

# Religious Moderation in Christian School at East Nusa Tenggara

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**Abstract:** The study aimed to determine religious moderation in Christian Schools at East Nusa Tenggara. The applied religious moderation is measured based on four indicators, national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture. This study used a quantitative study with a descriptive approach. The population in this study was 73 teachers, with the sample used being a saturated sample. Data were collected using a questionnaire, comprising 17 items related to the implementation of religious moderation. Before the instrument was used, its validity and reliability were tested first. After that, the data were analyzed using descriptive quantitative analysis. The results of the study showed a religious moderation in Christian Schools at East Nusa Tenggara by teachers was proven to be very good with an average of 88 percent, with details of the national commitment indicator of 90 percent, the tolerance indicator of 91 percent, the non-violence indicator of 92 percent, and the accommodation for local culture of 78 percent. The recommendation in this study is school can make the religious moderation program a role model for another Christian schools. Local education departments can also create standards related to the implementation of religious moderation to be applied in Christian schools.

**Keywords:** Christian schools; religious moderation.

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## Introduction

Indonesia with the fourth largest population in the world has diversity, ethnicity, culture, ethics, language, belief, and religion (Zein, 2020). This makes Indonesia known as a friendly and tolerant country, especially in harmony between religious communities (Soi et al., 2023). Harmony between religious communities in Indonesia continues to be maintained through various policies (Agung et al., 2024). This is based on a sense of mutual understanding, respect, and tolerance. Policies related to inter-religious harmony are well-regulated (Kruja, 2022). However, they still experience intolerance from certain groups in the name of fulfilling aspirations. Nevertheless, this policy is quite fair and wise in maintaining harmony between religious communities much better to fight intolerance (Tyas & Naibaho, 2020). A situation like this will trigger the formation of

radicalism with the emergence of massive extremist groups. Coupled with the sensitivity of religious life to the flow of extreme groups from abroad who participated (Kalin & Siddiqui, 2020; Saal, 2021). The hustle and bustle of radicalism amid of Indonesian society has made the government through the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia religious moderation.

Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), explains religious moderation as a way of view, attitude, and behavior that always takes a position in the middle, always acts fairly and is not extreme in religion. In line with that, Ali et al (2021) explained that religious moderation as a new policy depends on every religious believer. Religion is a unifying force that can sink kinship, tribalism, and nationality (Clarke, 2022). On the other hand, religion can be a divisive force that can destroy harmony and diversity (Castellino & Thomas, 2021; Lazović, 2021). Worse, the

destructive power of conflicts that are based on differences and mutual claims of the truth of religious interpretation to religious sensitivity (Pihlström, 2020; Yanti & Witro, 2020). To control this phenomenon, religious moderation is present to respect the diversity of interpretations, and not to be trapped in extreme, intolerant, and violent attitudes. This is necessary to create harmony and peace in carrying out religious life in Indonesia. This needs to be applied in all educational institutions in Indonesia. Educational institutions are very appropriate to be laboratories for religious moderation (Naim et al., 2022; Sutrisno, 2019). Therefore, schools as educational institutions are expected to foster a paradigm of religious moderation on the condition that exclusive views and acts of violent extremism in religion will damage the plurality joint.

In recent years, the tendency of intolerance has been strengthening. Cases of persecution, burning of houses of worship, and all forms of violence have become normalized. Coupled with brawls between students, it is an opaque portrait for educational institutions. This is in line with the results of the Maarif Institute's research that radical groups have massively penetrated radical views among the younger generation through educational institutions. In addition, there is an attitude of intolerance and radicalism that is quite worrying not only for students but also for teachers (Muslim et al., 2018). The tendency of intolerance and radicalism in educational institutions is getting stronger and concerning. Educational institutions, in this case schools, should implement religious moderation. Schools as educational institutions have a big role in the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia. Religious moderation in school needs to be done in various ways (Hayati & Susatya, 2020). One of them is through teachers. Teachers have an important role in building religious moderation in school. Considering that teachers are one of the main actors in carrying out all activities in school. Teachers are the ones who educate and direct students in a moderate direction (Ault et al., 2020).

Several previous studies have proven that the implementation of religious moderation in schools has been running effectively. Sutrisno (2019) In his

research, he explained that religious moderation needs to be carried out by making educational institutions the base of religious moderation laboratories and taking a socio-religious approach to religion and statehood. Saepudin et al (2023) and Rofik & Misbah (2021), it was also found that the implementation of the religious moderation program was carried out through religious extracurriculars, supervision of teachers, and cooperation with harmony between religious communities. Moreover, Dodego & Witro (2020) also found that schools are still not fully prepared to implement religious moderation programs. This is evidenced by indicators that have not been met. Referring to this research study, religious moderation is important to overcome various problems of radicalism at the school level.

One of the educational institutions that has implemented religious moderation in all school life in East Nusa Tenggara is the Sekolah Kristen Generasi Unggul Kupang dan Sekolah Komunitas Kristen Tunas Gloria. The results of initial observations show that there is a diversity of teachers who are not only Christians but also Catholics. Likewise with students, there are also Muslims and Buddhists. Christian schools under the auspices have explicitly practiced religious moderation. The implementation of religious moderation by teachers at the school has been running effectively. To find out how effective the process is, it is necessary to conduct further studies to describe the implementation of religious moderation reviewed from four indicators according to the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodating local culture. The purpose is to describe how the implementation of religious moderation in the Christian schools is reviewed from the indicators of national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation to local culture. It is hoped that it can help to understand the implementation of religious moderation in school, increase knowledge as well as expand the paradigm of thinking in conducting scientific research and formulating the results.

## Research Methods

### Study Area

This research was conducted in two Christian schools in Kupang, East Nusa Tenggara Province. First, at Sekolah Kristen Generasi Unggul Kupang, which is located in Bello Village, Maulafa District, Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Second, at Sekolah Komunitas Kristen Tunas Gloria, which is located on Jln H.R. Koroh Number 172A, Sikumana, Maulafa District, Kupang City, East Nusa Tenggara Province. Both schools are schools that have implemented religious moderation in all school life.

### Procedures

This research used quantitative research with a descriptive approach. A descriptive approach is used to describe how religious moderation is implemented in the Christian schools at Kupang. The sample used was 73 teachers, which were taken using a non-random method with a saturated sample technique. The data collection used was a questionnaire and document review, but previously the validity (above 0.3) and reliability of the instrument (0.94) were tested.

### Data Analysis

The data analysis technique in this study used descriptive quantitative data analysis. The results of the descriptive quantitative data analysis are described based on the categories by Azwar (2017). Furthermore, the results of the analysis obtained on the final score are then compared with the specified criteria. The score obtained is then measured based on the benchmark of descriptive analysis criteria according to Riduwan (2015).

## Results and Discussion

### Characteristics Responden

The characteristics of the respondents in this study consisted of gender, age, teaching, and religion adhered to. The following are the details of the characteristics of the respondents presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondent Characteristics.

Criteria	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Man	15	21
Woman	58	79
Age		
22-29	38	52
30-39	29	40
40-43	6	8
Teaching		
Duration	13	22
< 1 year	35	48
1-5 years	20	27
6-10 years	18	25
> 10 years	69	95
Religion	4	5
Christian		
Catholic		

Based on data from 73 questionnaires processed, the description of the respondents can be seen in table 1. Judging from gender, it was found that it was more dominated by women or 79 percent than men or 21 percent. In the age category, the majority of respondents were in the age range of 22-29 years or 52 percent Likewise, it was found that the length of time respondents worked between 1 to 5 years was 48 percent. Judging from the religious category, the majority of respondents are Christians with a percentage of 95 percent

### Implementation of Religious Moderation

The results of the analysis of the implementation of religious moderation in Christian schools were measured using a questionnaire consisting of 17 items, with a score of 1-4, so an ideal score range of 17-68 was obtained. After the data was collected, the results of the research were obtained, namely a minimum score of 44, a maximum score of 68; an average = 42.5; and a standard deviation of 8.5. The results of the analysis of the category of religious moderation implementation at the Christian Schools can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Religious Moderation Implementation.

No.	Category	Score	Frequency	Percent
1	Low	$X < 34$	0	0
2	Medium	$34 \leq X < 51$	6	8
3	High	$51 \leq X$	67	92
<b>Total</b>			<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Based on the category of religious moderation implementation above, it can be seen that most of the respondents spread across the two Christian Schools apply religious moderation in the high category. The data shows that as many as 67 respondents or 92 percent have a religious moderation score in the high category. Furthermore, as many as 6 respondents or 8 percent had a religious moderation score in the medium category. None of the respondents had a low religious moderation score. Thus, it can be concluded that the teachers at the Christian schools implement high religious moderation, which means that the teachers are very good at implementing national commitments, and education related to non-violence, tolerance, and respect for local culture. The following is a description of the results of the analysis based on the four indicators to find out how the indicators of the implementation of religious moderation in the Christian schools.

### National Commitment Indicators

The implementation of religious moderation on the indicator of national commitment in this study consists of 3 items. After the data was collected and analyzed, the results of the research were obtained, namely a minimum score of 7; a maximum score of 12; mean = 7.5, and standard deviation = 1.5. The results of the analysis of the national commitment indicator category can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3.** National Commitment Indicator.

No.	Category	Score	Frequency	Percent
1	Low	$X < 6$	0	0
2	Medium	$6 \leq X < 9$	3	4
3	High	$9 \leq X$	70	96
<b>Total</b>			<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

The data above is an overview of the results of the analysis of the indicators of national

commitment responded to by 73 respondents in two Christian schools. The results of the analysis showed that some respondents were in the implementation of national commitment in the high category. This category can be seen in the data, as many as 70 respondents or 96 percent have very high scores. Only 3 respondents or 4 percent applied the indicator of national commitment which was in the medium category, and none of the respondents had a low score.

### Tolerance Indicator

The tolerance indicators in this study were measured by a questionnaire consisting of 5 items. After the data was collected and processed, the results of the research were obtained, namely a minimum score of 14; a maximum score of 20; an average = 12.5; and a standard deviation of 3. The results of the analysis of the category of religious moderation implementation on tolerance indicators can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Tolerance Indicators.

No.	Category	Score	Frequency	Percent
1	Low	$X < 10$	0	0
2	Medium	$10 \leq X < 15$	2	3
3	High	$15 \leq X$	71	97
<b>Total</b>			<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

The above data is the result of a descriptive analysis of tolerance indicators, showing that most of the respondents applied tolerance in the very high category. This value shows that the values or norms that apply in the school environment in the form of tolerance are still high. It can be seen from the data that as many as 71 respondents or 97 percent have scores applying tolerance indicators in the high category. Then as many as 2 respondents or 3 percent had a score of applying tolerance which was in the medium category. Furthermore, none of the respondents had a score in the low category.

### Anti-Violence Indicators

The results of the descriptive calculation of the anti-violence indicator were measured by a questionnaire consisting of 6 items. After analysis, a minimum score of 16 was obtained; a maximum

score of 24; an average 15; and a standard deviation of 3. The results of the analysis of the category of anti-violence indicators are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Anti-Violence Indicators.

No.	Category	Score	Frequency	Percent
1	Low	$X < 19$	0	0
2	Medium	$24 \leq X < 24$	4	5
3	High	$24 \leq X$	69	95
<b>Total</b>			<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

The data above shows that most of the total respondents in the two Christian Schools are respondents who have a high level of anti-violence. It can be seen from the data, as many as 69 respondent or 95 percent have a high score on the implementation of anti-violence indicators. A total of 4 respondents or 5 percent was in the medium category, while in the low category, there were no respondents in the category.

#### Accommodation for Local Culture Indicators

Accommodation for local culture indicators in this study were measured by a questionnaire consisting of 3 items. Based on the data that has been analyzed, a minimum score = 6; a maximum score = 12; an average of 7.5; and a standard deviation of 1.50. The results of the analysis of the accommodation indicator category on local culture are presented in Table 6.

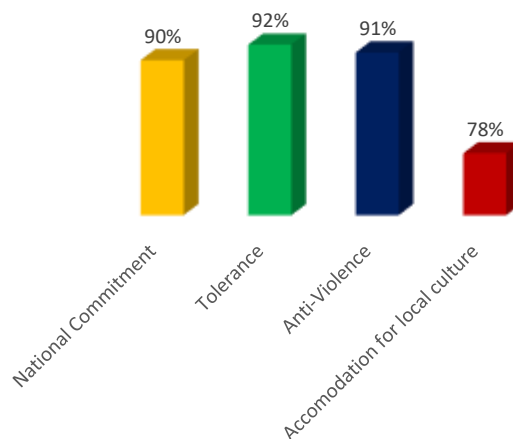
**Table 6.** Accommodation for Local Culture Indicators.

No.	Category	Shoes	<i>f</i>	%
1	Low	$X < 6$	1	1
2	Medium	$6 \leq X < 9$	15	21
3	High	$9 \leq X$	31	78
<b>Total</b>			<b>73</b>	<b>100</b>

Referring to the data above, it can be seen that the indicators of accommodation for local cultural in the medium category are 15 respondents or 21 percent and the high category is 31 respondents or 78 percent. Thus, it can be said that the indicator of accommodation for local culture in the implementation of religious moderation in Christian Schools in Kupang is in the high category.

## Recapitulation of the Implementation of Religious Moderation at Christian School

The calculation results of all indicators using *Microsoft Excel software* can be seen in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Religious Moderation Implementation Diagram

The data above shows that all indicators in the implementation of religious moderation are excellent indicators. This means that schools in implementing religious moderation have been very good, with an average percentage of 88 percent. The religious moderation implemented is in the very good category because Christian schools in Kupang have strengthened indicators of national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation for local culture.

## Discussion

This study found that Christian schools in Kupang are private Christian schools that have implemented religious moderation programs. Religious moderation as found shows that respondents have implemented religious moderation through indicators of national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation for local culture very well. This can be seen from the responses given by the respondents, where the majority of respondents stated that they strongly agree with the implementation of religious moderation in Christian schools. Religious moderation in school places the respondents perspective not to be extreme and not excessive when applying religious

teachings. This perspective should be moderated and of course, requires a process. This is in line with the explanation of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), religious moderation is the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a fair and balanced manner to avoid excessive or extreme behavior in the implementation process. Knowledge about religious moderation which is then implemented has been understood by most respondents makes the implementation go very well.

First, commitment to nationality is one of the most important indicators in the implementation of religious moderation in school. Nationality commitment is important as an indicator of religious moderation because in the view of religious moderation, carrying out obligations as a citizen according to Saifuddin (2019) is a form of practicing religious teachings. This can be seen from how teachers strongly agree to serve the state as a form of practicing religious teachings. In practice, religious moderation can also be seen in the enthusiasm of each teacher to participate in cooperation activities in the school environment and in the environment where they live. In addition, religious moderation is characterized by how respondents accept different ways of worshiping respondents of different religions. Christian schools in Kupang have proven to be very good at implementing indicators of national commitment. This is supported by the findings that show that the majority of respondents strongly agree to implement national commitments and are in the very good category. This finding is in line with research by Franika (2021) which found that the implementation of the national commitment indicator in MAN Surakarta school is also high, with a percentage of 90.23 percent. The implementation of indicators of national commitment that is very well implemented needs to be carried out on an ongoing basis. Therefore, Christian schools need to maintain and increase their national commitment considering that Indonesia is a diverse nation. This diversity is a gift as well as a strength for the Indonesian nation (Agus et al., 2021; Bourchier, 2019). This process is often faced with various challenges, such as acts of radicalism, extremism, terrorism, and

fundamentalism (Alderdice, 2020), which according to Nor (2020) can disrupt the nation's civilization, and hurt Indonesia's national commitment.

Second, tolerance in religious moderation is the result of a moderate attitude in religion. Tolerance in this context according to Bamualim et al (2018) is a religion with all its characteristics and specificities, but still recognizes the existence of other religions and can accept the situation to be different in terms of religion and belief. A moderate person may disagree with an interpretation of a religious teaching, but he will not blame others who disagree with him. In line with that, this study found that the implementation of religious moderation in Christian schools based on the items given, the majority of respondents answered that they strongly agree to implement tolerance in school. Respondents responses to existing items have formed attitudes or behaviors that obey the rules, where respondents can respect and respect the actions of others, provide space and do not interfere with the rights of others to believe and express opinions (Jelin, 2019). So, the findings related to the implementation of tolerance in Christian schools are very good. Every diversity must be appreciated and not threatened (Blosser, 2019; Verkuyten et al., 2019). In the Bible, the principle of tolerance is implied in Matthew 22:37-39, where Jesus teaches us love God with all our hearts and to love our fellow human beings as ourselves. The balance between loving God and loving one's neighbor must go hand in hand because love for God is shown through love for one's neighbor. Thus, each religion is considered correct by its respective adherents, which means that any religion that is adhered to has the right and freedom to practice its religious teachings without interference from other parties. This kind of mutual respect is very important in Indonesia, especially in Christian schools so that tolerance and harmony can be maintained amid a diverse school community

Third, implementing anti-violence indicators, of course, the respondents' attitude toward religious moderation is measured. Anti-violence as the opposite of radicalism is of course a way that a group can do by legalizing all means, including

terrorizing those who disagree with them (Munir et al., 2020; Saul, 2024). This kind of method, of course, is not found in Christian schools. School certainly has their way to counteract this by implementing an anti-violence attitude. Anti-violence attitudes can be built through religious activities. However, in research by Sogen & Keban (2022), it was found that anti-violence built through religious activities in school does not seem to be optimal because there are still acts of non-physical violence such as bullying, disrespect to others, and mocking friends of different religions. In contrast to these findings, this study found something different. The findings of the implementation of anti-violence indicators in Christian schools show that anti-violence indicators are in a very high category, where the majority of respondents strongly agree to implement anti-violence in school. This process can be seen in the respondents who always reminded when they make mistakes, are happy to do things, solve problems in a family manner, and do not cause conflicts for the common good. This indicator has proven to be very well implemented by respondents in Christian Schools.

Fourth, accommodation for local culture indicators are of course reflected in an open and inclusive attitude towards cultural diversity which is a characteristic of heterogeneous school residents. Munir et al (2020) and Qatrunnada et al., (2021) explained that a person who is more accommodating for local traditions and more moderate in religion still has to be proven because it allows there to be no positive correlation between moderate attitudes toward religion and accommodation for local traditions in religion. Through accommodation for local culture, individuals or religious groups can build stronger relationships with the surrounding community, increase cross-cultural understanding, and promote harmony and harmony between religious groups. In line with this, the findings of the study show that the local cultural accommodation implemented in Kupang Christian schools is in the very good category. This is reinforced by the teacher's response that agrees with the item of gaining new knowledge in each implementation of traditional ceremonies, is happy to see houses of worship with a certain cultural theme, and sees

traditional clothes in various religious activities are very interesting. So, it can be said that Christian schools have proven to be very good at implementing accommodation indicators against local culture. Accommodation to local culture requires schools to play an active role in introducing religious identity in the current era of globalization (Kennedy & Lee, 2020). Schools can of course play a role in implementing this, which can start with the respondents as educators. Respondent plays an important role in instilling a culture of mutual respect between cultures in their respective religions.

Based on the above findings, it can be concluded that Christian schools are schools in Kupang City that have successfully implemented religious moderation. This can be seen from the four indicators of religious moderation that are very well implemented, where the average percentage is 88 percent. This finding is supported by research from Nada (2023), which explains that the implementation of religious moderation implemented in school is also in the high category, namely 89.97 percent. Thus, the implementation of religious moderation has been implemented very well in Christian schools has opened a new paradigm for religious moderation as a program that has recently been continuously echoed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study showed that religious moderation in Christian schools has been implemented very well. This can be seen from the four indicators of religious moderation that are applied have an average percentage of 88 percent. This implementation can be seen from the active role of teachers and the support of all schools residents, so that the four indicators of religious moderation, namely national commitment, tolerance attitude, anti-violence attitude, and accommodation for local culture can be implemented very well. The suggestion that can be conveyed, namely: the implementation of religious moderation can be used as a role model for another Christian schools to be able to implement religious

moderation programs. Schools can use the results of this research to be integrated into various school programs as well as input materials in improving standardization related to the rules made so that Christian schools that are or will carry out religious moderation programs can adjust to long-term programs in the education system.

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