

RELIGIOUS MODERATION AS A FOUNDATIONAL UNDERSTANDING IN STRENGTHENING SOCIAL HARMONY IN SIMPANG EMPAT VILLAGE, SIMPANG EMPAT DISTRICT, ASAHAN REGENCY

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ABSTRACT

This research is motivated by the importance of religious moderation in creating a harmonious and harmonious community life amidst religious diversity. Simpang Empat Village once experienced a major interfaith conflict related to the rejection of the construction of a house of worship, but the conflict did not last long and was resolved through deliberation. This condition indicates a learning process towards a more peaceful and tolerant community life. This study aims to determine the community's understanding of religious moderation and its role in improving community harmony. This study uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological research type, using primary data in the form of interviews with local religious leaders and secondary data from books, journals, and the internet. The results show that religious moderation can be a foundation for building a harmonious society through tolerance, mutual respect, and a forum for interfaith cooperation such as BKUK, which has been successfully implemented and is the main goal in maintaining community harmony in the village. The conclusion of this study is that local religious leaders play an important role in educating religious moderation and building a harmonious society. Therefore, there needs to be cooperation between religious leaders and the community to spread religious moderation because religious moderation can help reduce conflict and increase tolerance between communities and create a peaceful and harmonious community life in Simpang Empat village.

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INTRODUCTIONS

In general, religious moderation is a way of view, religious attitude, and religious practice that emphasizes balance, justice, and rejection of extreme attitudes, both in understanding religious teachings and in social life. In terms, religious moderation refers to religious views, attitudes, and practices that take a middle position (*wasathiyah*),

namely not exaggerating in understanding religious texts, adhering to the principles of religious teachings, and respecting the existence of followers of other religions in social life.

Indonesia is a country with a high level of diversity, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, culture, and language. This diversity is the wealth of the nation, but it also has the potential to cause conflict if it is not accompanied by an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities. Therefore, a fair, balanced, and not excessive religious attitude is needed, known as the concept of religious moderation. (Suaidi, 2025; Taufik & Mohsi, 2023)

Simpang Empat Village is one of the areas that has religious diversity. In its history, this village has experienced socio-religious conflicts related to the rejection of the construction of houses of worship in 2000. However, through deliberation involving the government and religious leaders, the conflict can be resolved peacefully so that people's lives can be harmonious again. This event shows the importance of the role of religious moderation in maintaining community harmony.

Simpang Empat Village, Simpang Empat District, Asahan Regency is known as Pancasila Village and one of the areas that has religious diversity. In its history, this village has experienced religious conflicts around 2000, there was a rejection from some Muslims against the plan to build a church in Simpang Empat village. This conflict shows that differences in beliefs and disturb the harmony of society. (Nasrullah et al., 2026; Rosidin et al., 2025)

However, the conflict did not develop into a prolonged conflict. Through the role of the sub-district government and community leaders, especially the sub-district head at that time, it was carried out in a persuasive and deliberative manner with the community, especially Muslims. The deliberation process became an important event for the community to understand each other, so that in the end Muslims could accept the construction of a church in Simpang Empat Village. Harmony in this village there is cooperation between religious leaders, namely BKUK, namely (Religious Ummah Management Board), which makes the community live in harmony so that Simpang Empat Village can progress until now. The resolution of conflicts through deliberation reflects the values of religious moderation and the spirit of Pancasila in community life. (Annisa et al., 2026)

After this incident, the social life of the people of Simpang Empat Village showed a more harmonious development. Relations between religious communities are well established, tolerance is getting stronger, and people are able to coexist peacefully. The designation of Simpang Empat Village as a Pancasila Village further emphasizes the identity of the village as a shared living space that upholds the values of unity, tolerance, and deliberation. (Hamdi et al., 2021)

Nevertheless, the success of maintaining community harmony is inseparable from the understanding of religious moderation possessed by the community. Therefore, it is important to know how the understanding of religious moderation is formed, understood, and implemented by the people of Simpang Empat Village, as well as how this understanding plays a role in improving and maintaining social harmony. This research is important not only to understand the religion of the village community, but also as a lesson for other communities in managing diversity peacefully. (A. P. Aulia et al., 2024; F. A. Aulia & Arifin, 2023)

Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance in religion. In Simpang Empat Village, the majority of Muslims are estimated to be Muslim, 87 - 88% are Muslims, Christians (Protestants/Catholics) are estimated at 9 - 11% and other religions are around 0.4 - 1%. Allah created human beings with nations and tribes not to compete with each other but to complement each other. Moderation means seeing differences as a blessing, not a threat, this is contained in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13.

O people, I am the Creator of the Universe, and I am the Creator of all things, and I am the Creator
 .of all things, and I am the Creator of all things

Meaning: O true humans, We have created you from a man and a woman, then We have made you a nation and a tribe so that you may know each other. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah is the most pious. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Knowing, All-Knowing, (Al-Hujurat:13).

Based on this background, this study was conducted to examine the understanding of religious moderation and the role of religious leaders in improving community harmony in Simpang Empat Village. The role of religious leaders is very important in spreading the value of moderation to create harmony. This research is expected to provide a real

picture of the importance of tolerance and mutual respect in the life of a pluralistic society. The results of this research are also expected to be a reference for the community in maintaining harmony between religious communities so that similar conflicts do not recur.

METHOD

The research method used in this study is qualitative research with a phenomenological approach. In this study, the type of research used is qualitative research to research problems directly based on real conditions directly based on real conditions in society. The location used as a research site is Simpang Empat Village, Simpang Empat District, Asahan Regency. This location was chosen because it was in accordance with the problems being researched (Natow, 2020).

This study uses a phenomenological approach because it is used to explore in depth the understanding of religious leaders towards religious moderation. The type of research used is qualitative research that contains information and also records sourced from data obtained from informants. Furthermore, the data sources used in this study are divided into 2, namely primary and secondary data, primary data obtained through in-depth interviews with local religious leaders and secondary data obtained from various sources from books, journals and the internet.

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

Religious Moderation in Realizing Harmony

Religious moderation is very important as a foundation in realizing a harmonious society in the midst of diversity. Religious moderation is the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a fair and balanced manner. This attitude aims to avoid extreme or excessive behavior in carrying out religious worship. This moderate attitude and perspective in religion is very important for a multicultural society like Indonesia. (Darwis et al., 2025; Ropiah & Hafiz, 2025)

1. Definition of Religious Moderation According to Experts

- a. Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia
Religious moderation is a way of religion that is fair and balanced, not extreme to the right or left, and able to combine religious commitment with national commitment in community life
- b. Yusuf Qardhawi
Religious moderation is a wasathiyyah attitude, which is a fair and balanced middle attitude in religion, by avoiding excessive attitudes (ifraith) and underestimating religious teachings (tafrith).
- c. Quraish Shihab
Religious moderation is a religious attitude that places religious teachings proportionately, not extremely, and upholds the values of justice, tolerance, and humanity in social life.
- d. Abdul Mustaqim
Religious moderation is understood as a religious perspective that is inclusive, open, and tolerant of differences, and rejects all forms of violence and exclusive attitudes in religion.
- e. Nasaruddin Umar
Religious moderation is a religious approach that emphasizes the balance between religious texts and social contexts, so that religious teachings can be applied in a relevant way and bring benefits to the common life. We must also understand religious moderation where religious attitudes must be balanced between practicing one's own religion and respecting the religion of others who have different beliefs. Differences in ethnicity, religion, race and class are realities that must be used for the development of the country and nation. (Ansori et al., 2025; Khusniyah et al., 2025)

2. The Role of Religious Moderation in Realizing Harmony

Religious moderation is an effort that emphasizes balance, tolerance and respect for differences in religion. Religious moderation plays an important role in creating social harmony. Here are some of the main roles

- a. Reducing conflict in the name of religion and strengthening unity
With the principle of religious moderation, it is invited to avoid fanaticism and radicalism that can trigger conflicts.
- b. Strengthening tolerance and harmony
With the principle of moderation, religious people are invited to respect the beliefs of others without feeling threatened or needing to impose their views.
- c. Driving social justice
Religion that is understood in a moderate way encourages its adherents to care about justice, welfare and the rights of fellow human beings without differentiating religious or ethnic backgrounds
- d. Countering radicalism and religious abuse
Radical ideologies often divide society. Religious moderation becomes a bulwark of defense by promoting peaceful religious understanding,
- e. Strengthening interfaith and cultural discussions
Religious moderation encourages the opening of discussion spaces between religious and cultural groups. Through constructive discussions, people can find common values that strengthen social relationships. According to the theory of social institutions, social harmony is closely related to social life.
- f. The Role of Religious Leaders in Realizing Harmony
Religious leaders play an important role in providing an understanding of religious moderation through lectures, interfaith discussions, and community development, This role is able to strengthen social relationships, reduce conflicts, and create a harmonious and harmonious community life.

3. The Importance of Harmony in Society

Harmony in society is very important because it is the basis for creating a peaceful and respectful life in the midst of differences. In a society consisting of various ethnicities, religions, cultures, and social backgrounds, harmony helps foster tolerance and respect for differences, which are basic values in the life of the nation and state. If harmony is not maintained, it will lead to conflict and division.

In Simpang Empat Village, the majority of the population embraces Islam. In this village, the relationship between religious communities remains harmonious because all residents feel that they have family ties and also the cooperation between religious communities through BKUK is a forum for communication and coordination between religious communities in maintaining harmony. This can be seen from various joint activities, such as mutual cooperation, helping to clean the environment, or helping families in need to be done together regardless of religious background and in The celebration of Christian religious holidays helps to maintain security and vehicle parking in places of worship and vice versa. This strengthens the sense of togetherness and harmony. Cultural diversity is also one of the elements that strengthens tolerance in this village.

The following are the values of religious moderation from the perspective of Islam and nationality which are the foundation of a harmonious community life

1. National commitment (*muwathanah*)
2. Tolerance (*tasamuh*)
3. Anti kekerasan (*La'unf*)
4. Appreciation for local culture (*ihthiram al turats al mahalli*). (Loho & Wagiu, 2022; Munawiroh et al., 2025)

B. Religious Leaders' Understanding of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is the key to religious life in a radical multicultural society, both at the local, national, and international levels, which aims to realize harmony between religious communities and foster mutual respect between religious communities

1. The results of the research from an interview with Islamic religious figure Ustadz he said that for me religious moderation is to practice religion in a balanced way, not to excesses and not to underestimate the religion of others. Islam teaches us that we must avoid fanaticism or blame the beliefs of others. A moderate attitude does not mean that faith is weak, religious leaders are role models. If we show a

fair, calm and open attitude, then the people will follow. Religious moderation is a goal in an effort to realize tolerance and harmony in the life of society, nation, and state.

2. As a result of an interview with a Christian religious figure, namely the Spiritual Pastor, he said "Moderation respects differences". We believe that God's love is universal. So we must coexist, respect each other, not only tolerate, but also cooperate". We hold interfaith activities with young people, there are moderate religious discussions, and it makes them more open, but there are still those who think moderation is a compromise of faith. In fact, this is a way to maintain the teachings so that they can be accepted by all circles without causing conflict. We have a moral responsibility to create an atmosphere of peace and we instill the value of brotherhood.

To make the community live in harmony and peace, what is done is tolerance, for example, if there is an event for religious people, don't make a fuss, if there is an event from other religions, yes, we respect each other, don't sound the music in general, and one thing, for example, like this alley, this is not Christian, all there are Muslims too, So yesterday there was mourning, the alley of my house was closed, meaning no more passing from there from here because there is mourning, close the road so pass from the alley of my house, if there is no event, this alley will be closed off, this road is not a public road but an alley road. Then yesterday that Muslims had a party, we were happy to clean the environment because it was a party, yes, we gave money to drink, even though we are different religions, but we must still understand each other and respect each other, tolerance does not have to give to each other but greet each other and respect each other.

In this village, if for example there is a Christmas that secures the road, usually Muslims as well as Christians, if the Muslims are the holidays, Eid al-Fitr prayers and teraweh that secure the way of Christians, harmony in this village there is cooperation between religious leaders, namely BKUK, which is the governing body of religious people who make the community live in harmony, eating in Simpang Empat village can progress until now. I have been fostering the ummah for more than 5 years.

3. An interview with a Buddhist figure, namely Pandita Mr. U P Ananda Ali Sarwo S.Ag he said that Moderation is not something taught only in Islam, the same can be said in other religions. Because all religions love peace and always advocate moderation and middle ground. Therefore, religious moderation is very necessary to maintain harmony and harmony between religious communities.

If in Simpang Empat Village until now the relationship of harmony between religious people is quite good and it is also proven that in Simpang Empat the believers have their own houses of worship, there has been a case with fellow believers of the Bhuda religion because the previous house of worship was taken back by his heirs, in the past the house of worship was waqf but after he died the house of worship was taken by his son they made the place of worship a place of worship for the family The incident occurred in 2013, so we Bhuda worshippers worshipped from house to house for 2 years while waiting for the construction of a new place of worship and the beginning of the construction of a new house of worship made of bamboo and the development of the next temple, namely in 2017 finally the temple has been renovated until now.

He also mentioned that in Simpang Empat Village, there was cooperation between religious leaders which was carried out conditionally at the KUA office and activities carried out by religious leaders, namely talks about existing religions and interfaith prayers. He has been the leader of the Bhuda Religion from 2011 to 2026 (now). Now the recorded Buddhists number 180 people, consisting of children, teenagers, and adults. Based on in-depth interviews with religious leaders in Simpang Empat Village, it was found that there are several kinds of definitions that emerged:

- 1 According to Islam, in Q.S. Al Baqarah verse 256 carries out the sharia comprehensively, but does not force others: *"There is no compulsion to (enter) the religion (of Islam); Indeed, the right path is clear from the wrong path."*
- 2 According to Christianity John 1:17 "love without taking away the truth of faith"
- 3 According to Buddhism, namely

However, it should be understood that religious moderation does not intend to eliminate religious spirit or distance people from their religion, but rather to further improve the quality of their religion through an attitude of respect for diversity. Therefore, the presence of religious moderation is very important as a foundation to respond to increasingly complex religious life.

Table 1 Names of Religious Leaders in Simpang Empat Village

| Yes | Names of religious leaders | Religion | Education | Age |
|-----|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----|
| 1 | Ust Arif Budiman S.Kom | Islam | S1 | 33 |
| 2 | PDM Rohani Sianipar S.Th | Christian | S1 | 53 |
| 3 | UP Ananda Ali Sarwo S.Ag | Buddhism | S1 | 58 |

Source: *Simpang Empat Village Religious Leaders Data, 2026*

On the other hand, religious moderation is the idea of forming a moderate religious person, namely understanding and practicing religious teachings in a way that is not extreme, either extreme right (radicalism) or extreme left (liberalism), or behaving among the existing extremes. Meanwhile, in the relationship between religion and the state, each religion does not teach and requires its adherents to have an attitude of fanaticism, extremism, and fundamentalism that can endanger its people. (Saumantri, 2023; Syahminan et al., 2024)

CONCLUSION

The people of Simpang Empat Village interpret religious moderation as an attitude of mutual respect, not interfering with the practice of other religious worship, and prioritizing deliberation in solving problems together. This understanding is formed through social experiences that have occurred interfaith conflicts with religious moderation taught and applied in this village, as well as interfaith interactions that take place in daily life. The conflict over the rejection of the construction of a house of worship in 2000 became an important point in the social history of Simpang Empat Village. Conflict resolution through deliberation shows the real practice of religious moderation. Peace involving religious leaders and village and sub-district governments is able to reduce quarrels and produce mutually accepted agreements. This event proves that religious moderation is not only understood in theory but is actually applied in social life in order to maintain harmony and harmony in society. The local community upholds the attitude of tolerance and mutual respect and prioritizes peace over division.

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