1 + (8000 \times 0.01)) = 380.952$ rounded to = 381 people.

Considering the population above, the minimum research sample is 381 people. In this study, the sample was made up of 912 people. Obtained randomly via Googleform distributed by each faculty.

The questionnaire was tested randomly with 30 respondents by distributing the questionnaire in the form of a Google form. The equation used to determine validity is using the product moment person equation. And using Cronbach's alpha to determine reliability. The results obtained by all questionnaire items are valid, provided that the correlation value is above 0.361 with a confidence level of 0.05. The results of calculating Cronbach's alpha equation also show that reliability is at a very reliable level with a value of 0.937.

Data collection was carried out using a closed questionnaire instrument on Religious Moderation with four indicators: 1) national commitment, 2) tolerance, 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating to local culture, (Ministry of Religion, 2019: 43), (https://balitbangdiklat.kemenag.go.id/MODERASI_BERAGAMA.pdf, accessed November 10, 2023), with five Likert scale values. Data were analyzed using the average formula. The variables measured in this research use descriptive statistics with a total of 912 respondents, each of which is national commitment, Tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The picture of religious moderation in the social life of students in North Sumatra is very good. This is proven by the results of questionnaire data processing distributed to 912 USU and UNIMED students which show that almost all dimensions of religious moderation are in the very high category. Starting from the National Commitment dimension, the average value is 4.437% based on the Likert scale interpretation table, which is in the Very High category. The Tolerance dimension is 4.274% based on the Likert scale interpretation table and is in the Very High category, then the Anti-Violence dimension is 4.441% based on the table. The Likert scale interpretation is in the Very High category, and the Accommodative to Local Culture dimension is 4.425% based on the Likert scale interpretation table, which is in the Very High category.

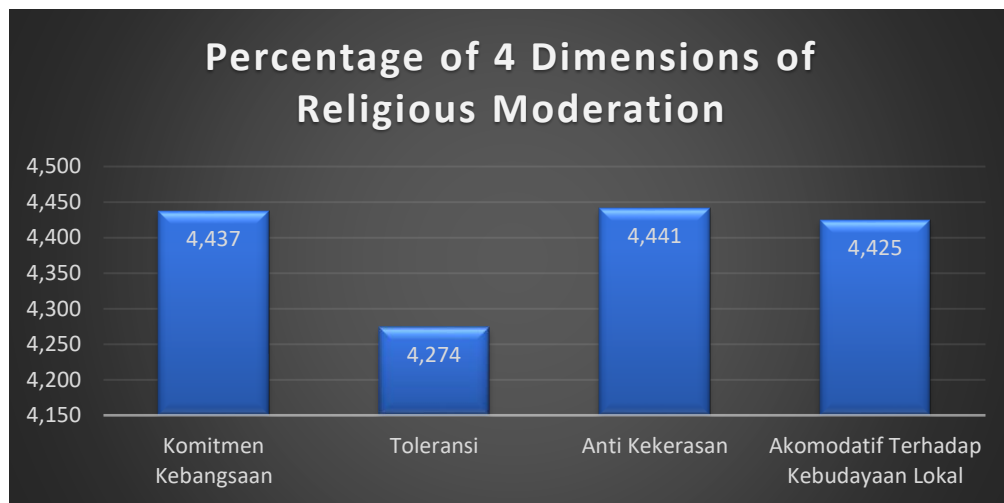


Figure 1. Percentage Graph of the Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students

No	Dimensions of Religious Moderation			
1	National Commitment	Tolerance	Anti violence	Accommodating to Local Culture
2	4,437 (very high category)	4,274 (very high category)	4,441 (very high category)	4,425 (very high category)
Average	4,394			

Table 1. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students

Even though all dimensions are in the very high category, in each category of student identity, which is broken down by religion, ethnicity, gender, and semester, and especially for Batak ethnic students with the religious identity category, there is a different average value for each dimension of religious moderation obtained. This shows that not all dimensions of moderation are maximally implemented by students in their social life. Moderation dimension data with higher and lower values based on student identity categories can be seen as follows:

Religion	The average value is higher	The average value is lower
Islam	National Commitment is 4.41%.	dimensional Tolerance of 4.18%.
Catholic	Anti-Violence was 4.52%.	dimensional Tolerance of 4.44%.
Christian	Anti-Violence was 4.48%.	dimensional Tolerance of 4.43%.

Table 2. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students Based on Religious Identity

Ethnic group	The average value is higher	The average value is lower
Aceh	Anti-Violence of 4.46%	Tolerance dimensions of 4.24%.
Batak	Non-Violence and Accommodation to local culture each amounted to 4.46%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.31%.
Banjar	Anti-Violence was 4.54%.	National Commitment of 4.03%.
Java	National Commitment is 4.46%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.11%.
Malay	Anti-Violence was 4.56%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.28%.
Minang	Accommodation to local culture is 4.40%.	The Tolerance dimension is 4.17%.
Nias	Accommodation to Local Culture was 4.58%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.39%.
Chinese	Anti-Violence by 5%	Accommodation to Local Culture was 4.18%.
Timor	National Commitment is 4.57%.	Accommodation to Local Culture was 4.18%.

Table 3. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students Based on Ethnic Identity

Gender	The average value is higher	The average value is lower
Man	National Commitment of 4.52%	Tolerance dimensions of 4.32%.
Woman	Anti-Violence of 4.43%	Tolerance dimensions of 4.26%.

Table 4. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students Based on Gender Identity

Semester	The average value is higher	The average value is lower
Semester 1	State Commitment is 4.46%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.27%.
3rd semester	Accommodation to Local Culture was 4.43%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.24%.
5th semester	Anti-Violence was 4.47%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.31%.
7th semester	Anti-Violence of 4.45%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.29%.

Table 5. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatra Students Based on Semester Level

Batak Tribe Students		
Religion	The average value is higher	The average value is lower
Islam	State Commitment is 4.44%.	Tolerance dimensions of 4.20%.
Catholic	Anti-Violence of 4.53%	Tolerance dimensions of 4.46%.
Christian	Anti-Violence of 4.47%	Tolerance dimensions of 4.33%.

Table 6. Level of Religious Moderation Among North Sumatran Batak Students Based on Religious Identity

Moderation dimension data is based on student identity categories, the Tolerance dimension is almost always the dimension with a lower average value than the average value of other dimensions. Religious Tolerance is an attitude of patient respect and respect for the beliefs or beliefs of another person or group. Tolerance should be interpreted as an attitude of living together and with people who adhere to other religions by having the freedom to implement their respective religious principles without coercion or pressure. If Tolerance is not implemented, there will be a risk of conflict between religious communities. Conflicts between religious communities can take the form of cases of intolerance, acts of extremism and terrorism or violence in the name of religion displayed by certain groups, for example, the disbandment of church congregations that were carrying out worship by certain groups in North Sumatra (<https://www.detik.com/sumut/berita/d-6751029/besar>). According to the religious harmony index (KUB published by the Puslitbang Bimas Religion and Religious Services 2019), Tolerance is one of the most significant indicators for creating religious harmony. The living conditions of religious communities who interact in harmony, Tolerance, peace, mutual respect and respect for religious differences as well as the freedom to carry out their respective worship according to their beliefs. Therefore, strengthening the dimensions of Tolerance needs to be carried out among students so that students, as the next generation, can implement the dimensions of Tolerance in their social lives to the maximum. Tolerance education is not enough just to be learned; it must also be applied and embedded in everyday life because harmony and harmony will not just arise naturally but must be fought for and maintained. Thus, one way to fight for this is through tolerance education because Tolerance can be a tool to unify the nation, especially in the social dynamics of Indonesian society. Furthermore, religious harmony can be realized by respecting each other's differences and maintaining good communication between residents. The existence of differences will enrich the idea that diversity is a wealth that must be protected, preserved and proud of in Indonesia.

Apart from the tolerance dimension, accommodating towards local culture is also a dimension with a lower average value than the other dimensions. It must be acknowledged that with diversity in society, the potential for differences in understanding can also result in feelings of suspicion between ethnic groups and religious communities; if this is not addressed appropriately, it can cause divisions among ethnic groups and religious communities. Multicultural societies cannot always live side by side as they should. The challenges of a society with cultural, cultural, racial and even religious diversity will one day become a national problem. Several tragedies in this nation have been caused by a lack of wisdom in managing diversity, which has led to horizontal conflicts, resulting in divisions and conflicts, which are the bitter experiences of the nation. To anticipate this, one approach considered appropriate by various experts is to strengthen local philosophy or local wisdom, which is full of messages of peace, which, of course, is accompanied by wise religious understanding and campaigning for it by the multicultural culture of Indonesian society. Instilling religious moderation by practising it and guiding the younger generation, such as students, so that they imitate and practice it provides theory and practice to emulate, namely in existing cultural traditions (Gazali et al., 2023). Because students, as the young generation, are one of the spearheads of obstacles and supporters in implementing religious moderation in local wisdom or cultural traditions.

Furthermore, looking at it from the perspective of national commitment and non-violence for students, it is an attitude and action that shows dedication to the development of the country and rejection of all forms of violence in carrying out their role as agents of change and future leaders. As an integral part of society and future leaders, students are expected to strongly commit to national values and uphold the spirit of unity. First, the national commitment for students includes loyalty to *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, a motto that describes diversity as a shared strength. Students are expected to have a deep understanding of the history, culture and values of *Pancasila* as the basis of the country. Through this commitment, students can play an active role in maintaining unity and harmony amidst the diversity of society (Tagorda & Magno, 2023).

Meanwhile, non-violence is an important aspect of forming responsible student characters. Students must show rejection of all forms of violence, whether physical, verbal or psychological. They are expected to be agents of peace who promote dialogue, Tolerance and understanding between individuals and groups (Kafedžić & Clarke, 2023).

National commitment is also reflected in students' active participation in social activities and community development. Through involvement in humanitarian projects, community service, and empowerment programs, students can prove their loyalty to the ideals of independence and shared prosperity (Sabet & Khaksar, 2020).

By integrating national commitment and an anti-violence attitude into students' lives, they

become positive agents capable of creating harmonious and sustainable social change. Higher education is the main stage where students can shape their character and prepare themselves to become leaders who create a just and peaceful future for the nation (Ferguson & Roofe, 2020).

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis utilizing an average formula, the assessment of religious moderation among students in North Sumatra reflects a commendable score of 4.394, positioning it within the "very high" category. This evaluation was derived from the assessment of four dimensions through the distribution of questionnaires via Google Forms. The dimension values attained are as follows: National Commitment scored 4.437 (categorized as "very high"); Tolerance scored 4.274 (also classified as "very high"); Anti-Violence scored 4.441 (falling within the "very high" category); and Accommodating to Local Culture scored 4.425 (likewise categorized as "very high").

An overview of religious moderation behaviours among students in North Sumatra, encompassing various factors such as religion, ethnicity, gender, semester, and specifically the Batak tribe, underscores an intriguing observation. Despite the overall high scores, the dimension of Tolerance consistently ranks relatively lower than other dimensions. Consequently, a notable opportunity exists for enhancement, particularly in fostering greater Tolerance levels within the North Sumatra student community.

In conclusion, while the study reveals a predominantly positive outlook on religious moderation among students in North Sumatra, the need for targeted interventions to bolster tolerance levels is evident. By addressing this aspect, stakeholders can contribute to fostering a more inclusive and harmonious social environment conducive to the holistic development of students in the region.

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