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Maqasid al-Shariah and Religious Tolerance: Strengthening Interfaith Harmony in Indonesia's Religious Movements and Cultural Identity

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Abstract:

Religious movements and cultural identities in Indonesia coexist, actively affecting how communities negotiate difference, manage local tensions, and construct shared civic life. This study argues that *maqasid al-shariah* offers an analytical perspective for examining how Islamic legal-ethical principles are translated into community-based practices of religious moderation. Rather than treating moderation as a general appeal to tolerance, the study refers to *maqasid* through three interrelated dimensions: *hifz al-din* as the protection of legitimate religious expression, *hifz al-nafs* as the prevention of violence and protection of communal security, and *hifz al-mal* as the safeguarding of property, public space, and shared social resources. Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, this research examines five purposively selected communities in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and West Nusa Tenggara, chosen for their religious-cultural diversity and active grassroots moderation initiatives. Data were collected through participant observation over three months in each community and document analysis of community records, interfaith activity reports, and statements issued by local religious organisations. The analysis focused on the practices and interactions of religious leaders, local authorities, community organisers, and interfaith actors. Thematic coding was used to identify patterns illustrating religion-culture negotiation, conflict management, cultural accommodation, and the practical application of *maqasid* principles.

The findings show that religious moderation functions not only as a normative ideal but also as a practical mechanism for preventing conflict, mediating disputes over worship spaces and public resources, and strengthening interreligious cooperation. Inclusive dialogue, local wisdom, and collaborative social programmes served as key strategies for reducing polarisation and building mutual trust. By linking *maqasid al-shariah* to micro-level community practices, this study contributes to studies on religious moderation by moving beyond state-centred and doctrinal discussions toward a grounded analysis of how Islamic legal values are negotiated and enacted in everyday pluralistic settings.

Keywords: religious movements; Islamic law; cultural identity; religious moderation; interfaith harmony.

Introduction

In Indonesia's plural society, the relationship between religious movements and cultural identity is not merely a matter of coexistence; it illustrates a site of continuous negotiation over authority, belonging, and communal boundaries.[1] While grassroots religious initiatives are often described as instruments for promoting interfaith dialogue and social harmony, insufficient attention has been given to how these initiatives operationalise religious moderation in everyday community practices. This article addresses this analytical gap by examining how local religious actors negotiate tensions between Islamic legal-ethical principles and culturally embedded forms of social life. Specifically, it asks how *maqasid al-shariah* serves as an analytical framework for interpreting community-based efforts to manage religious differences, accommodate local cultural practices, and prevent interreligious tensions in diverse Indonesian settings.

Indonesia's cultural and religious diversity serves as a primary ground for plural social life, while creating conditions in which religious identity can be mobilised as a source of political contestation and communal boundary-making. The 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, for example, demonstrated how Islamic symbols and narratives could be instrumentalised within electoral competition, intensifying religious polarisation and eroding trust across community groups. Comparable dynamics can also be observed in other countries, as studies on religious identity threats in Tanzania and religiously framed conflicts in the Central African Republic, Iraq, and Myanmar[2] show that perceived threats to collective identity may increase support for defensive or exclusionary violence.

These cases are not presented merely as examples of religious conflict but as evidence of a broader theoretical problem: plural societies require mechanisms to govern identity-based tensions before they escalate into social fragmentation. In this

[1] Achmad Robita and Khairil Anwar, "Understanding Religious Pluralism in Indonesia: Social and Religious Perspectives in the Modern Era," *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity* 2, no. 2 (2025): 60–69, https://doi.org/10.62951/ijss.v2i2.338; Kholid Mawardi, "Dynamics of Multiculturalism and Religious Pluralism: Strategies for Building Social Cohesion in Indonesia," *Asian Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 3, no. 1 (2024): 45–62, https://doi.org/10.55927/ajpr.v3i1.10130.

[2] Matthias Basedau et al., "Identity Threats and Ideas of Superiority as Drivers of Religious Violence? Evidence from a Survey Experiment in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania," *Journal of Peace Research* 59, no. 3 (2022): 395–408, https://doi.org/10.1177/00223433211035234.

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context, religious moderation becomes significant, as it offers a framework for restraining exclusivist religious mobilisation while sustaining legitimate religious expression in public life. However, this article argues that moderation should not be reduced to a general discourse of tolerance. By grounding moderation in *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*),[3] and social welfare, the study positions Islamic legal-ethical principles as an analytical tool for examining how religious actors negotiate conflict, cultural difference, and communal coexistence in plural Indonesian settings.

Recent studies on religious moderation in Indonesia have examined the issue from several dominant perspectives, including state-led moderation programmes, the role of major Islamic organisations, Islamic boarding school-based education, and the contribution of religious leaders to interfaith relations. These studies have significantly advanced the discussion by showing that moderation is central to managing diversity and preventing religious polarisation. However, most of these studies still tend to conceptualise religious moderation either as a normative value promoted through institutional programmes or as a policy-oriented discourse constructed by government and large-scale religious organisations. Insignificant attention has been given to how moderation is negotiated in everyday community interactions, especially when religious actors encounter local cultural practices, competing identity claims, and concrete disputes over worship, public space, and communal belonging. This limitation leaves two conceptual gaps. First, the practical mechanisms through which grassroots actors translate moderation into social practice remain underexplored. Second, *maqasid al-shariah* is often invoked as a theological or legal justification for moderation, but it is rarely developed as an analytical framework for examining how religious, cultural, and social interests are balanced in plural communities.[4] This study addresses these gaps by reconceptualising *maqasid* not merely as a normative foundation but as a community-level analytical instrument for understanding how religious actors protect legitimate religious expression, prevent social harm, accommodate local culture, and sustain interreligious coexistence in diverse Indonesian settings.

Although previous research has extensively addressed the concept of religious moderation, the primary focus has often been on formal initiatives undertaken by governments or large religious organisations. Studies by Thita M. Mazya et al.,[5]

[3] M. Thahir Maloko et al., "Humanitarian Values in Interfaith Marriage in Ende Regency from the Perspective of Maqashid Shari'ah," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 10, no. 3 (2026): 1609–25, https://doi.org/10.22373/2nzeqx44.

[4] Bustanul Arifin et al., "Fiqh Humanism in Interfaith Relations: Sufistic Expressions of Shalawat Wahidiya in Indonesia," *Justicia Islamica* 23, no. 1 (2026): 191–220, https://doi.org/10.21154/justicia.v23i1.10264; Rusydi Sulaiman et al., "The Symbol of Acculturation and Islamic Unity in Nganggung Tradition of Bangka: An Integration of MaqÄ□ á¹£id Asy-SyarÄ«â€™ah with Local Wisdom," *AL-IHKAM: Jurnal Hukum & Pranata Sosial* 19, no. 2 (2024): 356–83, https://doi.org/10.19105/al-lhkam.v19i2.14923.

[5] Thita M. Mazya et al., "Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia: Dynamics of Acceptance and Conflict in a Multidimensional Perspective," *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review* 07, no. 07 (2024), https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i7-32.

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Nadiyah et al.,[6] Husna Amin et al.,[7] Abdullah Aziz et al.,[8] Masykur et al.,[9] Bambang Saiful Ma'arif et al.,[10] and Abdul Mufid et al.[11] highlight this trend. However, religious moderation is not merely a value-based approach, but a dynamic process involving the negotiation of religious and cultural identities.[12] In Indonesia, religious moderation has significant potential to integrate local wisdom within the framework of universal values, creating a more relevant and contextual approach to addressing social challenges. Yet, research focusing on this aspect remains limited, particularly regarding the real-world practices implemented by religious movements at the community level.

Indonesia's religious and cultural plurality requires more than macro-level policies or general appeals to tolerance; it necessitates an analytical framework to explain how religious actors negotiate concrete tensions in everyday communal life.[13] Previous studies have tended to emphasise state programmes, institutional initiatives, or broad normative discourses on religious moderation, leaving insufficient attention to how moderation is practised when communities confront disputes over worship, public space, local customs, and competing identity claims. This study addresses this issue by positioning *maqasid al-shariah* as a methodological and analytical framework within Islamic legal theory instead of as a moral rhetoric. In the classical *maqasid* tradition, Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi conceptualises the objectives of Shariah around the preservation of essential human interests, commonly associated with the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and property (*hifz al-mal*).[14] Ibn Ashur extends this framework by emphasising the social purposes of Islamic law, including public welfare, social order, human dignity, and justice.[15] Jasser Auda further develops *maqasid* through a systems approach, which

[6] Nadiyah Nadiyah et al., "Fostering Religious Moderation in Pesantren: Cultivating Tolerance and Peace through Khilafiyah Fiqh in South Kalimantan's Multicultural Context," *Kawanua International Journal of Multicultural Studies* 5, no. 1 (2024): 26–36, https://doi.org/10.30984/kijms.v5i1.1001.
[7] Husna Amin et al., "The Role of Religious and Traditional Leaders in Maintaining Harmony Among Religious Communities: Strategy for Implementing the Religious Moderation Concept in Indonesia," *International Journal of Religion* 5, no. 11 (2024): 2288–94, https://doi.org/10.61707/sqe7a824.
[8] Abdullah Aziz et al., "The Relevance of the Value of Religious Moderation in the World of Contemporary Indonesian Islamic Education," *AJIS: Academic Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 1 (2024): 189–212, https://doi.org/10.29240/ajis.v9i1.9024.
[9] Masykur et al., "Reviving Religious Moderation for World Peace from the Religious Moderation House in Indonesia," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 3 (2024): 295–307, https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v3i3.3343.
[10] Bambang Saiful Ma'arif et al., "Study of Religious Moderation from the Muhammadiyah Perspective: Efforts to Realize Harmony Among Indonesian Citizens," *KnE Social Sciences* 9, no. 24 (2023), https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i24.16860.
[11] Abdul Mufid et al., "Culture and Technology Acculturation: Efforts to Revitalize the Prophetic Tradition in the Modern Worldview Era," *Addin* 19, no. 2 (2025): 419–62, https://doi.org/10.21043/addin.v19i2.31063.
[12] Minhaji Minhaji et al., "Responsive Islamic Education in Exploring Social Values Through the War Takjil Phenomenon: Sociological Perspective in Indonesia," *Jurnal Indo-Islamika* 14, no. 1 (2024): 51–61, https://doi.org/10.15408/jii.v14i1.37471.
[13] Ahmad Rivauzi et al., "Integration of Sufi Epistemology and Adherence to the Sharia: A Model for Mainstreaming the Moderation of Islamization at Madrasah Tarbiyah Islamiyah, Indonesia," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 24, no. 2 (2025): 311–30, https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i2.15756.
[14] Abu Ishaq al-Syatibi, *Al-Muwafaqat Fi Ushul al-Syariah* (Dar al-Ma'rifah, 1996).
[15] Mohammad Tahir Ibn Ashur, *Maqasid Al-Syari'ah al-Islamiyyah* (Dar al-Nafa'is, 2001).

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enables Islamic legal reasoning to engage with complexity, interdependence, and changing social realities.[16]

Drawing on these classical and contemporary perspectives, this article uses *maqasid al-shariah* as an analytical perspective to examine how grassroots religious actors balance religious commitments, cultural accommodation, conflict prevention, and interfaith coexistence in plural Indonesian communities. Therefore, the study contributes additional insights into religious moderation by showing how *maqasid*-based reasoning operates at the community level, where moderation is enacted through practical negotiations among Islamic legal-ethical principles, local cultural traditions, and the demands of plural social life. Addressing this gap, this study analyses how grassroots religious movements refer to *maqasid al-shariah* as a jurisprudential and analytical framework for negotiating religious difference, cultural plurality, and interfaith relations in Indonesia. Rather than treating *maqasid* merely as a moral vocabulary of tolerance, inclusivity, peace, and harmony, this article situates it within broader debates in *uṣūl al-fiqh* concerning public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), the preservation of essential human interests, and the ordering of social life. Drawing on Abu Ishaq al-Shatibi's classical formulation of *maqasid* as the protection of fundamental necessities, Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Ashur's emphasis on the social purposes of Islamic law, and Jasser Auda's systems-oriented approach to legal reasoning, the study conceptualises *maqasid al-shariah* as a methodological tool for analysing community-level practices.

In this framework, religious moderation is examined through concrete dimensions, including the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*), property and communal welfare (*hifz al-mal*), and the broader pursuit of justice and public benefit. By focusing on micro-level interactions, this study shows how religious actors translate *maqasid*-based reasoning into interfaith dialogue, cultural accommodation, conflict mediation, and collaborative social programmes. Its novelty lies in demonstrating that religious moderation is not simply a normative ideal promoted from above, but a situated practice through which Islamic legal-ethical reasoning is negotiated within local cultural contexts and plural social realities.

Religious moderation aligns with the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, which include protecting religion (*hifz al-din*), life (*hifz al-nafs*), intellect (*hifz al-aql*), lineage (*hifz al-nasl*), and property (*hifz al-mal*).[17] These principles guide religious groups toward a balanced and inclusive approach, discouraging extremism and fostering social integration. This study examines the normative aspects of religious moderation and investigates the challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation. For instance, it investigates how local communities confront structural barriers, such as religious stereotypes or historical conflicts, and how local cultural wisdom helps overcome these challenges. Through this approach, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the role of religious moderation in building social harmony.

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[16] Jasser Auda, *Maqasid Al-Shariah as Philosophy of Islamic Law: A Systems Approach* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2008).

[17] Zurifah Nurdin et al., "Housewives as Agents of Religious Moderation: A Maslahah Mursalah Perspective on Interfaith Family Harmony in Indonesia," *Al-'Adalah* 22, no. 2 (2025): 599–626, https://doi.org/10.24042/adalah.v222.25136.

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This study clarifies three distinctive dimensions of its originality. Theoretically, it reconceptualises *maqasid al-shariah* not merely as a normative vocabulary of tolerance and harmony, but as an analytical framework for examining how religious actors balance the protection of religious expression, communal security, public welfare, and cultural accommodation in plural societies.[18] This approach extends previous studies that have often treated moderation as a state policy, an institutional programme, or a moral value by showing how *maqasid*-based reasoning operates in concrete social negotiations at the community level. Methodologically, the study advances micro-level community analysis by focusing on everyday practices, local disputes, interfaith encounters, and culturally embedded forms of cooperation that are often overlooked in macro-level accounts of religious moderation.

In practical terms, the findings offer a context-sensitive model for policymakers, religious organisations, and civil society actors to design moderation initiatives that are not imposed from above in an abstract way but developed through local cultural resources, interreligious collaboration, and community-based conflict prevention. Thus, the article's contribution lies not simply in affirming the importance of themes of religious moderation but in demonstrating how *maqasid al-shariah* can serve as a legal-ethical and analytical tool for governing pluralism, negotiating religious-cultural tensions, and strengthening interfaith coexistence in Indonesia and comparable plural societies.

Method

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how religious moderation is practised and negotiated within local communities in Indonesia. The case-study approach was selected because the research focuses not on religious moderation as an abstract doctrine, but on concrete interactions among religious actors, cultural practices, and community-based initiatives within specific social settings. The cases consisted of five purposively selected communities in Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and West Nusa Tenggara. These sites were chosen because they represent different configurations of religious and cultural plurality, including urban and rural contexts, Muslim-majority communities, Christian-majority communities, and interfaith environments where grassroots moderation initiatives have been actively implemented.

The unit of analysis in this study is the community-level practice of religious moderation, particularly the interaction between local religious leaders, community organisers, members of interfaith organisations, and local institutional actors involved in managing religious-cultural relations. Participants were selected through purposive sampling based on their direct involvement in interfaith dialogue, community mediation, religious education, cultural activities, or grassroots programmes related to religious moderation. Data were collected through participant observation conducted over three months in each community and document analysis of community records, interfaith activity reports, local organisational statements, and relevant policy documents. During observation, field notes were used to record

[18] Asis Saefudin and Ika Berdiati, "Improving Moderate Attitudes among PGMI Students at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Through Internalizing the Values of Religius Moderation in Fiqh Education Courses," *El-Usrah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga* 9, no. 1 (2026): 662–83, https://doi.org/10.22373/ujhk.v9i1.34546.

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patterns of interaction, forms of cooperation, conflict-management practices, and the ways religious actors referred to Islamic legal-ethical values in responding to plural social realities.

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The analytical process began with open coding of field notes and documents, followed by grouping codes into broader themes: religion–culture negotiation, challenges to moderation, interfaith cooperation, and community-based conflict prevention. These themes were then interpreted using the framework of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly *hifz al-din,* protection of religious life; *hifz al-nafs,* protection of life and communal security; *hifz al-aql,* protection of reason and public understanding; and *hifz al-mal,* protection of property and communal welfare. To strengthen credibility, the study employed methodological triangulation by comparing observational data with documentary sources and discussions with experts and practitioners in religious moderation and cultural studies. Researcher bias was minimised through systematic field-note review, cross-checking between data sources, and reflective evaluation of emerging interpretations. Ethical considerations were upheld by ensuring voluntary participation, protecting participants' identities where necessary, and using field-based evidence only in ways that respected the sensitivity of interreligious relations.

Data for this research were collected using two main methods: participatory observation and document analysis. Participatory observation was conducted in five selected communities in urban and rural regions of Indonesia, including Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and West Nusa Tenggara, chosen for their high levels of religious and cultural pluralism. The communities were selected to represent a mix of Muslim-majority, Christian-majority, and interfaith environments, ensuring a diverse range of social and religious profiles. The researcher spent three months in each community, observing social interactions, religious activities, and the application of moderation values in everyday life. Document analysis involved reviewing community records, interfaith activity reports, and religious statements from local organisations. This observation helped deepen the understanding of the local context, including cultural elements that influence religious moderation practices. Field notes were used to record observations, which were later integrated into the data analysis.

Document analysis involved reviewing official documents, such as statements from religious organisations, interfaith activity reports, and relevant articles and books. These documents provided additional insights into policies, programmes, and practices related to religious moderation, strengthening the findings obtained through observation. The collected data were analysed using thematic analysis techniques, guided by the theoretical framework of *maqasid al-shariah* (the objectives of Islamic law), which provides a perspective on how religious moderation intersects with social harmony. The analysis process began by coding the data around themes relevant to the research objectives, including the harmony between religion and culture, challenges to religious moderation, and the impact on social harmony. *Maqasid al-shariah*, specifically its principles of *hifz al-din* (protection of religion), *hifz al-nafs* (protection of life), and *hifz al-mal* (protection of property), served as key indicators to examine the practical application of religious moderation in diverse communities. Afterwards, the data were categorised to identify significant patterns and relationships between the variables. The thematic analysis results were then

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interpreted within this framework to assess the extent to which religious moderation aligns with *maqasid al-shariah* in promoting social cohesion.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the study employed methodological triangulation. Combining observation and document analysis allows the researcher to cross-verify findings across multiple sources, yielding more accurate and comprehensive data. Additionally, internal validity was maintained through intensive discussions with experts and practitioners in religious moderation and cultural studies. The research was conducted in several local communities purposively selected for their cultural and religious diversity and the presence of active religious moderation initiatives. Specifically, the research was conducted in five communities across Indonesia, including urban areas such as Jakarta and rural areas such as West Nusa Tenggara and Yogyakarta. These locations were chosen due to their varying degrees of pluralism, with each community representing a mix of Muslim-majority, Christian-majority, and interfaith populations. The selection criteria ensured that the data generated would reflect the complex interfaith dynamics in Indonesia, particularly in areas where religious moderation efforts have been implemented at the grassroots level.

Result and Discussion

Observational Findings on Religious Moderation

The field findings indicate that religious moderation in Indonesia should not be understood merely as a normative discourse of tolerance or harmony, but as a contested social practice directed by regulation, identity politics, spatial negotiation, and everyday interreligious encounters. Houses of worship occupy a particularly significant position in this process. They serve as spaces for ritual activities, while marking communal presence, symbolic recognition, and claims to belonging within plural neighbourhoods. Consequently, disputes over houses of worship often reveal deeper tensions concerning majority-minority relations, public space, local authority, and the perceived boundaries of religious identity.

The case of the At-Tabayyun Mosque in Taman Villa Meruya, West Jakarta,[19] illustrates this complexity. Although the conflict was formally framed as a disagreement over the use of Green Open Space for mosque construction, field observations and documentary data suggest that the dispute also reflected competing perceptions of communal rights, urban spatial justice, and neighbourhood identity. Government mediation helped prevent the dispute from escalating into open conflict, particularly through negotiation, relocation arrangements, and the proposal to optimise the mosque area for broader social functions, including health and educational facilities. However, this should not be interpreted simplistically as evidence that religious moderation had fully resolved the tension. Rather, the case shows that moderation served as a negotiated mechanism through which state actors, religious leaders, and residents attempted to transform a potentially polarising dispute into a more acceptable social compromise.

[19] Muhammad Daffa Ramadhan and M. Ridwan Lubis, "Resolusi Konflik Pendirian Rumah Ibadah (Studi Kasus Pendirian Masjid At-Tabayuuin Perumah Taman Villa Meruya Selatan, Kecamatan Kembangan, Kota Jakarta Barat," *Inklusiva: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 2, no. 1 (2024): 89–108, https://doi.org/10.15408/ijsaa.v2i1.41435.

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One local resident explained during the mediation process that the problem was not only about building a mosque, but about how the space would affect the whole neighbourhood." This statement indicates that the dispute involved not only religious rights but also broader concerns about public space, neighbourhood order, and communal belonging. The quotation demonstrates that the conflict should be interpreted as a negotiation between *hifz al-din*, the protection of religious life, and *hifz al-mal*, the protection of property, public facilities, and shared communal interests. In this context, *Maqasid al-Shariah* does not function as a one-sided justification for religious claims, but as an analytical framework for balancing the right to worship with the need to preserve social order and public benefit.[20] The mediation process, therefore, illustrates how religious moderation is practised by accommodating multiple interests rather than by the simple assertion of harmony. This finding strengthens the argument that community-level moderation requires sensitivity to both religious aspirations and the lived concerns of residents affected by spatial and social change.

From the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, the At-Tabayyun case can be read through the interaction between *hifz al-din* and *hifz al-mal*. The protection of religion was reflected in efforts to secure the Muslim community's right to worship, while the protection of property and the public interest appeared in concerns over land use, neighbourhood facilities, and the collective function of urban space. The tension between these two dimensions is analytically important because it shows that *maqasid* is not a simple justification for one religious claim over another. Instead, it provides a framework for balancing legitimate religious expression with broader communal interests. In this sense, the case demonstrates both the potential and limitations of religious moderation: it can lead to compromise but does not always remove suspicion, resistance, or unequal perceptions among community members. This case study combines field observations and document analysis. Data were gathered from local government reports and observations during mediation meetings, which provided insight into how religious and cultural factors influenced the conflict's resolution. The application of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly the protection of religion (*hifz al-din*) and property (*hifz al-mal*), was evident in the mediation process, ensuring that both religious and cultural interests were accommodated and contributed to a peaceful resolution.[21]

A similar analytical tension appears in the conflict between the Tri Dharma Buddhist and Confucian/MAKIN communities in Pemangkat Sub-district, Sambas, West Kalimantan. The local government's persuasive approach, which involved identifying the source of disagreement, conducting an internal Muspika meeting, engaging the Religious Affairs Office, and facilitating mediation between the parties, helped prevent the conflict from escalating. Nevertheless, the fact that the conflict was not fully resolved is crucial. It indicates that religious moderation often works less as a final solution and more as a process of conflict containment, temporary

[20] Syarif Syarif et al., "Negotiating Sacred Law: Qura'nic Hermeneutics, Legal Pluralism, and Interfaith Marriage in Muslim-Majority Countries," *Syariah: Jurnal Hukum Dan Pemikiran* 25, no. 2 (2025): 379–401, https://doi.org/10.18592/sjhp.v25i2.18166.

[21] Bayu Suratman et al., "Recognition without Assimilation: Fiqh of Intra-Muslim Tolerance among Shia Muslims in Jepara, Indonesia," *Journal of Islamic Law* 7, no. 2 (2026): 465–93, https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v7i2.5999.

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stabilisation, and continuous negotiation. This finding challenges a purely normative understanding of moderation as the achievement of harmony and instead shows it as an ongoing governance practice in plural societies.

The Pemangkat case also demonstrates how *maqasid al-shariah* can be utilised analytically. The principle of *hifz al-nafs* was reflected to prevent violence and protect communal security, while *hifz al-mal* appeared in attempts to safeguard property, institutional assets, and the material interests of the communities involved. Meanwhile, *hifz al-din* was relevant in ensuring that future religious and cultural events, including Lunar New Year and Cap Go Meh celebrations, could be anticipated without intensifying intergroup suspicion. However, these principles did not operate automatically. Their practical meaning was constructed through negotiation involving local government officials, religious representatives, and community actors. This shows that *maqasid*-based moderation must be understood as a lived and negotiated practice rather than a fixed doctrinal formula.

The findings also suggest that government mediation plays an ambivalent role. On one hand, state involvement can provide procedural legitimacy, prevent escalation, and create a formal space for dialogue. On the other hand, excessive dependence on government mediation may limit grassroots actors' interventions, potentially leaving deeper social prejudices unresolved. In both cases, formal mediation addressed immediate disputes, but the longer-term transformation of interreligious relations depended on whether communities could develop everyday practices of trust, cooperation, and reciprocal recognition. The concept of lived religion then becomes relevant, as religious moderation is not only articulated in official forums or legal documents, but also practised in ordinary interactions, neighbourhood cooperation, shared cultural events, and informal communication across religious boundaries.

From the perspective of pluralism and social cohesion, these cases reveal that interfaith harmony is not a stable condition that cannot exist naturally in diverse societies.[22] It is created through repeated acts of negotiation, institutional mediation, and everyday social accommodation. Religious identity can serve as a source of solidarity, but it can also be mobilised as a boundary between insiders and outsiders. Therefore, the significance of religious moderation lies not in eliminating differences but in creating mechanisms to manage them without turning them into social hostility. The At-Tabayyun and Pemangkat cases show that such mechanisms encompass mediation, cultural reframing, public-space negotiation, and the use of religious-ethical reasoning to balance competing claims.

These findings complicate the assumption that religious moderation simply leads to social cohesion. In practice, moderation remains debated, uneven, and dependent on local power relations. Some actors may accept moderation because it protects coexistence, while others may view it as compromising doctrinal purity, weakening majority claims, or subordinating local traditions to institutional regulation. Therefore, this study contributes by showing that moderation should be analysed not only as a value, but as a social process constructed by identity politics, local governance, spatial contestation, and the everyday practice of religious life.

[22] Deri Rizal et al., "Portrait of Regional Regulations for Public Order and Tranquility in a Tolerant and Inclusive Society in West Sumatra," *El-Mashlahah* 15, no. 2 (2025): 213–30, https://doi.org/10.23971/el-mashlahah.v15i2.7826.

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Within this process, *maqasid al-shariah* functions as an analytical framework for examining how religious, social, and cultural interests are weighed, negotiated, and sometimes left unresolved in plural community settings.

Although the cases show that mediation and interfaith dialogue can prevent escalation, they also reveal several limitations. First, religious moderation often depends on the authority of local elites, such as government officials, religious leaders, and formal institutions, which may restrict the participation of ordinary community members in decision-making. Second, moderation may reduce superficial conflict without necessarily transforming deeper prejudice or identity-based suspicion. Third, local cultural practices may be accepted only when reframed by dominant religious interpretations, raising questions about whose versions of culture and religion are legitimised. These limitations suggest that religious moderation should be studied not only as a mechanism of harmony but also as a contested field in which power, identity, and religious authority are continuously negotiated.

Field observations indicate that interfaith dialogue initiatives function less as simple instruments for producing harmony and more as social spaces where suspicion, difference, and competing religious narratives are negotiated. In several communities, dialogue was organised through formal forums, informal neighbourhood meetings, and interfaith workshops involving religious leaders, community organisers, youth groups, and local authorities. These meetings did not instantly eliminate prejudice; rather, they created repeated encounters through which participants could clarify misunderstandings, express anxieties, and renegotiate their perceptions of other religious groups. This finding suggests that religious moderation should be understood as a gradual, relational process rather than an immediate outcome of dialogue programs. Field notes from an interfaith meeting recorded that several participants initially expressed hesitation to engage openly, but the discussion gradually shifted toward practical concerns such as neighbourhood security, youth interaction, and cooperation during public events.

This type of evidence would show that interfaith dialogue was not merely a formal expression of tolerance, but a setting in which social distance was actively negotiated. From the perspective of lived religion, the significance of these dialogues lies not only in official statements made by religious elites but also in the everyday process through which ordinary participants learn to coexist, cooperate, and manage disagreement. However, the findings also reveal a limitation: dialogue forums were often dominated by community elites, while the voices of ordinary residents, women, and younger participants were less involved. This indicates that religious moderation may reproduce existing hierarchies if participation is not broadened beyond formal leaders.

A second finding concerns the role of cultural integration, particularly through practices such as *gotong royong*, where community members work together in their neighbourhood. Rather than functioning simply as a symbol of solidarity, *gotong royong* served as a practical mechanism for enacting interreligious cooperation in everyday life. In some communities, residents from different religious backgrounds participated together in cleaning public facilities, preparing social events, supporting charity programmes, and assisting neighbours during communal activities. These practices helped shift interfaith relations from abstract tolerance to practical

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interdependence. In sociological terms, cultural cooperation strengthened bonding and bridging forms of social capital: it reinforced internal community ties while also creating channels of interaction across religious boundaries.

Nevertheless, cultural integration was not without issues. Some participants accepted local cultural practices as a shared civic tradition, while others questioned whether particular customs were compatible with religious doctrine. This shows that local culture does not immediately support moderation; it requires interpretation, negotiation, and sometimes reframing by religious actors. In this context, *maqasid al-shariah* provides an analytical perspective for understanding how communities balance religious integrity with social benefit. The principle of *hifz al-din* protects legitimate religious commitments, while *hifz al-nafs* and *hifz al-mal* support communal safety, social welfare, and the protection of shared resources. Thus, cultural integration becomes analytically important not because of the harmony it creates, but because it reveals how religious and cultural meanings are continuously negotiated in plural communities.[23]

The role of Islamic legal and institutional support should also be interpreted critically. Islamic councils, fatwa bodies, and government-backed religious institutions provide important normative legitimacy to religious moderation by discouraging extremist interpretations and promoting a balanced understanding of religion. Training programmes for clerics and community leaders on *maqasid al-shariah* further reinforce the idea that moderation has a legal-ethical foundation within Islamic thought.[24] However, institutional endorsement alone does not guarantee social acceptance. Field observations suggest that the effectiveness of such programmes depends on whether institutional messages are translated into local idioms, community needs, and everyday practices. When moderation is communicated only as an official doctrine, it might be merely perceived as a top-down agenda. When it is connected to concrete concerns such as neighbourhood safety, worship rights, public facilities, and intergroup cooperation, it becomes more socially meaningful.

The relationship between religious moderation and governance is therefore ambivalent. On the one hand, collaboration between local governments and religious institutions can help prevent conflict, support public education, and counter radical narratives. On the other hand, reliance on state-led programmes may associate moderation more with policy compliance rather than with community transformation, thereby narrowing its meaning. In regions with stronger interfaith cooperation, moderation was more visible not only because of government initiatives, but because local actors were able to connect formal programmes with everyday practices of trust-building. This suggests that social cohesion is not

[23] Supardi Mursalin et al., "Fiqh Tolerance in a Contemporary Context: The Response of State Islamic Religious University Students to Religious Extremism," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 2 (2024): 287–319, https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i2.9866.

[24] Ahmad Musadad et al., "A Maqāṣid Al-Sharīʿah Analysis of the Indonesian Ulema Council's Fatwa on Interfaith Greetings within Contemporary Human Rights Discourse," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mizani: Wacana Hukum, Ekonomi Dan Keagamaan* 12, no. 2 (2025): 770–88, https://doi.org/10.29300/mzn.v12i2.9610; Mellya Embun Baining et al., "Finding The Maqashid Al-Syariah Performance Model on Syariah Management Accounting Information System Values," *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan* 24, no. 2 (2024): 87–104, https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i2.1642.

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produced solely through regulation or public campaigns, but through repeated interactions in which communities develop shared expectations, manage disagreement, and recognise each other's presence in public life.

These findings complicate the normative assumption that religious moderation instantly reduces tension or produces long-term peace. The evidence suggests that moderation may fail to contribute to conflict prevention unless supported by inclusive participation, culturally grounded cooperation, credible religious leadership, and responsive local governance. Yet it remains contested when certain groups perceive it as weakening doctrinal boundaries, eroding religious identity, or privileging institutional narratives over grassroots concerns. Therefore, religious moderation should be analysed as a negotiated social practice constructed by pluralism, identity politics, lived religion, and local power relations. Its significance lies not merely in promoting harmony, but in providing a practical and ethical mechanism through which communities manage difference without escalating it into exclusion or conflict.

These observational findings illustrate that religious moderation is not merely a conceptual framework but an actively practised and institutionally supported reality. The combination of interfaith dialogue, cultural adaptation, and legal reinforcement demonstrates a multi-faceted approach to maintaining social harmony. Strengthening these mechanisms allows societies to continue to develop sustainable models of religious moderation that are firmly rooted in tradition and legal frameworks.

Religious Moderation as a Strategy for Building Interfaith Harmony

Religious moderation should not be understood as a self-evident solution that instantly leads to interfaith harmony.[25] In the communities observed, moderation functioned as a debated discourse and practice through which religious actors, local authorities, and community members negotiated the boundaries of legitimate religious expression, cultural accommodation, and public coexistence. While moderation is often associated with balance, tolerance, inclusivity, and justice, its practical implementation depends on local power relations, the credibility of religious leaders, the openness of community participation, and the ability of institutions to address concrete grievances rather than merely promote normative slogans.

Because the available empirical material consists of observation notes, summarised interview records, and a written mediation agreement rather than full verbatim transcripts, Table 1 presents the data as field-note-based statements. The table does not claim to reproduce the exact words of informants, but it preserves the substantive meaning of the information obtained from actors involved in or familiar with the Pemangkat mediation process.

Table 1. Field-Note-Based Data Display on Religious Moderation and Interfaith Harmony

[25] Usman Arif Habibi et al., "Kolaborasi Lintas Sektor: Membangun Kesepakatan Untuk Indonesia Yang Inklusif," *Nusantara: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 12, no. 4 (2025): 1554–65, https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v12i4.2025.1554-1565.

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Case	Informant/data source	Observed issue	Field-note-based statement / summarised interview statement	Initial empirical meaning
Muslim-Christian community relations in Yogyakarta	Muslim religious leader / Muhammadiyah local leader in Yogyakarta	Interreligious interaction in Yogyakarta was generally described as stable, although several incidents of intolerance had occurred in previous years.	Based on the FGD record cited in Zakiyah's study, the Muhammadiyah local leader described Yogyakarta as a community where Muslims and non-Muslims commonly interacted in everyday neighbourhood life. He noted that even in an area where non-Muslim residents were numerically significant, Muslim residents could still be trusted to hold local social roles, such as neighbourhood leadership. He also emphasized that Muhammadiyah, NU, the palace culture, and other religious groups had contributed to a tolerant social environment in Yogyakarta.	Religious moderation in Yogyakarta appeared through everyday coexistence, neighbourhood trust, and the role of local Islamic organizations in maintaining a tolerant public culture.

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Muslim-Christian community relations in Yogyakarta	Muslim community organisations / *majlis taklim* women's groups in Yogyakarta	Moderation was practiced through the selection of moderate speakers, inclusive religious messages, and social activities that reached wider community groups, including non-Muslims.	Based on Zakiyah's observation and interview data, women's *majlis taklim* in Yogyakarta promoted religious moderation by inviting moderate preachers, discussing themes such as peaceful family relations and non-violence, and conducting social programmes for orphans, poor communities, and the needy. The study also notes that social assistance was not always limited to Muslims, as some activities reached non-Muslim communities as well.	Harmony was not built only through formal interfaith dialogue, but also through routine religious education, social care, and everyday cooperation that reduced social distance between religious communities.
Pemangkat District mediation	Sub-district government actor / Camat (Subdistrict Head) or local administrative source	The conflict between MAKIN and the Tri Dharma Buddhist community did not escalate openly and was handled	Based on the summarised interview record, the informant explained that the case did not emerge openly or develop into physical confrontation. The sub-district	Local government mediation functioned as an early conflict-containment mechanism. The absence of open violence did not mean

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		through a relatively simple mediation process.	government therefore handled it through a relatively simple mechanism by first holding an internal meeting with Muspika and the Office of Religious Affairs, followed by a meeting involving both MAKIN and the Tri Dharma Buddhist community.	the issue was ignored; rather, it was managed through quiet institutional coordination before escalation occurred.
Pemangkat District mediation	Muspika and Office of Religious Affairs / mediation-related institutional actors	The mediation process involved institutional coordination prior to direct dialogue with the disputing parties.	Field notes indicate that the mediation process began with coordination between Muspika and the Office of Religious Affairs. After this internal coordination, both parties were invited to a dialogue forum, where they discussed the dispute and reached a written agreement.	Religious moderation involved procedural mediation: local authorities created a controlled space where disagreement could be discussed without escalating it into public conflict.
Pemangkat District mediation	Representatives of MAKIN and Tri Dharma Buddhist community	Both parties agreed to maintain harmony among the Chinese	The summarised agreement emphasised that the Chinese ethnic community in	The agreement shows that memory of past ethnic conflict shaped the

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		ethnic community members and prevent the dispute from being exploited by outside actors.	Pemangkat had long been known for harmonious relations, both internally and with other religious and ethnic groups. The parties agreed that this condition should be maintained, especially because Pemangkat and Sambas had past experience with ethnic conflict involving Malay and Madurese communities.	moderation process. Harmony was framed not only as a religious matter, but also as a preventive response to the risk of ethnic and religious conflict.
Pemangkat District mediation	Representatives of MAKIN and Tri Dharma Buddhist community	The agreement clarified the institutional status of the Tai Pak Kung / Pe Kong house of worship and opened a cooperative path for future religious needs.	Field notes show that the parties agreed that the Tai Pak Kung house of worship, also known as Pe Kong and later Vihara Tri Dharma Bumi Raya, would remain under the Gabungan Tri Dharma Indonesia. The agreement also stated that if Confucian adherents wished to build their own house of worship, the Tri Dharma community	The mediation did not merely suppress conflict; it produced a negotiated arrangement concerning worship space, institutional recognition, and future interreligious cooperation. This reflects hifz al-din through protection of religious expression and *hifz al-mal* through protection of communal

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		would provide support.	religious property.

From the perspective of pluralism theory, religious moderation is significant not because it eliminates difference, but because it can potentially manage difference without escalating it into exclusionary conflict.[26] In this sense, pluralism does not simply represent the peaceful presence of multiple religious groups; rather, it is an ongoing process of negotiation over recognition, public space, and communal belonging. Field observations suggest that interfaith dialogues in Yogyakarta, involving Muslim and Christian communities, provided room for religious leaders to clarify misconceptions and identify shared concerns. However, these dialogues should not be interpreted as evidence that prejudice was fully resolved. Rather, they show how moderation, as a gradual process, facilitate trust-building, especially when participants move from abstract statements of tolerance toward practical discussions about neighbourhood relations, youth interaction, worship practices, and shared social responsibilities.

The framework of *maqasid al-shariah* helps clarify this process, but only if it is treated as an analytical framework rather than a theological endorsement of moderation. In the observed communities, *hifz al-din* protection of religion was reflected in efforts to secure legitimate religious expression and prevent the delegitimisation of minority or majority worship practices. Yet this principle also raised difficult questions: whose religious expression is protected, who has the authority to define acceptable religious practice, and how are competing religious claims balanced in shared social spaces? These questions indicate that *hifz al-din* cannot be reduced to a simple call for tolerance. It requires analysis of power, authority, and recognition within plural communities.

Similarly, *hifz al-mal* protection of property and communal welfare appeared in conflict-resolution efforts such as the mediation process in Pemangkat Sub-district, West Kalimantan. Local authorities attempted to prevent further escalation by protecting material resources, institutional assets, and the security of the communities involved. However, this case also shows the limits of moderation discourse. Mediation may prevent open violence, but it does not guarantee that it removes deeper identity-based suspicion or resolves unequal access to decision-making. Some actors may experience moderation as a fair mechanism for coexistence, while others may perceive it as a compromise imposed by local elites or state institutions. Therefore, the absence of conflict is not a sole indication for the success of moderation; it requires other elements to assess the quality of participation, the recognition of marginalised voices, and the durability of trust after formal mediation ends.

After presenting the two cases, Table 2 shows how religious moderation operates through different mechanisms in Yogyakarta and Pemangkat District. The table compares the two cases across several empirical themes, including interfaith communication, conflict prevention, protection of communal resources, and

[26] Muh Barid Nizarudin Wajdi et al., "The Approach of Religious Pluralism in Public Policy: An Analysis of Presidential Regulation Number 58 of 2023," *Journal of Social Political Sciences* 5, no. 3 (2024): 252–67, https://doi.org/10.52166/jsps.v5i3.249.

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outcomes for harmony. This thematic restructuring helps clarify the relationship between the observed practices and the *maqasid al-shariah* framework, particularly *hifz al-din, hifz al-nafs*, and *hifz al-mal*.

Table 2. Thematic Restructuring of Findings from the Two Cases

Empirical theme	Yogyakarta: Muslim-Christian communities	Pemangkat District: mediation process	Relation to *maqasid al-shariah*
Interfaith communication	Dialogue reduced suspicion and clarified misunderstandings between religious actors.	Direct mediation created a formal setting for communication between disputing parties.	*Hifz al-din*: protection of religious life through respectful recognition of different communities.
Conflict prevention	Shared social activities made religious difference less likely to become polarisation.	Government coordination prevented escalation during sensitive religious-cultural events.	*Hifz al-nafs*: protection of life and social safety by limiting the risk of violence.
Protection of communal resources	Cooperation strengthened trust in shared public space and community programmes.	Mediation sought to protect property, worship spaces, and collective security.	*Hifz al-mal*: protection of property and public order through negotiated settlement.
Outcome for harmony	Harmony was reflected by routine cooperation and mutual recognition.	Harmony was reflected by managed disagreement and reduced escalation.	Moderation became practical when religious values were translated into dialogue, mediation, and social responsibility.

A critical reading of religious moderation also requires attention to Identity politics. In plural societies, religious identity can be mobilised both as a source of solidarity and as a boundary-making instrument that distinguishes insiders from outsiders. The dialogues observed in Yogyakarta and the mediation process in Pemangkat suggest that moderation is meaningful when it interrupts exclusionary identity narratives and redirects religious authority toward the public good. However, moderation can also become exclusionary if it tends to label certain groups as immoderate without addressing the social, historical, or political reasons behind their resistance. This is particularly important in the context of state-sponsored moderation, where official programmes may promote coexistence but may also discipline religious expression according to state-defined standards of acceptable religiosity.

From the perspective of lived religion, the significance of moderation lies not only in formal statements by religious leaders or government institutions, but also in

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everyday practices through which communities learn to coexist. These practices include informal conversations after interfaith meetings, cooperation in neighbourhood activities, shared responses to local problems, and small acts of recognition across religious boundaries. Such everyday practices demonstrate that moderation is not merely a doctrine taught from above, but a lived process shaped by ordinary social encounters. Simultaneously, these practices remain fragile because they depend on continuing interaction, mutual trust, and the willingness of local actors to keep negotiating differences.

Thus, the findings do not support an idealised claim that religious moderation inherently produces social harmony. Instead, they show that moderation can contribute to interfaith coexistence when it is supported by inclusive participation, accountable leadership, sensitivity to local culture, and mechanisms for addressing grievances. Grounded in *maqasid al-shariah*, moderation is analytically valuable for explaining how communities balance religious protection, public welfare, social order, and cultural plurality. Its contribution, therefore, lies not in offering a universal formula for harmony, but in providing a legal-ethical perspective for examining the contested and uneven processes through which plural communities manage religious difference in everyday life.

Religious moderation has been observed to reduce interfaith tensions and foster long-term social cohesion,[27] as evidenced by several key findings from this study. In the communities observed, interfaith dialogue initiatives played a significant role in bridging religious divides. For example, in Yogyakarta, a series of facilitated discussions between Muslim and Christian leaders helped dispel long-standing misconceptions. They built mutual respect, leading to a noticeable reduction in conflicts over religious differences.

Additionally, community-based initiatives, such as collaborative social programmes between different religious groups, demonstrated how shared values of tolerance and solidarity contributed to greater social harmony. Such a programme involved the joint celebration of national holidays by both Muslim and Christian communities, which not only eased tensions but also strengthened communal bonds. The thematic analysis of the data highlights these practices as concrete examples of how religious moderation, grounded in the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, has successfully contributed to sustainable peace and interfaith cooperation in the regions studied.

However, implementing religious moderation faces several challenges, including the strong influence of extremist ideologies in some segments of society. These ideologies frequently utilise social media to disseminate narratives of intolerance, which can potentially spark conflicts. Another challenge is cultural resistance, where moderation values may be perceived as conflicting with local traditions or the interests of certain groups. To overcome these challenges, coordination among the government, religious institutions, and civil society is needed to design policies and programmes that support religious moderation. The government can play a role by enacting policies that protect minority rights and promote interfaith dialogue. Religious institutions can contribute by providing

[27] Gustiana Isya Marjani, "Overcoming Theological Dilemmas: Fostering Religious Moderation through the Resolution of Faith and Rationality," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 7, no. 2 (2023): 115–28, https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v7i2.28311.

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moderation-based education to their followers, while civil society can act as an agent of change by promoting inclusivity at the community level.

Religious moderation in Indonesia holds significant potential to serve as a model for other countries facing similar challenges. By integrating religious values with local cultural wisdom, Indonesia can demonstrate to the world that interfaith harmony is not only an ideal but also a tangible reality. This approach is relevant for preventing religious conflicts and creating a more peaceful global society.These findings suggest that religious moderation can support interfaith harmony when it is practised through concrete mechanisms such as interfaith dialogue, community cooperation, and mediated negotiation. In the Yogyakarta case, moderation was evident in repeated Muslim-Christian dialogue and shared social activities, while in Pemangkat District it was evident in local government mediation that helped prevent conflict escalation. Therefore, the study does not claim that moderation automatically produces social cohesion, but shows that it may contribute to harmony when supported by identifiable actors, institutional processes, and community-based practices.

Interaction Between Cultural Identity and Religious Movements in Indonesia

The interaction between cultural identity and religious movements in Yogyakarta and West Nusa Tenggara shows that delivering religious moderation requires cultural hybridity and negotiated religiosity. Local traditions such as *gotong royong* do not merely serve as cultural symbols of cooperation; they become social mechanisms by which religious communities translate abstract values of coexistence into everyday practices. In the observed communities, cooperation across religious boundaries occurred through rebuilding worship facilities, organising communal activities, supporting charity programmes, and responding collectively to local crises. These practices demonstrate that interreligious relations are sustained not only through formal dialogue but also through shared labour, reciprocal assistance, and repeated social encounters. From the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, such practices can be interpreted through *hifz al-nafs,* as they protect communal safety and social welfare, while also revealing how Islamic legal-ethical values are mediated through vernacular cultural forms.

The example of Muslims and Christians working together to rebuild a mosque and a church after a natural disaster in Yogyakarta illustrates this dynamic. This cooperation reflects not only *ukhuwah*—brotherhood—but also a form of lived pluralism in which religious identity is expressed through mutual responsibility rather than separation. However, this form of cooperation should not be romanticised as evidence that religious boundaries disappear. Instead, it shows that boundaries are temporarily softened and renegotiated through shared vulnerability and common social needs. In this sense, *gotong royong* bridges religious ethics and local civic culture, allowing communities to maintain their distinct religious identities while participating in a shared moral economy of care.

A similar pattern appears in West Nusa Tenggara, where local Christians helped organise charity activities during Ramadan. This practice indicates that cultural accommodation applies to everyday acts of recognition rather than to doctrinal agreement. The participation of non-Muslim residents in Ramadan-related charity did not require them to adopt Islamic rituals; rather, it allowed them to

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participate in the social dimension of religious life. Analytically, this represents the distinction between religious belief and social practice: interfaith cooperation becomes possible when religious events are also understood as occasions for public welfare, neighbourhood solidarity, and communal care. Within a *maqasid al-shariah* framework, this practice may be linked to *hifz al-mal* and broader public benefit, because it supports resource sharing, reduces social distance, and prevents competition over communal assistance.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that cultural integration remains contested. Some religious actors accepted local traditions as expressions of social wisdom, while others viewed certain practices, such as traditional dances, ancestral rituals, *wayang kulit*, or culturally embedded *Maulid* celebrations, as potentially incompatible with Islamic orthodoxy. This tension reflects a broader debate between normative religious purification and vernacular religious practice. In such cases, local Islam does not simply absorb culture without conflict; rather, cultural practices are selected, reinterpreted, or reframed to be accepted within religiously legitimate boundaries. This process shows that cultural accommodation is also an exercise of religious authority: certain actors gain the power to decide which elements of local culture are compatible with Islamic values and which should be rejected.

The *Maulid* celebration, especially when combined with local music, performance, or communal rituals, illustrates this negotiation between orthodoxy and vernacular Islam. For some communities, *Maulid* becomes a culturally meaningful way to express love for the Prophet and strengthen collective identity. For more conservative actors, however, such practices may be questioned when they appear to blur the boundary between religious devotion and local custom. This tension is analytically important because it shows that *hifz al-din* cannot be understood merely as the protection of religion in the abstract. It also involves contestation over who defines legitimate religious expression, how local practices are Islamised, and how religious communities manage disagreement without producing exclusion.

Therefore, the integration of local culture and religious practice should be understood as a sociological process of negotiated religiosity. Local traditions are not passively incorporated into religious life; they are debated, authorised, modified, and sometimes resisted. This finding contributes to the discourse on local Islam by showing that religious moderation at the community level emerges from the ongoing interaction between Islamic legal-ethical reasoning, local cultural memory, and everyday social relations. Rather than presenting cultural accommodation as an automatic path to harmony, the study shows that moderation works through continuous negotiation between doctrinal boundaries and vernacular forms of religious life. In this process, *Maqasid al-Shariah* functions as an analytical tool to examine how communities balance religious integrity, cultural continuity, social welfare, and interfaith coexistence in plural Indonesian settings.

The study shows that integrating local cultural values with religious teachings, as practised in these communities, creates a space for dialogue and mutual understanding, thereby contributing to social cohesion. This interaction strengthens both the national identity and the moral foundation of religious practices, grounded in Islamic law, thus promoting interfaith respect and preserving cultural heritage in a pluralistic society. The interaction between cultural identity and religious

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movements significantly shapes social cohesion.[28] Integrating cultural and religious values allows communities to overcome identity conflicts that often lead to social disintegration. This interaction provides a space for dialogue that promotes respect and supports diversity, allowing sustainable social harmony. The relationship between cultural identity and religious movements in Indonesia shows that both elements influence each other in creating social harmony.[29] Utilising local cultural values can make religious movements more inclusive and relevant to the communities they serve. Conversely, the presence of religion enriches local culture by providing a strong moral and spiritual foundation. This collaboration strengthens national identity and serves as a model for religious practice that other countries can adapt. The integration of religion and culture in this way leads to social cohesion, interfaith respect, and the preservation of cultural heritage in a pluralistic society.

The Role of Religious Organisations in Promoting Moderation and Pluralism

In this study, several religious organisations in Indonesia, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI), were directly involved in promoting religious moderation within the local communities, as observed in Yogyakarta and West Nusa Tenggara. These organisations played a crucial role in fostering interfaith harmony by advocating for tolerance and inclusivity through various programmes and initiatives. For example, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), one of the largest Islamic organisations, has long promoted the concept of Islam Nusantara, which emphasises values of diversity and tolerance. In Yogyakarta, NU actively held interfaith dialogue sessions in which Muslim and non-Muslim communities discussed common values, focusing on the principles of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) and *hifz al-din* (protection of religion) as articulated in *maqasid al-syariah*. This approach was observed to reduce interfaith tensions and foster mutual respect.

Similarly, Muhammadiyah organised regular cultural forums in West Nusa Tenggara where Muslims and followers of other faiths came together to address shared community issues, including education and social welfare. These forums were part of an initiative to implement *maqasid al-syariah*, particularly *hifz al-mal* (protection of property), by focusing on cooperative efforts to improve public infrastructure and alleviate poverty, benefiting all community members regardless of religion. In addition to Islamic organisations, the Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia (PHDI) in Bali facilitated interfaith seminars to strengthen relationships among Hindu, Muslim, and Christian communities.[30] These initiatives promoted dialogue, non-violence (Ahimsa), and mutual recognition across religious boundaries. From the perspective of *maqasid al-shariah*, such efforts can be associated with *hifz al-nafs* (the protection of life), as they seek to reduce the potential for intercommunal conflict and create conditions for peaceful coexistence. However, their significance extends beyond

[28] Loso Judijanto et al., "The Influence of Religious Beliefs and Religious Practices on Social Cohesion in Modern Society in Indonesia," *The Eastasouth Journal of Social Science and Humanities* 1, no. 03 (2024): 139–50, https://doi.org/10.58812/esssh.v1i03.276.

[29] Mazya et al., "Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia."

[30] Mohamad Abdun Nasir, "Conflict, Peace, and Religious Festivals: Muslim-Hindu-Christian Relations on the Eastern Indonesian Island of Lombok," *Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology* 4, no. 1 (2020): 102–23, Indonesia; Contemporary; Scholarly; Fieldwork, https://doi.org/10.1558/isit.36471.

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promoting harmony. Interfaith initiatives also serve as arenas where different religious actors negotiate authority, public representation, and the meaning of coexistence in a plural society.

The findings indicate that religious organisations play an important role in shaping moderation discourses, yet their involvement should not be understood as uniform or uncontested. Within and across religious organisations, varied interpretations often emerge regarding the meaning, scope, and limits of religious moderation. While some actors view moderation as a necessary framework for managing diversity and strengthening national cohesion, others express concerns that moderation may dilute doctrinal commitments or be used to discipline particular religious expressions. These tensions suggest that moderation is not a universally accepted concept but a debatable one, raising questions of religious authority, identity, and legitimacy.

Such contestation became visible in areas experiencing heightened religious polarisation. In West Nusa Tenggara, for example, local actors reported concerns regarding the circulation of exclusivist religious narratives through informal networks, religious gatherings, and digital media platforms. Religious organisations, including GP Ansor, responded with educational programmes, youth engagement initiatives, and public campaigns that promote critical engagement with religious teachings. These efforts may be interpreted through the perspective of *hifz al-aql* (the protection of intellect), particularly in their attempt to encourage reflective religious understanding and resistance to extremist interpretations. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these initiatives varied according to local contexts, levels of community trust, and perceptions of organisational legitimacy.

A critical perspective also reveals that religious organisations are not merely agents of moderation but participants in broader struggles over religious authority. Programmes promoting moderation may strengthen social cohesion, yet they can also generate resistance among groups that perceive moderation as a state-sponsored agenda or as privileging particular interpretations of religion over others. Consequently, the significance of organisations such as NU, Muhammadiyah, PHDI, and GP Ansor lies not only in their capacity to promote peaceful coexistence but also in how they navigate competing claims of religious authenticity, public influence, and communal leadership within Indonesia's plural religious landscape. These findings illustrate how religious organisations in Indonesia, through a combination of grassroots initiatives and alignment with the principles of *maqasid al-shariah*, contribute to promoting religious moderation. Their activities in local communities provide concrete examples of how Islamic law is applied in practice to address religious polarisation and strengthen social harmony.

Challenges in Integrating Religious Moderation with Local Culture

In Indonesia, the interaction between local traditions and Islamic law often creates tensions, particularly when certain traditional practices are perceived as conflicting with religious teachings. For example, in West Nusa Tenggara, local customs such as traditional dances and ancestor worship have sometimes been seen as incompatible with Islamic principles by some conservative religious groups. These traditions, rooted in local culture, are viewed by some as *bid'ah* (innovation) or even

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shirk (idolatry), creating significant normative conflicts between maintaining cultural heritage and adhering to religious doctrines.

However, *maqasid al-shariah* should not be treated as an automatic formula for resolving tensions between Islamic orthodoxy and local cultural traditions. In the observed communities, *maqasid* functioned more as a contested interpretive framework through which religious leaders, cultural actors, and community members negotiated the boundaries of legitimate religious and cultural expression. The principle of *hifz al-din*—protection of religion—for instance, did not simply lead to either the rejection or acceptance of local customs. Rather, it opened a debate over which cultural practices could be considered relevant to Islamic teachings, who had the authority to make such judgments, and how far local traditions could be reframed without losing their cultural meaning.

This tension was evident in Yogyakarta, where some local Muslim leaders supported the continuation of cultural practices such as *wayang kulit*, provided they were interpreted as cultural expressions rather than religious rituals. Through this reframing, *wayang kulit* could be preserved as part of local heritage while being positioned within acceptable Islamic boundaries. However, this process also reveals an asymmetry of interpretive authority. Cultural practices were not simply accepted on their own terms; they had to be authorised by religious actors and adjusted to fit particular understandings of Islamic legitimacy. Some conservative groups may still regard such practices as problematic, especially when they are perceived to contain elements associated with pre-Islamic belief, ritual ambiguity, or excessive cultural syncretism. Thus, the accommodation of local culture through *maqasid al-shariah* should be understood not as a completed reconciliation, but as an ongoing negotiation between vernacular religious practice and claims of doctrinal purity.

A similar complexity appears in conflicts over land use, where religious obligations, cultural practices, and communal interests intersect. The principle of *hifz al-mal*—protection of property—and communal welfare can provide a framework for considering the shared benefit of land, public facilities, and community resources. However, issues such as the tension between the establishment of mosques and the use of land for cultural rituals in Sambas, West Kalimantan, cannot be reduced to a simple balance between religious and cultural needs. Land-use disputes often involve unequal bargaining power, different levels of access to local authorities, majority-minority dynamics, and competing claims over public legitimacy. While mediation may prevent escalation, it may also leave unresolved questions about whose interests are prioritised, whose traditions are recognised, and whose claims must be compromised.

Therefore, the application of *maqasid al-shariah* in these cases should be analysed as a process of legal-ethical negotiation rather than as a purely conciliatory solution. *Hifz al-din* may protect religious integrity, but it can also become a site of contestation when actors disagree over what counts as legitimate religious expression. *Hifz al-mal* may support the protection of property and public welfare, but it also requires critical attention to how resources, land, and communal spaces are distributed and governed. These findings suggest that *maqasid*-based moderation is most analytically useful when it exposes tensions among cultural preservation, religious authority, and social order, rather than when it is used solely to affirm harmony. In this sense, religious moderation does not erase conflict; it provides a

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framework through which unresolved differences can be managed, negotiated, and sometimes only partially accommodated within plural community life.

These examples illustrate how *maqasid al-shariah* not only provides solutions to conflicts between local culture and Islamic law but also serves as a guiding principle for accommodating cultural diversity. By emphasising values such as tolerance, justice, and balance, *maqasid al-shariah* allows for the integration of local traditions into Islamic practices, ensuring that both religious and cultural identities can coexist harmoniously. The application of *maqasid al-shariah* in these situations helps create a framework in which religious moderation serves as a tool for resolving normative conflicts, ultimately fostering interfaith cooperation and social cohesion.

Conclusion

This study has examined the relationship between religious moderation, *maqasid al-shariah*, and interfaith relations in Indonesia by focusing on the interaction between religious movements and cultural identity at the community level. The findings suggest that religious moderation should not be understood as an inherently effective or universally accepted framework for producing interfaith harmony. Rather, it operates as a socially contested and politically negotiated practice through which religious actors, local authorities, and community members attempt to manage religious difference, cultural plurality, and communal tensions. By employing *maqasid al-shariah* as an analytical perspective, the study shows that principles such as *hifz al-din, hifz al-nafs*, and *hifz al-mal* can help explain how communities seek to balance legitimate religious expression, social security, public welfare, and shared communal interests. However, these principles do not automatically resolve conflict; their application depends on local power relations, institutional authority, competing interpretations of religious legitimacy, and the willingness of communities to negotiate unresolved differences. Thus, the contribution of this study lies not in presenting religious moderation as a universal solution, but in demonstrating how *maqasid*-based reasoning can illuminate both the possibilities and limitations of managing interfaith relations in plural Indonesian society.

The research highlights that Indonesia's cultural identity, rooted in cooperation, tolerance, and respect, plays a vital role in enabling the application of religious moderation. Religious movements that prioritise moderation are integral to facilitating interfaith dialogue and reducing conflicts arising from religious differences. These movements align with the *maqasid al-shariah* principles, particularly *hifz al-din* (the protection of religion) and *hifz al-nafs* (the protection of life), through their active involvement in conflict resolution and in educational initiatives that promote inclusivity. However, integrating religious moderation with local culture presents challenges. Cultural resistance, stereotypes, and identity politics pose significant barriers.[31] Despite these challenges, local cultures that emphasise inclusivity offer potential pathways to overcome them. Strengthening cooperation across religious and cultural divides remains essential for achieving a more tolerant and harmonious society.

[31] Abdul Karim et al., "Negotiating Islamic Legal Culture: Muslim Majority Participation under Non-Muslim Leadership in Multicultural Villages," *Al-Manahij: Jurnal Kajian Hukum Islam*, September 11, 2025, 191–204, https://doi.org/10.24090/mnh.v19i2.13918.

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Furthermore, this study examines how the application of *maqasid al-shariah*, particularly its emphasis on justice, peace, and the protection of community welfare, aligns with the promotion of religious moderation.[32] The findings contribute to a reinterpretation of *maqasid* in the context of pluralism, suggesting that these principles can serve as a foundation for fostering tolerance and social cohesion in a multicultural society.At the normative level, the study enriches Islamic legal theory by offering insights into how religious moderation, as framed by *maqasid al-shariah*, can function to support interfaith harmony. The implications for Islamic law practice in Indonesia are significant, as this study suggests a more inclusive approach to Islamic jurisprudence that aligns with the principles of tolerance, solidarity, and peace. Thus, religious moderation, supported by *maqasid al-shariah*, offers not only a conceptual framework but also practical guidelines for addressing religious and cultural conflicts to enhance Indonesia's social harmony.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of the use of AI

The initial draft was developed with the assistance of ChatGPT for language refinement and preliminary structuring. All substantive analysis, interpretation, argumentation, and further development of the manuscript were conducted independently by the authors.

Credit of Author Statement

Reslawati and Ahsanul Khalikin: Conceptualisation, original draft preparation, methodology. Suhanah: Data curation. Wakhid Sugiyarto and Marpuah: writing, reviewing, and editing.

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