



Religious Moderation in the Digital Era: Strengthening Social Tolerance amid Digital Diversity

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Abstract

Religious moderation has become increasingly important in addressing the challenges of contemporary social life shaped by digital technology, rapid information exchange, and intensified intercultural and interreligious interactions. This study examines the role of religious moderation in fostering tolerance amid digital diversity and explores the challenges posed by the spread of intolerant, provocative, and radical content on digital platforms. Employing a qualitative library research design with a content analysis approach, data were collected from scholarly journals, books, policy documents, and other relevant literature on religious moderation and digital social dynamics. The findings indicate that religious moderation contributes significantly to promoting social harmony through the reinforcement of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, inclusivity, and responsible digital literacy. The study also reveals that hate speech, social polarization, misinformation, and the misuse of social media constitute major obstacles to the development of tolerant digital communities. Furthermore, effective implementation of religious moderation requires collaborative efforts among educational institutions, governments, religious leaders, and civil society organizations. The study concludes that religious moderation serves as a critical framework for strengthening social cohesion, preserving national unity, and fostering peaceful coexistence within increasingly diverse digital societies.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has transformed contemporary social life by reshaping patterns of communication, interaction, and information exchange. The emergence of social media, digital platforms, and unrestricted access to information has expanded opportunities for social engagement across geographical and cultural boundaries (Klein, 2017). However, these developments have also generated new challenges, including the spread of hate speech, intolerance, radicalism, and religiously motivated conflicts in digital spaces (Asmani, 2017; Ixfina, 2024; Miftahussurur & Firdaus, 2024). Such conditions threaten social harmony and highlight the urgent need for effective

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approaches to maintaining unity and strengthening tolerance in increasingly diverse societies (Taufiq & Alkholid, 2021).

Indonesia represents a multicultural nation characterized by diverse ethnicities, cultures, languages, and religious traditions. Within the context of digital society, interactions among individuals are no longer limited to physical encounters but increasingly occur through virtual platforms. While digital media facilitate communication, education, and religious dissemination, they also provide opportunities for the circulation of provocative narratives, misinformation, and intolerant ideologies capable of undermining social cohesion (Zainuri, 2024). Consequently, understanding strategies that promote peaceful coexistence within digitally connected communities has become increasingly important.

One of the most relevant approaches to addressing these challenges is religious moderation. Religious moderation promotes a balanced and non-extremist understanding of religion while encouraging respect for diversity and differences. This concept emphasizes tolerance, mutual respect, justice, and peaceful coexistence as fundamental values necessary for maintaining harmony within pluralistic societies. In the contemporary digital era, religious moderation extends beyond individual religious practices and encompasses responsible behavior in online environments where diverse viewpoints frequently interact (Haluti et al., 2025).

Recent studies have highlighted the importance of religious moderation in strengthening social harmony and preventing conflict. In educational settings, Islamic Religious Education has been recognized as an important medium for cultivating moderate religious values among younger generations Engkizar et al., (2026). Contemporary educational environments are increasingly influenced by globalization, digital technology, and rapidly changing social dynamics, requiring students to navigate both physical and digital spaces. These developments create opportunities for broader access to knowledge while simultaneously exposing students to radicalism, intolerance, religious misinformation, and moral challenges.

The integration of religious moderation values into educational processes has therefore received considerable scholarly attention. Principles such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) are considered essential for developing inclusive and non-extremist attitudes among learners. Through these values, educational institutions contribute not only to the transmission of religious knowledge but also to the formation of responsible citizens capable of living harmoniously in multicultural societies (Aziz, 2025). Furthermore, the increasing influence of digital technology has intensified the need for digital literacy, which includes critical thinking skills, information evaluation, contextual religious understanding, and responsible use of digital media. Such competencies are necessary to prevent individuals from being influenced by misleading or intolerant online content (Fitrotunnisa et al., 2025).

Although previous studies have examined religious moderation in educational contexts and digital literacy separately, limited attention has been devoted to understanding how religious moderation functions as a broader social framework for strengthening tolerance amid digital diversity. Existing research tends to focus on educational implementation, religious instruction, or digital competencies rather than examining the interconnected relationship between religious moderation, digital diversity, and social tolerance within contemporary society. This gap is particularly significant given the growing influence of digital communication on religious and social interactions.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the role of religious moderation in addressing the challenges of contemporary social life and strengthening tolerance amid digital diversity. This research contributes to the growing discourse on religious moderation by examining its relevance beyond formal educational settings and

positioning it as a strategic framework for promoting social cohesion in multicultural digital societies. Through the integration of moderate religious values, digital awareness, and inclusive social engagement, religious moderation can serve as an important foundation for fostering harmony and unity in the digital era.

Accordingly, this study addresses three primary questions: (1) How does religious moderation contribute to addressing the challenges of contemporary social life in the digital era? (2) How does digital diversity influence social tolerance within society? and (3) What strategies can be implemented to strengthen tolerance amidst the increasing prevalence of hate speech, misinformation, and religiously motivated conflicts in digital spaces? Answering these questions is expected to provide both theoretical and practical insights for policymakers, educational institutions, religious leaders, and communities seeking to strengthen religious moderation and social cohesion in increasingly diverse digital environments.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach using content analysis to examine the role of religious moderation in addressing the challenges of contemporary social life and strengthening tolerance amid digital diversity. The study relied on secondary data obtained from scholarly journals, books, academic articles, policy documents, and other relevant publications discussing religious moderation, social tolerance, digital diversity, and digital social dynamics (Sa'adah et al., 2022).

Data collection was conducted through documentation techniques by identifying, selecting, and reviewing literature relevant to the research objectives. The collected documents were organized according to key themes related to religious moderation, tolerance, digital media, and contemporary social challenges.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. This method involved systematically examining textual data, identifying recurring themes and patterns, interpreting meanings, and synthesizing findings from various sources. The analysis process consisted of data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing to generate a comprehensive understanding of the role of religious moderation in fostering social harmony and tolerance in the digital era (Asiah & Harjoni, 2024).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Religious Moderation in Contemporary Social Life

The findings indicate that religious moderation plays a strategic role in addressing the challenges of contemporary social life, particularly in societies characterized by increasing diversity and rapid digital transformation. Religious moderation promotes a balanced understanding of religion that rejects extremism while encouraging respect for differences. In the Indonesian context, the importance of religious moderation is reflected in educational policies that emphasize the integration of moderation values into learning processes as a means of developing individuals who possess tolerant, balanced, and contextually relevant religious perspectives within a pluralistic society. Such an approach highlights the principles of *wasathiyah* (moderation), non-extremism, and respect for diversity as essential foundations for social harmony (Hadini et al., 2024; Sakti et al., 2024).

The analysis further reveals that religious moderation functions as an important mechanism for maintaining social stability amid the increasingly complex dynamics of contemporary society. The rapid development of digital technology has expanded opportunities for interaction among individuals from different religious, cultural, and social backgrounds. However, these developments have also intensified the circulation of information, opinions, and ideological narratives that may contribute to polarization and social tension. In this context, religious moderation serves as a

balancing framework that prevents individuals and communities from adopting extreme positions, whether in the form of excessive religious fanaticism or the neglect of religious values altogether (Hidayat, 2024).

Another significant role of religious moderation lies in strengthening tolerance among diverse social groups. The values of mutual respect, acceptance of differences, and recognition of plurality contribute to the development of harmonious social relationships in both physical and digital environments. The findings suggest that societies that embrace moderation are better equipped to manage differences in beliefs, cultures, and perspectives without allowing such differences to evolve into social conflict. This is particularly important in the digital era, where information spreads rapidly and is often consumed without adequate verification, increasing the potential for misunderstanding and division. Religious moderation therefore serves as a protective mechanism that encourages individuals to respond to differences wisely and constructively (Adawiyah, 2022).

Furthermore, religious moderation contributes significantly to the development of collective awareness regarding the importance of peaceful coexistence. In educational institutions, community organizations, and public spaces, moderation values can be transmitted through both formal and informal learning processes. Such efforts help cultivate generations that are more tolerant, socially responsible, and capable of engaging ethically in digital environments. Beyond its educational function, religious moderation reinforces the role of religion as a source of peace, justice, compassion, and solidarity rather than as a source of division. A moderate religious perspective encourages individuals to prioritize universal humanitarian values, thereby strengthening social cohesion and fostering inclusive social relationships within increasingly diverse societies (Azmat et al., 2019; John et al., 2019; Masani & Fabanjo, 2026).

These findings demonstrate that religious moderation extends beyond a purely theological concept and functions as a practical social strategy for managing diversity in contemporary society. By promoting tolerance, preventing extremism, and encouraging responsible participation in digital spaces, religious moderation contributes to the creation of peaceful, inclusive, and harmonious communities capable of responding effectively to the challenges posed by technological advancement and growing social complexity.

Challenges of Social Life in the Era of Digital Diversity

The analysis reveals that the expansion of digital technology has significantly transformed patterns of social interaction, creating both opportunities and challenges for contemporary society. In increasingly interconnected digital environments, interactions among individuals and groups from diverse religious, cultural, and social backgrounds occur more frequently than ever before. While digital platforms facilitate communication and access to information, they also generate complex challenges that affect social cohesion and tolerance. The findings indicate that digital diversity has intensified several issues related to information dissemination, social polarization, and intergroup relations, particularly within multicultural societies (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025).

One of the most prominent challenges identified in this study is the rapid and uncontrolled dissemination of information through digital media. The absence of adequate verification mechanisms often enables inaccurate or misleading information to spread widely within a short period. As a result, individuals may accept and redistribute unverified information, creating misunderstandings and contributing to social tensions. This phenomenon demonstrates how technological advancement can simultaneously facilitate communication and increase vulnerability to misinformation (Asiah & Harjoni, 2024).

The study further identifies the increasing prevalence of hate speech and

hoaxes as a major challenge in the digital era. Social media platforms have become spaces where provocative narratives related to religion, politics, and social identity can circulate extensively. Such content often fuels prejudice and distrust among different groups, thereby undermining social harmony and increasing the potential for conflict within pluralistic societies. The widespread dissemination of false information and hostile discourse has therefore become a significant obstacle to the development of peaceful social relationships (Radial, 2021).

Another important challenge concerns the emergence of social polarization in digital spaces. The findings suggest that digital communication often reinforces the formation of echo chambers, in which individuals interact primarily with like-minded groups while limiting exposure to alternative perspectives. This tendency reduces opportunities for constructive dialogue and weakens openness to diversity. Consequently, social interactions become increasingly fragmented, making it more difficult to build mutual understanding and social solidarity across different communities.

The analysis also highlights the issue of low digital literacy among certain segments of society. Many users lack the critical skills necessary to evaluate the credibility of information sources and distinguish between factual and misleading content. This condition increases susceptibility to provocative narratives, misinformation, and manipulative online content, thereby elevating the risk of social conflict. The findings indicate that inadequate digital literacy remains a major barrier to the development of healthy and responsible digital citizenship.

Furthermore, the study identifies the persistence of intolerance as a significant consequence of digital diversity. Although digital platforms provide opportunities for intercultural and interreligious interaction, they may also facilitate the dissemination of exclusive, radical, and intolerant narratives. Such narratives can reinforce negative stereotypes and strengthen attitudes of rejection toward individuals or groups with different beliefs and perspectives. As a result, the potential of digital diversity to promote mutual understanding is often undermined by the spread of divisive content.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the challenges of social life in the era of digital diversity arise from the interaction between technological advancement, inadequate digital literacy, the spread of misinformation, and limited understanding of religious moderation. Addressing these challenges therefore requires systematic efforts to strengthen public awareness, promote responsible digital engagement, and cultivate values that support tolerance and social cohesion.

Efforts to Build Tolerance through Religious Moderation

The findings indicate that religious moderation serves as a fundamental strategy for fostering tolerance and maintaining social harmony in increasingly diverse digital societies. Religious moderation encourages individuals to adopt balanced religious perspectives, avoid extremism, and respect differences in beliefs, cultures, and social viewpoints. The internalization of moderation values in everyday life contributes to the development of mutual respect and peaceful coexistence, thereby strengthening the social foundations necessary for harmonious community relations. Educational institutions play a particularly important role in this process by cultivating tolerance and openness toward diversity from an early age (Baroud et al., 2025; Engkizar et al., 2026; Hafizah et al., 2025).

The study further reveals that the responsible use of digital media is an essential component of efforts to strengthen tolerance. Digital platforms possess significant potential to disseminate messages of peace, inclusivity, and interreligious understanding. However, realizing this potential requires adequate digital literacy skills that enable individuals to critically evaluate information and resist provocative or divisive content. Digital literacy not only protects individuals from misinformation

but also encourages more ethical and constructive participation in online environments.

Another important finding concerns the role of religious leaders and community leaders in promoting tolerance. Religious leaders serve as influential sources of guidance who can communicate inclusive and peaceful interpretations of religious teachings. Through moderate religious discourse, they contribute to reducing tensions and counteracting narratives that promote conflict and division. At the same time, community members play an active role in maintaining social harmony by fostering respectful interactions and supporting initiatives that strengthen social cohesion. The collaboration between religious leaders and communities therefore represents an important mechanism for implementing religious moderation in both physical and digital spaces (Haris, 2023).

The analysis also highlights the importance of integrating digital literacy with religious values, particularly within educational settings. Digital literacy enables individuals to understand the ethical dimensions of technology use, including the importance of verifying information before sharing it, communicating respectfully on social media, and avoiding hate speech or provocative behavior. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, digital technology can be utilized to encourage the creation of positive content, such as educational videos, digital campaigns promoting moral values, and reflective religious messages shared through online platforms. Such activities not only strengthen religious understanding but also develop critical thinking, creativity, and social responsibility among learners (Bheo et al., 2020).

These findings suggest that strengthening tolerance through religious moderation requires a multidimensional approach involving education, digital literacy, responsible media engagement, and active participation from religious and community leaders. Through these interconnected efforts, religious moderation can function as an effective framework for promoting peaceful coexistence, reducing social tensions, and strengthening social cohesion in the era of digital diversity (Leask et al., 2023; Santoso & Ahmad, 2025; Supriyadi et al., 2025).

Religious Moderation and Digital Literacy in the Educational Process

The findings indicate that religious moderation and digital literacy are closely interconnected in shaping students' character and preparing them to navigate the complexities of contemporary society. National educational policies, as reflected in the 1945 Constitution and Law No. 20 of 2003, emphasize the importance of education in fostering individuals who are not only intellectually competent but also socially responsible and respectful of diversity. Within this framework, religious moderation contributes to the development of balanced and non-extremist religious perspectives that prioritize tolerance, justice, humanity, and peaceful coexistence. Through educational processes that promote these values, students are encouraged to understand religious teachings contextually, appreciate differences, and interact harmoniously within diverse social environments (Bjorklund, 2022; Widyawati et al., 2024).

The analysis further reveals that the integration of religious moderation into education is increasingly important in the digital era, where students are exposed to vast amounts of information from various online sources. In this regard, the educational philosophy of Nurcholish Madjid remains highly relevant. He emphasized that modernity in Islamic education should not be interpreted as the imitation of Western culture, but rather as the adoption of positive values such as rationality, openness to knowledge, critical inquiry, and responsiveness to technological advancement (Asyibli et al., 2025; Herdiansyah et al., 2019; Moy et al., 2016). These principles encourage educational institutions to develop learning environments that combine religious values with critical engagement in contemporary social realities (Hasan et al., 2025).

A key finding of this study is that digital literacy functions as a complementary instrument to religious moderation. Beyond technical skills, digital literacy enables students to evaluate information critically, identify credible sources, and distinguish moderate religious perspectives from radical or misleading narratives. In an era where religious discourse is increasingly disseminated through digital platforms, these competencies are essential for preventing the spread of intolerance, hate speech, and misinformation. Consequently, students become more capable of using technology responsibly while maintaining balanced religious perspectives (Gafarurrozi, 2022).

The study also highlights the continued relevance of Nurcholish Madjid's educational thought in supporting character formation through the integration of religious moderation and digital literacy. His perspective emphasizes three interconnected principles: the promotion of inclusive Islam that respects plurality and diversity, openness to scientific and technological developments through a modern educational outlook, and the integration of religious and general knowledge to overcome the dichotomy between the two domains. These principles provide a conceptual foundation for developing educational practices that are both religiously grounded and responsive to contemporary challenges.

Furthermore, the findings suggest that religious moderation plays an important role in cultivating students' openness toward diversity and preventing excessive religious fanaticism. Students who internalize moderation values tend to demonstrate greater respect for differences in beliefs, cultures, and perspectives. Such attitudes are particularly important in contemporary societies characterized by increasing multicultural interaction and global connectivity. Religious moderation therefore contributes not only to individual character development but also to broader social harmony and intercultural understanding (Baroud et al., 2025; Defriyanto et al., 2026; Saidi et al., 2025).

Digital literacy strengthens this process by equipping students with the ability to navigate digital environments critically and responsibly. Given that much religious information is now accessed through online media, students require the capacity to assess the credibility of information, understand contextual meanings, and avoid being influenced by provocative or extremist content. The development of these competencies supports the formation of individuals who are intelligent, selective, and capable of utilizing digital technology productively for learning and social engagement (Baroud et al., 2025; Okenova et al., 2025).

Another important finding concerns the influence of religious moderation and digital literacy on students' behavior in digital spaces. The integration of these two dimensions encourages students to communicate respectfully, engage in constructive dialogue, and avoid behaviors that may contribute to conflict or social division. Moreover, students can utilize digital platforms to disseminate positive messages, promote tolerance, and encourage peaceful coexistence among diverse communities. Such practices foster empathy, responsibility, and social awareness while strengthening the ethical use of technology in everyday life (Kassymova et al., 2025; Mutiaramses et al., 2025; Rahawarin et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the integration of religious moderation and digital literacy extends beyond the transmission of knowledge and contributes significantly to character formation. Students are encouraged to develop moral integrity, respect diversity, think critically, and utilize technology in positive and responsible ways. These competencies are increasingly important for addressing the challenges of globalization and maintaining social harmony within multicultural societies (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025).

Collaboration among Government, Religious Leaders, and Communities

The findings indicate that strengthening religious moderation in contemporary society requires collaboration among multiple stakeholders. The analysis reveals that

the government, religious leaders, and communities perform complementary roles in promoting tolerance and maintaining social harmony amid the challenges posed by digital diversity. Effective implementation of religious moderation cannot rely solely on individual awareness but requires collective efforts supported by institutional, social, and religious structures (Hefni, 2020).

The government plays a strategic role as both regulator and facilitator in creating policies that support the promotion of religious moderation and digital literacy. Through educational institutions, governmental agencies, and digital governance mechanisms, public authorities can encourage the dissemination of tolerance values, strengthen digital literacy programs, and reduce the circulation of misinformation and intolerant content. Regulatory measures aimed at addressing harmful online content are therefore important components of broader efforts to maintain social stability and cohesion in digital environments (Oriyanto, 2025).

The study further highlights the important role of religious leaders as moral and spiritual guides within society. In the context of digital communication, religious leaders possess significant influence in shaping public understanding of religious teachings and social values. By promoting inclusive, peaceful, and contextual interpretations of religion, they can counteract divisive narratives and provide constructive guidance for navigating social differences. Their role becomes increasingly important as digital platforms expand the reach of both moderate and extremist religious messages (Taufiq & Alkholid, 2021).

In addition to governmental and religious institutions, communities themselves play a central role in strengthening tolerance within digital spaces. As active users of social media and digital communication platforms, community members contribute directly to the quality of online interactions. The findings suggest that public awareness regarding information verification, responsible communication, and respect for diversity is essential for creating a healthy digital ecosystem. Active participation in disseminating positive and educational content further strengthens the implementation of religious moderation and contributes to the cultivation of inclusive digital environments (Bulungo et al., 2026).

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the successful implementation of religious moderation depends on sustained collaboration among governments, religious leaders, and communities. Such synergy creates a comprehensive framework for promoting tolerance, preventing social conflict, and strengthening social cohesion in increasingly diverse and digitally connected societies.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious moderation plays an essential role in addressing the challenges of contemporary social life in the era of digital diversity. It functions as a framework for strengthening tolerance, reducing extremism, and maintaining social cohesion amid rapid digital transformation. The findings also show that digital society faces key challenges, including the spread of misinformation, hate speech, social polarization, low digital literacy, and increasing intolerance in online spaces. These conditions highlight the need for stronger awareness of responsible digital engagement and the reinforcement of moderate religious values.

In addition, the study emphasizes that efforts to strengthen tolerance require collaboration among governments, educational institutions, religious leaders, and communities. Such synergy is necessary to build inclusive, peaceful, and harmonious social relations in the digital era. Overall, religious moderation is confirmed as a crucial foundation for promoting tolerance and social harmony in multicultural and digitally connected societies.

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