

## RECONSTRUCTION OF MODERATE RELIGIOUS STRENGTHENING IN MALAY SOCIETY

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### Abstract

This study examines the reconstruction of religious moderation within the Malay community of Muntok City, Bangka Belitung, amid contemporary socio-religious challenges. Although historically recognized for its strong interreligious harmony grounded in Malay local wisdom, recent social changes, transnational religious influences, and digital media exposure have begun to reshape patterns of religious interaction. This research addresses two key questions: how the reconstruction of religious moderation is carried out and what factors influence its strengthening in the local context. Employing a qualitative case study approach, primary and secondary data were collected through in-depth interviews with religious leaders, Malay traditional leaders, government representatives, and community members, supported by participant observation and document analysis, and analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The findings reveal that religious moderation in Muntok is reconstructed through the revitalization of core Malay values, musyawarah (deliberation), mutual cooperation, kinship solidarity, and cultural politeness, integrated with moderate Islamic principles. Religious and customary leaders function as moral authorities and conflict mediators, while educational institutions, social networks, government policies, and digital literacy initiatives provide structural support. The study concludes that religious moderation in Muntok is not a newly constructed paradigm but a contextual reinforcement of historically embedded cultural-religious values. Sustainable strengthening requires systematic educational programs, cross-faith dialogue, and proactive digital engagement to ensure resilience against exclusivist ideologies in the digital era.

### Keywords

Digital Era, Local Wisdom, Malay Community, Reconstruction, Religious Moderation.



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## INTRODUCTION

The strengthening of moderate religious values among the Malay community in Muntok City, West Bangka Regency, can be understood as a process of internalizing the values of Islam wasatiyyah, which emphasizes balance, justice, tolerance, and moderation in religious practice (Kamali, 2015; Rahman, 1982). This concept is rooted in the principle of Ummatan Wasathan as mentioned in QS. Al-Baqarah verse 143, which positions Muslims as a community that is just and moderate in carrying out social life. In the context of the Malay community in Muntok, this principle is formulated through the integration of Islamic values with local Malay wisdom (Abdullah, 2017; Azra, 2004), such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, social politeness, and family solidarity. Field data shows that the community of Muntok, which consists of various ethnic groups, including Malay, Chinese, and migrants, has long lived in a relatively harmonious pattern of interaction. Based on data from the West Bangka Regency Central Statistics Agency in 2023, the population of Muntok District is around 53 thousand people with a diverse religious composition, namely a Muslim majority of around 70%, followed by Buddhists and Confucians, most of whom are from the Chinese community, as well as a smaller number of Christians and Catholics. This diversity does not trigger open conflict because the value of moderation has become part of the social culture of the community. In this context, strengthening moderate religious values is not about creating new values, but rather recontextualizing Islamic values that have long been acculturated with Malay culture.

The social and cultural practices of the Malay community in Muntok City empirically reflect the implementation of the principles of religious moderation in everyday life. This can be seen in various social activities, such as the Nganggung tradition, which is the tradition of carrying food trays together at religious or social events involving cross-group participation. This tradition not only functions as a cultural ritual but also as a social mechanism that strengthens solidarity and tolerance among citizens. Field observations show that people from various religious backgrounds participate in social activities such as village charity events, religious holidays, and village mutual aid activities. In addition, the existence of places of worship side by side in the Muntok area is a clear indicator of the practice of tolerance, where mosques, temples, and churches can be found within a relatively close radius without causing social tension. Interviews with community leaders show that religious and traditional leaders play a dominant role in maintaining this balance, particularly in promoting the understanding that religion should not be a source of social conflict. From a

sociological perspective, this condition shows that the value of moderation has been internalized in the social capital of the community, which is reflected in high levels of trust, strong social networks, and a culture of dialogue in resolving differences.

Efforts to reconstruct the strengthening of moderate religiosity in the Muntok Malay community need to be carried out through cultural, educational, and structural approaches in order to respond to contemporary social dynamics, especially the influence of globalization and digital media. Normatively, this reconstruction can be carried out by reaffirming moderate Islamic values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) in various social institutions in society. Research data shows that religious leaders, educational institutions, and local governments have begun to integrate moderate values through interfaith dialogue programs, the strengthening of tolerance-based religious education in schools, and the activities of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB). In addition, digital literacy is an important aspect of the reconstruction of moderation because some people are beginning to be exposed to more exclusive religious narratives through social media (Azra, 2020; Huda & Huda, 2022; Lim, 2017). Therefore, the reconstruction of moderation is not only carried out through religious lectures, but also through digital education programs, cross-community discussions, and the revitalization of local cultural traditions that contain values of togetherness. With this approach, the strengthening of moderate religion in Muntok can be maintained as a social foundation that maintains the stability of a multicultural society and becomes a model for the practice of religious moderation based on local wisdom in Indonesia.

In a theoretical context, this reality can be understood through the perspective of social constructivism, which states that social reality is shaped through a process of interaction and shared construction of meaning (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Religious moderation is not a stand-alone entity, but rather the result of a dialectical process between social structures, cultural values, and religious interpretations. When social structures change due to globalization and the penetration of transnational ideologies, the construction of meaning about religious diversity also undergoes change. Therefore, a process of reconstruction is needed to reorganize narratives, practices, and social institutions so that the values of moderation remain relevant to the current context.

The term reconstruction in this study is defined as a systematic process of rebuilding, reorganizing, and strengthening the values of religious moderation that already exist in the local traditions of the Muntok Malay community. Reconstruction does not mean creating entirely new

values, but rather revitalizing and contextualizing values that are already rooted in local culture so that they can respond to contemporary challenges. Latif (2020) emphasizes that the strengthening of religious moderation must be carried out through educational, cultural, and institutional approaches simultaneously. In the context of Muntok, this approach needs to be based on local Malay wisdom, which has long been the social glue of the community.

Research on moderate religiosity in Malay society in recent years shows a tendency that the value of religious moderation is often deeply rooted in local culture and the role of certain social actors. Research by Bujuri (2023) The internalization of Islamic moderation values in Malay communities in South Sumatra shows that the values of *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, and *tawazun* have become part of social practices through traditional customs, religious education, and inclusive social interactions. The results of this study confirm that Malay culture has the adaptive ability to integrate Islamic teachings with local wisdom, thereby forming a relatively moderate pattern of religious practice. However, this study emphasizes the process of internalizing moderate values in community cultural practices without analyzing in depth the dynamics of social change influenced by the development of digital media and the transformation of social structures. Thus, there is a gap in research related to how these values of moderation are reconstructed in the face of contemporary social challenges.

Another study was conducted by Harahap (2022), which examined the role of local wisdom in building harmony among religious communities through traditional social systems. The results of the study show that the structure of local cultural values can function as a mechanism for conflict resolution and strengthening tolerance in multicultural societies. However, this study does not specifically focus on the Malay community as the main subject of study, but rather highlights the role of the customary system as an instrument of social integration. Meanwhile, research by Fakhurokhman (2022) on the concept of Islam Nusantara shows that religious practices rooted in local culture can be a model for inclusive and contextual Islamic moderation. The results of this study confirm that the integration of Islamic teachings and local culture produces a form of religiosity that is adaptive to social plurality (Bruinessen, 2013; Woodward, 2011). However, this study is more conceptual in nature and does not specifically examine the dynamics of religious moderation in the context of specific Malay communities, especially at the local community level, which is facing the influence of globalization.

Furthermore, research by Massoweang (2021) highlights the role of religious literature and the authority of religious scholars in maintaining moderate Islamic traditions in eastern Indonesia. The results show that religious leaders have a strategic position in transmitting the values of moderation through religious teaching and community social activities. However, the study emphasizes the dimension of religious literacy and does not link it deeply to the socio-cultural practices of the Malay community. Another relevant study was conducted by Hefner (2021), who examined the relationship between Islam, democracy, and civil society in Indonesia. The results of this study show that the success of religious moderation is greatly influenced by the strength of social institutions, education, and civil society networks that encourage dialogue and tolerance. However, this study was conducted on a national scale and did not specifically examine the practice of moderation in specific local communities, such as the Malay community in Muntok City.

Based on the five previous studies, it can be concluded that studies on religious moderation generally emphasize three main aspects, namely the internalization of moderate religious values, the role of local culture in maintaining social harmony, and the contribution of religious leaders and social institutions in building tolerance. Nevertheless, there is a clear research gap, namely the limited number of studies that specifically examine the process of reconstructing moderate religious reinforcement in Malay communities at the local community level, facing the dynamics of globalization and digital media penetration. Most previous studies have been descriptive in nature, examining existing values of moderation, but have not yet thoroughly examined how these values are systematically reconstructed and strengthened in the face of contemporary social change.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in its attempt to formulate a model for reconstructing moderate religious strengthening based on the local wisdom of the Malay community in Muntok City, which integrates three dimensions simultaneously, namely the cultural dimension (Malay traditional values such as deliberation and mutual cooperation), the institutional dimension (the role of religious leaders, traditional leaders, and local government policies), and the digital dimension (media literacy and the management of narratives of moderation in the digital space). This approach not only identifies existing values of moderation but also explains how these values are revitalized and reconstructed as social strategies to maintain harmony in a multicultural society amid the challenges of globalization. Therefore, this research provides new conceptual contributions to the study of community-based religious moderation and offers a model for strengthening moderation that is more contextual and adaptive to the dynamics of contemporary society.

Based on conceptual and empirical descriptions of the dynamics of religious moderation in multicultural societies, this study aims to comprehensively analyze and formulate the process of strengthening moderate religiosity among the Malay community in Muntok City, Bangka Belitung. Specifically, this study seeks to explain how the concept of religious moderation is understood and constructed based on the Islamic values of *wasatiyyah*, how the social and cultural practices of the Malay community reflect the principles of moderation in religious and social life, and how efforts to reconstruct the strengthening of religious moderation can be formulated normatively to maintain social harmony in a pluralistic society. With this focus, this study not only captures the practices of religious moderation that have developed in Malay traditions but also examines the social dynamics that influence the sustainability of these values in the face of the challenges of globalization, social transformation, and the development of digital media.

From a theoretical perspective, this research contributes to the development of religious moderation studies from the perspective of the sociology of religion and contemporary Islamic studies by placing the local wisdom of the Malay community as the basis for analysis. This research enriches the academic discourse on the relationship between religion, culture, and social structures in shaping inclusive and tolerant religious practices. In addition, this study also seeks to develop a conceptual framework for the reconstruction of religious moderation, which is not only understood as a normative concept in religious texts but as a social reality shaped through interactions between religious values, cultural traditions, and social institutions in society. Thus, this study is expected to broaden the theoretical perspective on how religious moderation is constructed, maintained, and revitalized in the context of local communities with a long history of intercultural and interreligious interaction.

Meanwhile, from a pragmatic perspective, the results of this study are expected to provide practical contributions to various stakeholders in their efforts to strengthen social harmony and religious stability in multicultural societies. The findings of this study can be used as a reference for local governments, religious leaders, traditional leaders, and educational institutions in designing strategies to strengthen religious moderation based on the local wisdom of the Malay community. In addition, this study also provides recommendations on the importance of strengthening tolerance education, interfaith dialogue, and digital literacy as instruments to prevent the development of exclusive religious narratives that have the potential to trigger social conflict. Thus, this research not only has academic value in enriching scientific literature on religious moderation but also has

practical relevance as a basis for formulating policies and social programs oriented towards strengthening social cohesion and diversity in Indonesia.

## **METHOD**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design that focuses on the dynamics of reconstructing religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City, West Bangka Regency, Bangka Belitung Islands Province. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study aims to deeply understand social processes, the construction of meaning, and the interaction between religious values and local culture in the context of community life (Creswell, 2014). Case studies were used to explore the phenomenon of religious moderation contextually and holistically in a particular social setting (Yin, 2018).

The research data sources consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with Islamic religious leaders, Malay traditional leaders, non-Muslim religious leaders, local government representatives, and community members involved in socio-religious activities. The field research was conducted from May to June 2025. Preliminary observations were carried out in May 2025, followed by intensive field observations and in-depth interviews from June 5 to June 20, 2025, in Muntok City, West Bangka Regency. This time frame enabled the researcher to comprehensively capture the dynamics of socio-religious interactions within the Malay community. Secondary data was obtained from official local government documents, archives of the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), academic literature, and policies related to religious moderation.

The data analysis technique used the interactive model of Miles et al., (2014), which includes data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Data validity was tested through source and technique triangulation, as well as reconfirmation with key informants to ensure the credibility of the findings. This approach enabled researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors that influence the reconstruction of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

Before presenting the research findings in detail, it is important to first explain the empirical context behind the data collection and analysis process in this study. Research on the strengthening

of moderate religiosity among the Malay community in Muntok City aims not only to describe social phenomena descriptively, but also to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of interaction between religious values, local cultural traditions, and the social structure of the community (Esposito & Voll, 2001; Hefner, 2016). Muntok City, as a historical region known since colonial times as a center of trade and a meeting place for various ethnic groups, such as the Malay, Chinese, and other immigrant groups, presents a plural and complex social configuration. In this context, the community's religious practices cannot be separated from the long-standing process of acculturation between Islamic teachings and local Malay traditions.

Data collection in this study was conducted through a series of field observations, in-depth interviews with religious leaders, traditional leaders, community leaders, and local government representatives, as well as analysis of various social documents and policies related to religious moderation. This approach enabled researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of how moderate religious values are practiced in the daily lives of the Malay community in Muntok City. In addition, the data obtained also shows how the community interprets the relationship between religion and culture in building a harmonious social life amid ethnic and religious diversity. Therefore, the research findings not only describe the social practices that take place in the community, but also explain the social construction process that shapes and maintains these values of moderation.

Based on the data collection and analysis process, this study then identified a number of key findings related to the forms of strengthening moderate religion in the Malay community in Muntok City. These findings include the historical conditions that shaped the tradition of tolerance in society, the factual conditions that demonstrate the dynamics of religious moderation practices in contemporary social life, and models for reconstructing religious moderation that can be implemented to maintain social harmony in the future. The presentation of the following research findings is expected to provide a clear empirical picture of how the values of religious moderation are not only present as normative concepts in religious discourse, but also as living and evolving social practices in the lives of the Malay community in Muntok City, Bangka Belitung.

**Table 1.** Reconstruction of Moderate Religious Strengthening in the Malay Community of Muntok City, Bangka Belitung

<b>Historical Conditions</b>	<b>Actual Conditions</b>	<b>Reconstruction Model</b>
Since the early days of Islamization, the Muntok Malay community has integrated Islamic teachings with local traditions such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, and the Nganggung tradition. Interactions between Malays, Chinese, and other ethnic groups have fostered a tolerant and harmonious social culture.	The value of moderation is still evident through harmonious social life and cross-community activities. However, the development of digital media and the influx of transnational religious discourse have begun to influence some societal religious patterns.	Strengthening moderation is carried out through the revitalization of moderate Islamic values based on Malay culture, strengthening tolerance education, the role of religious and traditional leaders, and support for government policies and digital literacy to maintain social harmony.

*Source: Processed by the researcher (2025)*

Table 1 illustrates the dynamics of moderate religious strengthening reconstruction in the Malay community in Muntok City, Bangka Belitung, through three main dimensions, namely historical conditions, factual conditions, and reconstruction models. The historical conditions dimension shows that the values of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok are not a new phenomenon, but rather the result of a long historical process through the interaction between Islamic teachings and local Malay culture. Since the development of Islam in the Bangka Belitung region, the Malay community has built a social system that emphasizes the values of deliberation, mutual cooperation, politeness, and family solidarity as part of their daily practices. Social traditions such as Nganggung, village almsgiving, and joint participation in various religious and social activities have become cultural mechanisms that strengthen social cohesion. In this context, religious and traditional leaders play an important role as guardians of the community's moral values, instilling principles of tolerance, balance, and respect for differences. Therefore, the foundation of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok can be understood as the result of acculturation between Islamic values and local wisdom that has been internalized in the social structure of the community.

In terms of factual conditions, the table shows that the practice of religious moderation is still relatively well preserved in the lives of the Malay community in Muntok City. The pluralistic social life of the community, which consists of various ethnicities and religions, is still characterized by harmonious patterns of interaction. Joint social activities, cross-community participation in traditional events and social activities, and the coexistence of houses of worship are empirical indicators that the value of tolerance is still alive in the social practices of the community. However,

the changing times have brought new dynamics that influence the community's patterns of religious practice. The flow of information globalisation, the development of social media, and the influx of more textual and exclusive religious discourse have begun to influence the way some people view local traditions. This condition does not directly cause conflict, but it shows the potential for a change in religious orientation that could weaken the practice of moderation that has been culturally established. Therefore, this factual condition shows that the value of religious moderation cannot be considered static, but must continue to be strengthened and contextualized in accordance with the social changes occurring in society. The reconstruction of religious moderation in Muntok also reflects global dynamics of Islam in contemporary society, where local traditions interact with transnational religious discourses (Feener, 2019; Kersten, 2020).

Based on these two dimensions, the table then formulates a model for the reconstruction of moderate religious strengthening that aims to maintain the sustainability of social harmony in the Malay community of Muntok City. This reconstruction is carried out through an integrative approach between the dimensions of culture, education, and social institutions. The cultural approach emphasizes the revitalization of Malay traditions that embody the values of togetherness and tolerance as a space for inclusive social interaction. The educational approach is carried out by strengthening religious moderation education through formal and non-formal educational institutions, such as schools, Islamic boarding schools, and majelis ta'lim (religious gatherings), so that the values of tolerance can be instilled in the younger generation from an early age. Meanwhile, the institutional approach is carried out through synergy between religious leaders, traditional leaders, local governments, and interfaith harmony forums in developing interfaith dialogue, joint social activities, and strengthening digital literacy that promotes moderate religious narratives. Through this reconstruction model, the strengthening of moderate religious values in the Malay community of Muntok is expected not only to preserve existing traditional values but also to adapt to modern social dynamics, thereby remaining relevant in maintaining stability and harmony within a multicultural society.

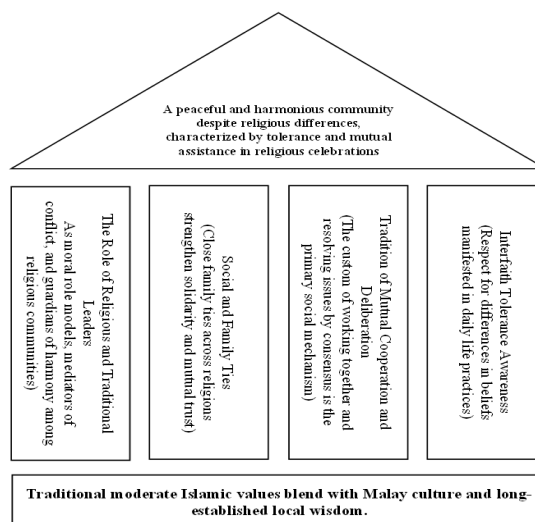
## **Discussion**

### **Reconstruction in an effort to strengthen religious moderation among the Malay community in Muntok City**

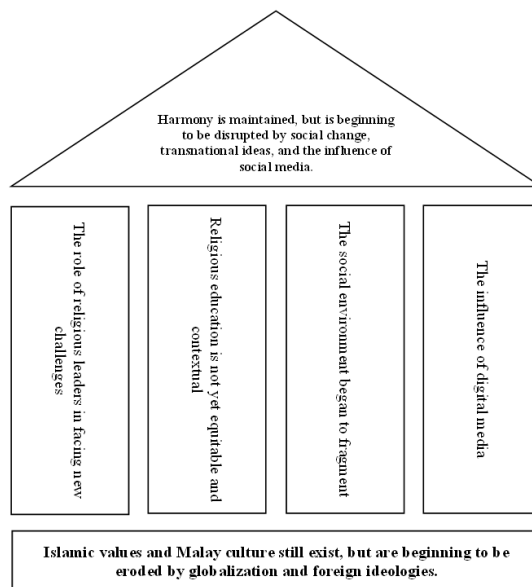
Based on the results of research through observation and interviews, it appears that the Malay community in Muntok City places religious moderation as part of their daily lives. This value

is reflected in mutual respect between religions, the involvement of religious and traditional leaders in maintaining harmony, and the strong tradition of deliberation in resolving social issues. This shows that moderation is not only a normative concept but has become an internalized social practice. These findings are in line with Geertz, (1973) view, which emphasizes that religion and culture are intertwined in shaping a community's system of meaning. Thus, the reconstruction of religious moderation values in Muntok is not something new, but a continuation of long-established local wisdom. The research findings show that the Malay community does not see religion and nationality as two conflicting things, but rather as complementary. This is reflected in their openness to ethnic and religious differences, as well as in their active participation in maintaining harmony among communities. Based on Durkheim's theory of social integration (1997), social cohesion is formed through agreed-upon shared values, one of which is inclusive nationality. Barton, (2014) research also shows that the practice of Islamic moderation in Indonesia plays an important role in supporting democratic consolidation (Esposito, 2011; Hefner, 2016).

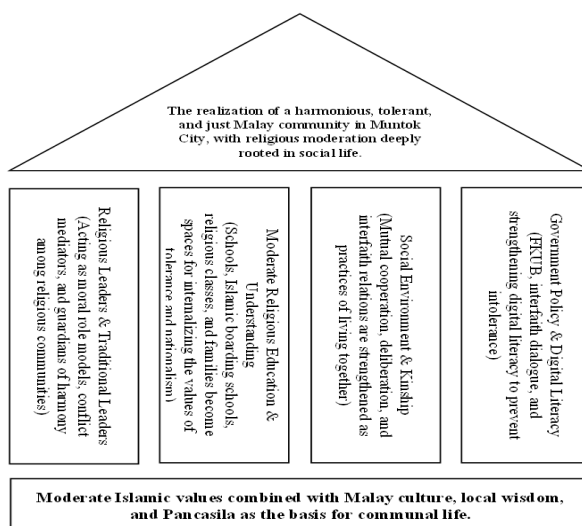
To understand the dynamics of the reconstruction of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City, this study maps the socio-religious reality into three time constructs, namely the past, the present, and the future. This approach is used to show that religious moderation is not a concept that was born suddenly, but rather the result of a long social process, experiencing challenges, and requiring reinforcement in accordance with the context of the times. Therefore, the reconstruction of religious moderation is analogous to a building consisting of a foundation, supporting pillars, and a roof, which support each other.



**Figure 1.** Historical Conditions of Conceptual Religious Moderation



**Figure 2.** The Factual and Conceptual Conditions of Religious Moderation



**Figure 3.** Conceptual Reconstruction Model of Religious Moderation

The first construction describes the past of the Muntok community, which had long lived in harmony among religious communities, as seen from the proximity of houses of worship and the tradition of mutual assistance in religious celebrations. However, in the second construction, this condition began to face challenges due to the influx of transnational religious ideas, the strengthening of religious organizations with exclusive tendencies, and the influence of social media that gave rise to narratives of intolerance. This situation caused the values of moderation that had previously existed naturally to become vulnerable and in need of reinforcement. The third construction then represents the ideal form of religious moderation reconstruction that is hoped for, namely the re-strengthening of all socio-religious elements through the synergy of religious and traditional leaders, moderate education, an inclusive social environment, and the support of local

government policies.

These three constructions are dialectically interrelated and demonstrate the continuity of the process of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City. The past construction has become a strong social and cultural capital as a foundation of values, the present construction has become a space for reflection on social challenges and disruptions, while the future construction is a reconstruction effort oriented towards strengthening and sustainability. Thus, the reconstruction of religious moderation is not interpreted as the formation of new values, but rather as an effort to reorganize old values that have proven capable of maintaining social harmony so that they remain relevant in the face of changing times.

The findings of this study reinforce Habermas, (1996) theory of deliberative democracy, which emphasizes the importance of dialogue to reach consensus. The presence of social forums and interfaith activities in Muntok shows that the reconstruction of moderation is carried out as an instrument for conflict resolution, not merely as discourse. In addition, the results of research by Fealy & White, (2008) also prove that Islamic scholars in Indonesia play a dual role as spiritual leaders and guardians of social stability. In other words, the reconstruction of moderation in Muntok has proven effective in preventing potential social disintegration. Based on the interview results, it appears that religious and traditional leaders in Muntok have a significant influence on internalizing the value of moderation. They not only teach religion but also set an example of tolerance.

This is in line with Putnam, (2000) the concept of social capital, which states that trust in leaders can strengthen social cohesion. In line with Azra, (2006) research, since classical times, Islamic scholars in Indonesia have played an important role in instilling moderate and nationalist attitudes. Therefore, the reconstruction of moderation in Muntok is carried out through the example set by leaders who are respected by people of all religions. In addition to religious figures, education and literacy play an important role in strengthening the reconstruction of moderation. Observations show that schools and religious institutions in Muntok teach tolerance and harmony as part of their formal curriculum and non-formal activities. Tilaar, (2004) refers to multicultural education as a strategic instrument in building social tolerance.

Meanwhile, Azra, (2019) research confirms that the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia plays an important role in fostering moderate attitudes. Thus, education is a key pillar in continuing the reconstruction of religious moderation among the younger generation. One of the important findings of this study is the influence of social media in shaping people's religious views.

Some people acknowledge the existence of intolerant content that can trigger conflict, but on the other hand, social media is also used to spread messages of peace. Campbell & Tsuria, (2021) state that digital space has a dual role, both in spreading radicalism and strengthening moderation. Therefore, the reconstruction of moderation in Muntok includes efforts to promote digital literacy so that people are more selective in accepting religious information. Reconstruction in the Policy Framework Interviews with local government officials revealed the existence of policies that support interfaith activities and harmony forums.

This is in line with the national policy direction of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019), which makes religious moderation a priority development program. The Wahid Institute report (2020) also shows the effectiveness of the Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in reducing religion-based social conflicts in many regions. Thus, the reconstruction of moderation in Muntok is in line with structural support from the central and regional governments. Moderation of the Muntok Malay Community has local wisdom that is rich in values of moderation, such as the traditions of mutual cooperation, respect for guests, and traditional deliberation. This shows that religious moderation is not a value imposed from outside, but rather part of cultural heritage. Geertz, (1973) refers to culture as a system of meaning that binds society in social action. Hefner, (2011) research also confirms that the religious diversity of Indonesian society tends to be accommodative of local culture, thus forming a friendly and moderate form of Islam. Thus, the reconstruction of moderation in Muntok is a manifestation of the integration of religion with Malay culture. The reconstruction of religious moderation in Muntok has several important implications. First, it strengthens social solidarity through recognition of diversity. Second, it increases political stability by reducing the potential for religion-based conflict. Third, it strengthens an inclusive national identity. These implications are in line with Barton, (2014) findings, which emphasize that Islamic moderation in Indonesia plays a strategic role in strengthening democracy and nationality. Thus, the reconstruction of religious moderation in Muntok is an important foundation for the creation of a harmonious, democratic, and just society.

Based on the research results and discussion outlined above, the reconstruction of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City can be concluded to be realized through the exemplary behavior of religious and traditional leaders, support for education, digital literacy, and government policies that promote harmony. The local wisdom of the Malay community is an important basis for maintaining the values of moderation. However, to strengthen this

reconstruction, there is a need for more structured programs, such as interfaith training based on local Malay wisdom, regular discussion forums between religious and traditional leaders and the younger generation, and the strengthening of religious literacy through digital media that displays the moderate character of Malay Islam (Huda & Huda, 2022; Lim, 2017). With these steps, the value of religious moderation will not only be maintained but also passed on to the next generation. The influence of digital media on religious perspectives in Muntok reflects broader trends identified in recent studies, where social media functions as both a channel for the dissemination of radical narratives and a space for strengthening moderate discourse (Lim, 2020; Nisa, 2021). This duality requires critical digital literacy to ensure that religious understanding remains inclusive and contextually grounded.

This is because Malay Islam has long developed scientific, cultural, and social practices based on moderation. Therefore, the reconstruction of religious moderation in Muntok City can be used as a model for the application of Islam Nusantara that is culturally friendly, inclusive, and adaptive to the dynamics of the times. Thus, the results of this study are expected to enrich academic studies and contribute practically to efforts to maintain social and religious harmony in Indonesia.

#### **Factors influencing the strengthening of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City**

Religious moderation is a social process that cannot be separated from the interaction between religious values, local culture, and social structures that exist within a community. Based on the results of the research described above, the strengthening of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok City is influenced by a number of key factors that work simultaneously, both internally within the community and externally. These factors not only influence the community's patterns of religiosity but also support the creation of stable social harmony. This finding is in line with the concept of social capital proposed by Putnam, (2000), in which social networks, shared values, and norms play an important role in building trust and cooperation in a pluralistic society.

Religious and traditional leaders have a strategic position in shaping the moderate attitudes of the community. Their presence is not only as spiritual figures but also as mediators and role models in resolving socio-religious issues. Based on the research findings, the Muntok community tends to follow the direction of religious and traditional leaders in dealing with differences in religious views. This shows that the moral authority of community leaders is still very strong.

According to Fealy & White, (2008), religious leaders in Indonesia have a dual role: maintaining orthodoxy while also being guardians of social harmony.

The exemplary behavior of religious and traditional leaders in Muntok strengthens the internalization of inclusive Malay Islamic values. In Weber's (1978) theory of charismatic authority, leadership based on exemplary behavior is capable of creating stronger moral legitimacy than formal authority alone. Therefore, religious and traditional leaders are at the forefront in ensuring that the value of moderation is maintained amid social change. Another important factor is education, both formal and non-formal. Education plays a role in shaping an inclusive and contextual understanding of religion, so that people are not easily trapped in extreme interpretations. In Muntok, schools, Islamic boarding schools, and religious study groups are spaces for the internalization of the values of tolerance and togetherness. Azra's (2006) research confirms that the tradition of Islamic education in Indonesia contributes significantly to instilling the values of pluralism and nationalism. The persistence of religious moderation in Muntok also aligns with the broader Indonesian experience, where pluralism is socially constructed through continuous negotiation between religious values and national identity (Menchik, 2019; Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020).

In addition, religious education models that are adaptive to the local context also strengthen a culturally friendly understanding of religion. This is in line with the concept of cultural pedagogy (Giroux, 1997), in which education not only functions as a transfer of knowledge but also as a space for the formation of social identity in harmony with local values. Thus, education in Muntok becomes the main means of strengthening religious moderation from an early age (Banks, 2008). Education plays a transformative role in shaping moderate religious attitudes, as highlighted in studies emphasizing the integration of multicultural values within formal and informal learning environments (Pohl, 2020; Tanu, 2020).

Strong social and kinship ties in Malay society are an important social capital in strengthening religious moderation. The results of the study show that extensive family relationships and interfaith relations between citizens create a conducive atmosphere of togetherness. Social solidarity born of mutual cooperation, respect for elders, and deliberation within the family has been proven to prevent the emergence of potential conflicts. This concept is in line with Coleman, (1988), who emphasizes that social norms, reciprocal relationships, and kinship networks form trust that supports social cooperation. In the context of Malay society, strong family values make religious moderation not just a slogan, but part of everyday practice.

An external factor that also strengthens religious moderation is the role of local government. Based on research findings, local government policies through interfaith dialogue forums, support for joint social and religious activities, and the facilitation of the FKUB (Forum for Religious Harmony) contribute significantly to maintaining harmony. This is in line with Hefner's (2013) view, which emphasizes that the success of religious moderation in Indonesia is largely supported by state support, particularly through policies that encourage dialogue and community participation. With clear policies in place, the space for harmony is more legally and administratively guaranteed. In addition, the presence of the local government as a facilitator strengthens the legitimacy of moderation efforts carried out by religious and community leaders. Thus, public policy in Muntok can be seen as structural empowerment that provides real support for the creation of a harmonious social life.

The development of social media has brought new dynamics to the strengthening of religious moderation. Research findings show that the people of Muntok are aware of the positive and negative impacts of social media. On the one hand, uncontrolled information flows can trigger misunderstandings and even intolerance. However, on the other hand, social media is also used to spread narratives of peace and interfaith activities. Campbell & Tsuria, (2021) explain that digital space is a new arena for the reproduction of religious discourse. Social media can expand the reach of moderate preaching while strengthening collective awareness of the importance of tolerance. Therefore, digital literacy is key for the community to be able to filter information and use social media productively in strengthening the value of moderation.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that the strengthening of religious moderation in the Malay community of Muntok is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. The roles of religious and traditional leaders, education, kinship, government policies, and social media interact with each other in creating an inclusive socio-religious ecosystem. These factors show that religious moderation in Muntok is not a stand-alone process, but rather the result of the collective work of various elements of society.

## CONCLUSION

The reconstruction of religious moderation in Muntok City was realized through the synergy between moderate Islamic teachings and Malay cultural values. Religious and traditional leaders played a central role, not only teaching spiritual values, but also setting a real example in maintaining social harmony. They act as mediators in dealing with differences and guide the

community to adhere to the principles of justice, balance, and tolerance. In addition, this reconstruction is evident in the implementation of deliberation, mutual cooperation, and respect for differences in beliefs, which have long been a tradition of the community. National values such as love for the homeland and anti-violence attitudes are also integrated into religious life, thereby forming a collective identity of a harmonious and peaceful community.

The strengthening of religious moderation in Muntok is influenced by complementary internal and external factors. Internal factors include the role of religious and traditional leaders as role models, religious education that instills inclusive and tolerant values, and strong social and kinship ties that bind the community together. Local values that emphasize togetherness and brotherhood also strengthen the community's resilience in the face of potential conflict. Meanwhile, supporting external factors include local government policies that provide space for interfaith dialogue, joint social programs, and the use of social media to spread narratives of peace. Although social media also poses challenges in the form of the potential spread of intolerance, the people of Muntok tend to use it to expand communication spaces and strengthen digital literacy that emphasizes moderation.

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