

## Religious Literacy of Young Muslims towards the Values of Religious Moderation: A Study of High School Students in the 3t Area of Pesisir Barat Regency

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Abstract	Article Info
<p>This study aims to investigate the relationship between religious literacy and the acceptance process of religious moderation values among Muslim youth in the 3T areas of Pesisir Barat Regency. The research subjects focus on high school students as a group still vulnerable in forming their religious identity. Therefore, Erikson's Identity Theory serves as the basis for analysis, tracing, and understanding of how these two variables form an interrelated discourse. This applied qualitative research employs an Interpretive Phenomenology approach. To explore students' views, experiences, and understanding related to religious literacy and religious moderation values, data collection was conducted using Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), in-depth interviews, and observations as the primary sources. Additionally, the intimacy technique was used as an integral part of obtaining comprehensive research data. Informants were selected using intensity purposive sampling techniques. The findings of this study indicate that students' religious literacy in Pesisir Barat Regency is relatively general, with sources including digital social media, peer environments, schools, and family factors. Besides the dissemination of literacy through religious subjects in schools, traditional religious learning guidance, such as that provided by Quran teachers in the family environment, becomes an integral part of religious literacy. Students also learn religion through social media by watching content from their favorite preachers. Another specific finding is the existence of 'situational tolerance' attitudes towards other groups when faced with primordial issues. Meanwhile, understanding global socio-religious issues is still unfamiliar to students. The implications of this research can serve as a basis for developing religious literacy programs to enhance the understanding and practice of religious moderation among high school and equivalent students in 3T areas</p>	<p><b>Article History</b>            Received :            August 10, 2025            Revised :            October 26, 2025            Accepted :            November 09, 2025</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b>            Religious Literacy,            Muslim Youth,            Religious            Moderation,            High School</p>
<p>Published by Yayasan Payungi Smart Madani            ISSN 2776-4303            Website <a href="https://journal.payungi.org/index.php/ijcep">https://journal.payungi.org/index.php/ijcep</a>            This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license  <a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/</a></p>	

### INTRODUCTION

The traces of radicalism in Lampung began after independence. This was marked by the defeat of the separatist movement DI/TII (Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia) by government forces in 1962 in West Java. An event that compelled the perpetrators to migrate to various regions throughout the country. Many of the troops joined the transmigration program, with the primary destination being Lampung and several other islands outside Java. The exodus of former DI/TII members to Lampung had an impact on the region. Shortly after that, the DI/TII

elite regrouped by organizing former members who were still interested in realizing the Islamic State of Indonesia.

Two important events to note are the terror of Musa Warman under Komando Jihad and the case of Warsidi, also known as *Jamaah Mujahidin fi Sabilillah*, better known as the Talangsari Tragedy. Warman was a former DI/TII sub-district head in Gunung Haruman, Garut, West Java. His reputation was outstanding among the DI due to his expertise in defeating his enemies, including the killing of several government soldiers. He was even nicknamed the Tiger of Haruman and the king of fa'i. He was one of the members who migrated through the transmigration program to Lampung after being released from detention after the defeat of DI/TII (Solahudin, 2011).

Meanwhile, the Talangsari tragedy began with a local figure, Anwar Warsidi, who worked as a Quran recitation teacher. He built a pesantren in Umbul Cihideung, Talangsari, Way Jepara, Lampung, on the waqf land of a student. There, he accommodated prisoners from Central Java because they were involved in Abdullah Sungkar's usroh movement. Through these prisoners, Warsidi was brought together with a recitation group led by Nur Hidayat, a former follower of Abdullah Sungkar, who was a member of the elite Solo DI/TII. Due to their shared vision and ideology, they formed an agreement to establish an Islamic village in December 1988 in Cibinong. Since then, Nur Hidayat's followers have gradually migrated to Lampung, and as a result, Warsidi's pesantren has experienced rapid growth. Along the way, their activities were considered heretical and subversive by local authorities. On 7 February 1989, under Colonel Hendropriyono, the authorities destroyed the pesantren in the early hours of the morning.

The story of Warman and the Talangsari tragedy above serves as a local foothold for examining the broader context of this study. Jurgens Meyer argues that religion-based separatist movements were initially mobilized in local and national contexts. Jayapraksh and Sikh religious activists in India, Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, Buddhist activists in Sri Lanka, and Muslim activists in Egypt are examples of this (Juergensmeyer, 2008). DI/TII falls into this category because its inception was not directly related to similar movements outside Indonesia.

Although the embryo of radicalism in Lampung is rooted in the idea of the DI/TII movement, the seeding of radicalism in Lampung became more massive when the Islamist movement was promoted as an instrument of political struggle. The revelation of various national and international terrorism networks in Lampung, and most strikingly, the involvement of the *Khilafatul Muslimin* movement in the caliphate state project, is evidence that Lampung is one of the fertile areas for seeding radicalism with a religious background in Indonesia. Some research results, such as those pioneered by CONVEY Indonesia, found that the emergence of radical groups among Muslim students in Lampung can be observed from their reading of religious literature (Bamualim et al., 2018; Hasan et al., 2018; Hasan, 2010).

The above facts serve as the basis for this research, which builds upon the previous research findings. Inspired by the findings of a previous study, which revealed that several public high schools in Bandar Lampung remain fertile ground for radicalism, this study aims to explore the latest developments among Muslim high school students in Lampung Province. Different from previous researchers who took the object of research in urban areas such as in Bandar Lampung (Bamualim et al., 2018; Hasan et al., 2018; Lessy & Rohman, 2022), the object of this research prefers the 3T area of Pesisir Barat Regency which is mostly a rural area (Yetri et al., 2019).

The selection of Kabupaten Pesisir Barat as the research location was based on at least two reasons. Firstly, Pesisir Barat represents the characteristics of being a remote, outermost, and underdeveloped (3T) area. 3T areas often face challenges in accessing education and other resources, which can impact the religious literacy level of the younger generation, particularly Muslim students. By focusing on high school students in Pesisir Barat Regency, this study aims to explore their understanding of moderate values and the factors that influence their religious literacy. Secondly, the cultural situation of the people in West Pesisir Regency is characterized

by a high level of religiosity; however, based on the researcher's initial observations, there is an exclusive character among some students in the region.

Indicators of religiosity awareness among the people of Pesisir Barat Regency, apart from being reflected in its identity as "The Land of the Saibatin and the Ulama," in 2021, the BPS recorded that the school enrollment rate at the public religious high school level was higher than that in public schools. The statistics show the second-highest number for the type of public religious schools after Bandar Lampung City (BPS Provinsi Lampung, 2022). This indicates that the level of religiosity awareness of the local community is high. Although the level of religious awareness in the community is high, this is paralleled by a tendency towards intolerant attitudes among students.

From initial observations made between January and February 2023 in several high schools, researchers posed several triggering questions related to religious moderation. Some students refused to have houses of worship of other religions established in their area. The reason for choosing leaders is because of their faith, as well as avoiding the intensity of friendship with non-Muslims who still feel "taboo" in their ears. This fact serves as a warning, considering that Pesisir Barat Regency is an area with a diverse social composition, culture, and religious conditions, featuring the presence of all ethnic groups and religions within the region.

Plurality and heterogeneity on the West Coast are like a double-edged sword; on the one hand, they are a portrait of the future of democratization in national life, but on the other hand, a yawning social gap has emerged due to the tendency towards intolerance towards other groups. This phenomenon, which Bruinessen calls the "conservative turn," has emerged in line with the increasing religiosity among Muslim students (Martin van Bruinessen, 2013). In this situation, researchers consider it essential to examine the extent to which students' religious literacy influences their understanding of religious moderation values, including factors that shape their religious literacy and behavior.

Focusing on high school students in Pesisir Barat, this research aims to identify their understanding of the values of religious moderation and the factors that influence their religious literacy, including the impact of family environment, formal education, access to information (reading sources) and media, as well as the surrounding social environment. The results of this study are expected to provide a deeper understanding and become the basis for the development of relevant programs and policies in order to improve the religious literacy of young Muslims in the 3T areas, especially in designing best practices for instilling religious moderation values, as well as encouraging the development of a religious, harmonious and tolerant society.

To ensure novelty in the research, the researcher attempted to identify and trace relevant previous research sources. To the best of our knowledge, studies on the younger generation of Muslims in Indonesia have been conducted with various styles and focuses. Some studies are generally related, for example, the results of Postgraduate research at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, conducted in collaboration with CONVEY Indonesia, regarding reading materials or Islamic literature for young Muslim generations in various regions of Indonesia (Hasan et al., 2018). In addition, research by the Center for the Study of Religion and Culture, spearheaded by Bamualim, analyzed the rise of populism and the strengthening of identity politics among young Muslims, which caused cultural, political, socio-religious, and security shocks. As a result, they are faced with dichotomous choices (Bamualim et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the research of Nisa et al. (2018) is largely in line with the research of Bamualim et al. The results of their survey found a constellation of discourses showing that young Muslims have a high opinion of intolerance but low in radical actions. On the other hand, Badrus Sholeh (2018), who examined the economic creativity of the millennial generation, particularly about counterterrorism policies, found that the more economically independent they are, the more difficult it is for terrorist networks to infiltrate their radical ideology. One thing that is also interesting is Shelina Janmohamed's research (Janmohamed, 2017). She found a new trend of the Millennial Muslim Generation in expressing their Islamic paradigm. They are

so expressive in living life with a blend of faith and modernity. They express both through symbols of new capital cultural identity and then commodify them. Shelina describes the Millennial Muslim Generation as no longer bound by a specific paradigm; what they want is to live the best life without compromising on certain ideologies.

Regarding scientific articles related to research on religious moderation among students, some have also been conducted, although not all of them address the 3T area. Albana (2023), for example, examines the seeding of religious moderation values, which can be done by inserting material content into learning activities. Another study was conducted by Lessy and Rohman (2022), who aimed to understand the understanding of religious moderation values among Muslim youth. Their research found that the understanding of the values of religious moderation of students and university students in Bandar Lampung is moderate and semi-moderate.

While research by Zakariyah et al. (2022) examines the application of religious moderation values in pesantren. Furthermore, Husaini and Islamy's research (2022) examines the mainstreaming of moderate values through a da'wah approach that can be developed by accommodating material content. The last literature review the researcher conducted was Zulfatmi's (2023) research, which concluded that moderation values could be used as an approach to teaching Islamic religious education in schools that can spark students' critical reasoning, thus affecting their awareness of the actualization of religious moderation values in their lives.

The literature review above serves as a foundation for researchers to conduct their studies. From several previous studies, there has been no study related to the practice of religious moderation among young Muslims in the 3T area. Therefore, this research is expected to contribute to the religious literacy of the younger generation of Muslims, enhancing their understanding and actualization of the values of religious moderation, particularly in the 3T areas. By using the theoretical framework of the four pillars of religious moderation as a roadmap for preparing research instruments, researchers aim to identify forms of religious literacy that can be analyzed within the framework of religious moderation (Hanapi, 2014; Shihab, 2019). This implies two things: forms of literacy that move in parallel with the value of moderation and vice versa, contrary to the value of religious moderation.

In addition, since literacy is always intertwined with reality and class, identifying the extent of involvement and support of the Muslim Middle Class is considered important to identify the background of the interviewees and how the components of that background significantly influence the condition of religious literacy of the younger generation of Muslims (Heryanto, 1990, 2004, 2015; Jati, 2016). Lastly, this research is also supported by the concept of digital literacy as an integral part of the young Muslim generation. The production of social media discourse and the dissemination of religious content in its various forms and baggage have become the intimate daily companions of the young Muslim generation. Thus, digital literacy is essential for adapting to social change (McDougall et al., 2018).

Furthermore, due to the massive use of digital social media, content that is deliberately produced for young people, designed in such a way, and campaigned in a very diverse form has affected the psychological condition of the young Muslim generation (Erikson, 2017). To identify the psychological condition and its impact on the development of literacy, thereby shaping the actualization of life's value, the researcher draws on Erik H. Erikson's psychosocial development analysis as a theoretical justification, particularly in the identity vs. role confusion phase (Erikson, 2010).

## **METHOD**

This research is applied qualitative research and uses the Interpretive Phenomenology (IP) approach (Khan, 2014; Silverman & Patterson, 2021). With this approach, the research aims to understand, analyze, and explore how young Muslims accept or otherwise reject knowledge related to the values of religious moderation in two contexts: First, the

strengthening of the spread of radical and extremist ideological narratives among young Muslims, and Second, their social interactions with their family environment, friendships, educational institutions, school organizations, and youth associations, as well as Islamic mass organizations with a wide spectrum of political ideologies (Ledford & Gast, 2018).

Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide policymakers with useful input for two functions simultaneously. Firstly, to increase the effectiveness of prevention and countermeasures against violent radicalism and extremism. Second, to provide a deeper understanding and serve as the basis for developing relevant programs and policies that enhance the religious literacy of young Muslims in the 3T areas, particularly in fostering an understanding and practice of religious moderation, as well as encouraging the development of a harmonious and tolerant society.

One of the crucial aspects of this research is to identify respondents or resource persons who can fulfill the research objectives' criteria. Therefore, the researcher developed guidelines for recruiting resource persons to ensure the validity and plurality of the resource persons. The resource persons were selected using an intensity purposed sampling technique in each school (Sugiyono, 2019). This technique aims to select research participants in a manner that reflects the characteristics of the socio-cultural background under study, thereby facilitating a comparative analysis of their views, behaviors, and attitudes towards the issue being investigated (Katz, 2015).

The research participants, in this case, are young Muslims (male and female) aged between 15 and 18 who are actively involved in student and youth organizations. They represent activists of intra-school student organizations such as OSIS, ROHIS, Science Club, Scouts, and out-of-school organizations or associations that involve youth as administrators or activists. The number of research resource persons per school consisted of five members, with criteria and backgrounds as determined. Meanwhile, the number and composition of schools from which the resource persons came consisted of five senior high schools of the same level, with different types and backgrounds of schools. The diverse composition of the schools is considered to represent the plural characteristics of the resource persons.

The process of extracting source information, in this case, was carried out by conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGD), in-depth interviews, participatory observations, informal chats (intimacy), life stories, and document studies. After the data is collected, recorded, and accurately written, the next step is to analyze the data thematically, which aims to examine the entire dataset and identify the main issues and ideas that emerge. Data analysis aims to interpret the data or information obtained and categorize the information by referring to the objectives, research conceptual framework, and formulation of research questions as guidelines. Data analysis ultimately aims to identify similar and different patterns and concepts that can further explain the substance and meaning of the attitudes and behaviors of the young Muslim generation in response to the research issues (Miles et al., 2014).

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Geographical and demographic portrait of the research area**

#### ***Local context of the research area***

One of the domestic regions that contributes to the pluralistic composition of Lampung's society is the Pesisir Barat Regency. As a contributor to the community's diversity, this area is renowned not only for its stunning tourism destinations but also for the quality of its comfortable living environment and the rapid growth of its cross-cultural dynamics. The youngest regency, it was officially established in 2012 based on Indonesian Law Number 22 of 2012. As a coastal area, Pesisir Barat is renowned for its beach tourism, particularly Labuhan Jukung Beach and Tanjung Setia Beach, which not only attract local tourists but also draw foreign tourists.

Located on the westernmost edge of Lampung Province, the regency has a varied topography, although most of the area is low-lying. One of the most notable features of the

region is its coastline, which extends directly into the Indian Ocean on the western edge, and the dense tropical forests of the Bukit Barisan Selatan National Park on the east. The coast offers great potential in the tourism and fisheries sectors, providing a source of livelihood for the local community. Meanwhile, the tropical rainforests scattered throughout the region support the balance of ecosystems, providing ecological benefits and protecting biodiversity.

In addition to the coast, fertile lowland areas also stretch across Pesisir Barat Regency. This creates a regional landscape rich in a diversity of natural products. These fertile plains are utilized for various agricultural activities, including rice cultivation and plantations of oil palm, rubber, and cocoa. The abundance of natural resources makes an important contribution to the region's economy and food security. It is not surprising that agricultural and plantation products are the main sectors of the local economy. In 2021, BPS recorded that the largest production in the plantation sector was produced by Palm Oil, followed by Coconut, Rubber, Coffee, and Cocoa. Meanwhile, in the agricultural sector, rice production remains the leading commodity, alongside corn and secondary crops.

With a topography rich in diverse landscapes, the region is a harmonious blend of natural beauty, economic potential, and an abundant cultural heritage. Unfortunately, such great potential has not been matched by good management skills. BPS Pesisir Barat District, as of 2023, noted that the Farmer Exchange Rate has indeed increased every month. However, this is not proportional to the high production and post-production costs that must be incurred. This is due to farmers' limited access to efficient market infrastructure, combined with the slow pace of infrastructure development at key transportation access points, resulting in higher transportation costs.

Pesisir Barat Regency is difficult to access due to its distance from urban areas, and therefore, it is categorized as a Remote, Outermost, and Disadvantaged (3T) area. 3T areas often face challenges in accessing education, infrastructure development, and managing natural resources. Overall, Pesisir Barat has an area of approximately 2,889.98 square kilometers, which accounts for 8.39% of Lampung Province's total area. The area is elongated, extending along the coastline for 210 kilometers (BPS, 2022).

In 2021, the total population by gender in West Coast Regency was 165,937 people, comprising 86,241 men and 79,696 women. Meanwhile, when viewed from the percentage of the population based on age range, the composition of the population consists of 11.70% Post Generation Z (l. 2013), 28.56% Generation Z (l.1997-2012), 26.86% Millennial Generation (l.1981-1996), 21.38% Generation X (l.1965-1980), 9.97% Baby Boomer (l.1946-1964), and 1.53% Pre Boomer Generation (born before 1945). From this data, it is clear that the largest population in Pesisir Barat Regency consists of the Generation Z and Millennial Generations.

Meanwhile, when viewed from the background of identity formation based on religion, Islam is the religion of the majority of the population with a percentage of 97.5%, followed by Hinduism at 2.21%, Protestant Christianity at 0.21%, Catholicism at 0.06%, Buddhism at 0.005% and others 0.003% (BPS, 2022). With such an unbalanced situation, social segregation in the name of religion, a sense of superiority over other religions, is certainly a warning sign of danger if not managed properly. This also highlights the importance of an early warning system to facilitate preventive efforts through education, fostering a sense of empathy and care in the face of differences. Therefore, this research aims to explore the religious literacy of the younger generation of Muslims regarding the values of moderation as a core principle in the life of the nation and state.

This preference for the majority group is based on an attempt to assess the potential impact on and treatment of the minority group. The attitude of superiority, the desire to occupy, is like the tip of the iceberg in the ocean. This often happens in multireligious societies. Fortunately, the local political configuration remains highly fluid, reflecting the national political landscape. However, when viewed based on the distribution of the population by religious background, the configuration of the local community falls into the category of segmented-fragmented-pluralism as shown in the figure below:



Economically, almost all of the interviewees came from the lower middle class, with families working as Farmers and Labourers ranking highest. This was followed by traders, private employees, goods distributors, and civil servants. The interviewees generally have diverse interests and aspirations. In terms of hobbies, their interests include activities as diverse as playing games, reading romance novels, dancing, pencak silat, and playing sports. However, their involvement in extracurricular organizational activities was not significant, as many of the interviewees chose not to be involved in extracurricular organizations, either at the youth level or in social groups, based on their hobbies. In terms of educational aspirations, all interviewees had the desire to continue their studies at a leading public university in Indonesia. The diversity of academic interests is evident in the range of study programs chosen, including Pharmacy, Political Science, Education, and Science.

One notable aspect to consider is the interviewees' affiliation with religious organizations. Although they generally have NU and Muhammadiyah religious backgrounds in their families, some interviewees claimed not to be affiliated with either of these Islamic organizations. Some stated that their religious background was not related to NU, Muhammadiyah, or other Islamic organizations but only to Islam. Interestingly, these three categories do not imply that each faction is static. In practical terms, the three categories can undergo a process of dynamization, transitioning from one category to another, with the degree of change depending on the context. This means that their attitudes and behavior, especially towards religious discourse/literacy—which will be discussed in more detail in the next discussion—are very varied, so that they can be stretched from the middle position (moderate), moving towards the right (semi-moderate), as well as towards the left (semi-secular) according to their respective views, attitudes, and visions.

### **Components of Religious Identity Formation**

The argument structure of this section is based on the research questions, specifically how religious literacy influences young Muslims' understanding of religious moderation values and how it facilitates the actualization of these values. The formation of understanding and behavior among young Muslims, in this case, high school student council activists in Pesisir Barat Regency, is influenced by several factors, including the significant role of social media, friendship factors, religious education in both formal and informal environments, and parents' religious backgrounds. These finding points will be elaborated in more detail in the sub-discussion below.

#### ***The massive role of social media among students***

There is no denying that today's students are faced with an era of disruption characterized by a torrent of information in cyberspace with various variants. This has an impact on the ease with which students can access information through their smartphones. The impact is evident in the increasing dominance of internet usage, particularly in everyday life, whether for educational purposes, seeking entertainment, establishing communication and friendships, or utilizing it to learn about religious knowledge.

The research findings on high school student council activists in Pesisir Barat Regency reflect the above diversity. Maya, a student council member at SMAN I Ngambur, for example, uses social media to communicate with her friends. However, she also often quotes motivational quotes from social media content, especially on Instagram. Similar to Maya, Aulia, a ROHIS member from the same school, also often sees motivational video clips that appear on her Instagram social media homepage. Aulia admitted that she often watches a summary of motivational videos or saves pieces of memes in the form of screenshots that she feels relate to her situation.

Students' interest in motivational religiosity, wisdom, and light-hearted life advice sparked the researcher's curiosity to dig deeper. Why are they interested, and what are the reasons behind them liking the content? Aulia explained:

“When I scroll through my Instagram, I love watching videos of motivational lectures, such as those by Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Felix Siau, and Ustaz Hannan

Attaki. I get the message, especially the inspiration from their words. It's fun to listen to; I think I feel the motivation.”

The tendency of students to consume content from popular clerics, as shown by the two interviewees above, is an example of how digital social media can not only fold social distances and disparities but also co-opt every inch of its users' space. By itself, digital media has created a new ecosystem for students in Pesisir Barat Regency. Unfortunately, this situation has not been reinforced by teachers or figures who guide them in sorting out content or exploring religious material in the digital space. Religious motivational content appears on their social media homepage primarily due to the like and dislikes factors, allowing social media algorithms to display a variety of content related to what users like.

Almost the same information was obtained from a different interviewee. Asyraf, apart from being an active member of ROHIS at SMAN I Ngambur, his previous experience in religious education at a pesantren has made his religious literacy more profound than that of the previous two interviewees. Another factor that influences his religious literacy is his parents' affiliation with the Nahdlatul Ulama organization, which is rooted in their religious background. He said:

I also often watch famous Ustazs like Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Hannan Attaki, and Gus Baha, who are also very deep. There are also those whom I often listen to, such as Ustazah Umi Laila. In my opinion, her lectures are good, especially when you listen to her voice; it's quite pleasant.

The three statements above mark the expansion of mechanisms for delivering information through audiovisual and digital-based social media platforms. Discourse, knowledge, literacy, ideology, and all forms that resemble them are constructed and disseminated through the pillars of digital media. At the same time, social media can display all the information that users need, ranging from positive content to the most negative. So, social media also needs to be balanced with digital literacy skills, especially when surfing for internet information, so that the younger generation of Muslims will not be swept away by waves of understanding that are not in line with the values of religious moderation.

The internet is the greatest anonymizing medium in human history. Tom Nichols once said that the digitization of information through the internet not only leads users to a jungle of misleading disinformation but, more importantly, its ability to facilitate remote debate makes users feel they know best, exceeding their capacity as laypeople (Nichols, 2018). From the perspective of personality psychology, they are said to experience the Dunning-Kruger effect, a phenomenon in which they overestimate their abilities despite not possessing commensurate skills. This situation often occurs in sophisticated situations on digital social media.

There's a lot of inaccurate and even false information on the internet, but one that went viral was one of the million tragic cases where Google was right and the experts were wrong. When faced with strong evidence that they are wrong, some people will just persist with their mistakes. Hence, this situation serves as a reminder of the importance of digital literacy among young Muslims, who are the biggest users of social media.

The results of research on ROHIS work programs at SMAN I Ngambur and SMAN I Pesisir Selatan indicate that ROHIS activities are primarily comprised of routine tasks packaged within the “Lampung Mengaji” program, a mandatory initiative from the Lampung Provincial Education Office. Meanwhile, different information was obtained from student activists of OSIS-ROHIS at Madrasah Aliyah. Student activists of OSIS-ROHIS at MAN I Pesisir Barat and MAS Darussalam Siring Balak provided a different perspective. They are familiar with the values of moderation that the Ministry of Religious Affairs campaigns for. According to Abdul Aziz and Aisyah, both interviewees from MAN, they have received an understanding of religious moderation from some educators in their madrasah. Additionally, both individuals come from families with a background in Nahdlatul Ulama, a prominent Islamic organization.

My parents are Nahdliyin, sir. Before attending school here, I attended a boarding school. Both at home and the pesantren, I often received teachings that in Islam,

the term must be *tawashut*, *tawazun*, or in the middle. If someone has a different way of worship from us, we should never blame them because they also have a basis.

The findings from the interviews build upon the focus group discussions (FGD) that the author had previously conducted. The 20 FGD participants were broadly divided into two major groups: those familiar with the values of religious moderation and those less familiar with the term. The first group consisted of students in MAN and most in MAS. They stated that information about religious moderation was obtained from teachers and seminars in madrasah. In addition, students with family backgrounds affiliated with organizations such as NU and Muhammadiyah gain insight into the values of religious moderation. As for the rest, they felt that they had never heard the term religious moderation.

#### ***Friendships shape new identities.***

As already mentioned, almost all of the research participants came from families with a lower-middle-class economic background; however, there were also some participants whose parents worked as distributors of goods and civil servants. From an economic aspect, it is generally not seen to affect their attitudes and behavior towards radicalism and extremism. However, from a social and environmental perspective, some interviewees highlighted the influence of social conditions within their families and certain environments.

Three factors influence students' views and attitudes toward religious perspectives, namely peers, parents, and religious teachers. These three factors shape the personality of students with moderate and semi-moderate characteristics. The first influence comes from the friendship environment, especially in the organization community, which quickly shapes the character configuration.

The FGD findings indicate that nearly all students have a community of friends, both within and outside of school. These communities vary, but a shared activity or hobby generally unites them. Participants from high school student councils, for example, mostly receive regular studies on religious teachings from social media, as suggested by their friends. This trend escapes the attention of ROHIS educators or coaches at school. So, they seem to learn religion without the guidance of teachers. Participants from MA student council activists showed different things. Their previous religious knowledge background enables them to filter information from the social environment that they perceive as not aligning with their Islamic views. This FGD finding was reinforced by an interview with one of the interviewees from senior high school, who admitted that he often opens social media to view religious content that aligns with his Islamic paradigm.

#### ***The role of parents in character building***

Another aspect of the social environment that is equally interesting to look at comes from two ROHIS activists from SMAN I Ngambur. Educators play a significant role in shaping their students' ideology. Abdul Halim and Asyraf, for example, recounted the crucial role of educators in their lives. For them, the Qur'an recitation teacher at home played a role in shaping their character. Additionally, teachings that are not in line with the Nahdlatul Ulama ideology he holds can be recognized due to the role of his teacher, who imparts this knowledge.

Teachers and parents are like two sides of a coin that cannot be separated. If teachers play a role in transmitting knowledge (transfer of knowledge) and sowing values (transfer of values) to students (Amalia et al., 2023), so do parents; they play an essential role in supporting the growth and development of students to become intellectually, emotionally, socially and spiritually competent individuals (Ceka & Murati, 2016). A number of these roles are particularly important for students, especially in the post-COVID-19 pandemic period, given their significant impact on social change, particularly under the influence of digital-based information technology.

Post-pandemic social order changes in the digital world require good digital literacy. Students must be equipped with the ability to understand and use information from various digital sources (Davydov et al., 2020). Digital literacy competencies must be instilled so that

individuals can select information spread on the internet and use it in a positive manner (Bawden, 2008). The rapidity of information that develops on the internet must be anticipated by instilling critical thinking in students so that they are not trapped in binary information. Moreover, digital technology and its features are familiar to students in the four research schools. The results of personal conversations and participatory observations found that almost all students from each school spend more time accessing YouTube, Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram.

However, despite the dominant use of social media, some students claim to remain within the framework of parental supervision, especially in terms of education, facilitation, and character development to achieve their goals. In the context of character education, student achievement is not measured solely by academic performance but also by social and emotional development. Social achievement, in this case, refers to an attitude and character that enables one to appreciate the differences within the plurality of society. Therefore, in addition to guiding their children to achieve, parents also play a role in facilitating the growth and development of children into individuals with commendable character. One of the interviewees recounted his social conditions at home when interviewed:

“At home, I was guided by my father, who taught me religious and other general knowledge.”

The interview quoted above was compared with other interviewees. In an opportunity for observation and intimacy with one of the informants, it was also found that the role of parents at home was not so significant in introducing moderate religious knowledge to their children. This is due to the parents' limited understanding of pluralist religious values. Economic and educational backgrounds are other variables that cause the weak cultivation of religious values. It is unfortunate if, within the scope of the family, parents fail to instill character values in their children, thereby hindering their ability to coexist in diverse conditions.

#### ***Support for religious programs in school organizations***

The ROHIS religious organization's programs in all institutions that were the subject of the study varied greatly. Of the four schools/madrasas, MAN I Pesisir Barat has the most active programs, including the "Ant Movement," an alms collection activity held around the class on Fridays, scheduled urban training programs, nasyid groups, and dhikr assemblies. The other two public schools, SMAN I Ngambur and SMAN I Pesisir Selatan, have not implemented any tangible programs beyond the "Lampung Mengaji" movement, which is conducted before the start of the learning process. As for the ROHIS work program at MA Darussalam Siring Balak, it is integrated into the daily programs and activities of the pesantren.

For the weekly program in ROHIS, SMAN I Ngambur has not seen any clear routine studies conducted. They only pioneered the movement of cleaning worship facilities and school grounds. The same thing was also seen at SMAN I Pesisir Selatan. The researcher found that ROHIS activities are only filled with Quran recitation activities; there is no counseling, training, or Islamic studies that explore current issues in the socio-religious life of the young Muslim generation. However, some students from this school have the capacity and often fill the Friday sermon in their social environment. According to religious teachers in both schools, the pandemic's impact has led to the stagnation of ROHIS activities and work programs over the past two years.

However, among these factors, the most significant in shaping students' perceptions and behavior towards the values of diversity, tolerance, and human rights is the widespread use of social media, which adequate digital literacy skills have not matched. Muslim youth who are still in search of their identity should receive guidance, direction, and instructions on digital-religious literacy from their families and schools. So that the behavior that is formed is inclusive, moderate, and not rigid when faced with diversity.

#### **Actualization of religious moderation values**

The character of the younger generation can be formed based on how they perceive the socio-religious problems that arise. At a relatively young age, the younger generation is

vulnerable to influences that enter into their lives, both positive and negative. Young people can also experience a multidimensional crisis in themselves. This leads to the development of certain motives that can trap them in attitudes and behaviors contrary to the spirit of religious values. Socio-religious problems, social media, and the influence of the friendship environment, as described earlier, contribute to the development of a narrow perspective on diversity.

Another aspect is that religion is not considered a basic need in social behavior. This is due to the negligence of parents in providing education for their children and or from a less supportive friendship environment. Ultimately, there is a desire to find a new place as a means of expression to showcase their identity, and this is indeed an alternative to overcome the frustration they face in the crisis. But it is not uncommon for the choice of such a platform to result in them being shackled to the exclusivity of their views and behaving in a less tolerant manner.

The research findings in the Pesisir Barat district illustrate students' understanding of the values of religious moderation into two major groups: those who understand the values of religious moderation and those who do not. Their attitudes and behavior towards the values of religious moderation are quite varied. That is, not all interviewees have a homogeneous view. They share a similar perception of the values of religious moderation, including the preservation of their just culture, tolerance, anti-violence, and national commitment. However, to a certain extent, they do not share the same understanding, such as in terms of the debate on whether or not it is permissible to be involved in the euphoria of other religions, the issue of non-Muslim leadership, and gender relations.

Students from MAN's student council activists are more open to the values of difference. On the other hand, some OSIS-ROHIS students in SMA tend to have conditional tolerance. According to them, involving themselves in celebrations of other religions is still a taboo. In addition, some high school students are of the view that the criteria for leaders must be male—as happened in the election of the student council chairman at SMAN I Pesisir Selatan—and do not allow non-Muslim leadership. The findings of this study align with those of Lessy and Rohman's research, which examined students in several schools in Bandar Lampung and categorized the students' perceptions into two groups: moderate and semi-moderate.

The findings of this research are somewhat aligned, although there are notable differences. Students in Bandar Lampung, for example, exhibit a passion for religiosity, particularly in religious practices, with their views shifting from moderate to semi-moderate. Meanwhile, students in Pesisir Barat tend to shift their views in both the same direction and the opposite direction. Some students develop a passion for religiosity, while others allow the value of religiosity to fade within themselves. Their views move from moderate to semi-moderate, as well as from moderate to semi-secular. Interviewees with moderate and semi-moderate reasoning tendencies came from activists of OSIS-ROHIS of Madrasah Aliyah and a small number of SMAN. While the rest, namely high school students, have a semi-secular tendency.

The semi-moderate view can be identified with a tolerant attitude only in certain situations, such as in social relations, rights, and obligations. But when it comes to primordial matters, then they will build a fortress around it. Researchers refer to this attitude as “selective pluralism” or “situational tolerance.” Meanwhile, the semi-secular category can be identified from the tendency of students who are reluctant to talk about religion as an integral part of their lives. They see religion as a static way of life that does not need to be explored but also should not be abandoned - an attitude that can be referred to as “laziness in worship.”

However, the labeling of the three categories above does not mean that their attitudes and views are static. In practice, these three categories transition dynamically from one to another, with the level of change varying depending on the context and the specific case. Therefore, the contribution of each accompanying context, such as religious factors, culture, socio-religious practices, responses to national political situations, and responses to global life, all become an integral part that cannot be separated.

### ***Inter- and intra-religious relations***

One of the factors contributing to disharmonious relations between religious communities and the emergence of religious communal conflicts is the erosion of the bonds of tolerance between religious communities themselves. In this context, most of the young Muslims who were interviewed for this study have never questioned the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, especially in terms of equality, rights, and obligations as fellow citizens. However, further investigation reveals an interesting phenomenon that can be identified as "situational tolerance." Although there is tolerance when interacting in daily social activities, a significant shift occurs when entering the realm of faith.

Interviewees from ROHIS SMAN I Ngambur, for example, said that in establishing social relations with non-Muslims, they should not be too familiar. Too close a relationship with them (Hindus, Catholics, Protestants) risks causing mixing of beliefs, for example, going to their places of worship or celebrating their religious holidays. In line with the ROHIS activists, the resource person from the student council organization of SMAN I Ngambur admitted that he rarely interacted with them and had only exchanged greetings so far. The inter-religious social relations of the OSIS-ROHIS students of SMAN I are built on "situational tolerance." Some of them claimed that they could get involved in the festivities of other religions, wishing them a merry Christmas, for example, but they were reluctant to do so. Although not all of them hold this view, in general, the interviewees from senior high schools tend to have a similar understanding.

In this context, exclusivity arises when students encounter issues related to religious faith and values. They tend to adopt stricter and more exclusive attitudes towards aspects of religion, perhaps in response to a stronger sense of religious identity or the influence of the surrounding environment. The seemingly socially friendly tolerance in everyday life only covers the surface dimension, while in the religious realm, there is a narrowing of views and acceptance. Indifference or unwillingness to explore religious differences has created an impression of limited tolerance.

However, it is also important to understand that the rejection of direct involvement in the rituals of other religions does not necessarily reflect an overall intolerant attitude. This attitude is more closely related to maintaining their own religious identity without necessarily negating the ability to establish and expand a network of social relationships with individuals who hold different beliefs. Therefore, the existence of such phenomena underscores the need for a holistic educational approach to understand and respond to religious differences more deeply. This could involve more intense inter-religious dialogue campaigns, opening up space for a more comprehensive understanding and building a strong foundation for tolerance that is not only situational but also extends to the level of praxis and sustainability amidst societal plurality.

### ***Recognition of the state philosophy***

In general, Muslim students' understanding of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and Unity in Diversity as the country's philosophy and identity is very good. Most, but not all, of them do not question Pancasila as the agreed-upon basis of the state. As a pluralistic country comprising diverse ethnic, religious, and cultural groups, Pancasila is considered highly suitable for accommodating the interests of the entire pluralistic and multicultural Indonesian nation. ROHIS has no problem with the state philosophy. Even so, some student council groups view the basis of the state, as formulated by the founding fathers, as not a problem. This attitude reflects a positive view of the basic principles of the Indonesian state, which are considered relevant in accommodating the diversity that characterizes this nation.

They even realize that all ethnic groups and religions recognized in Indonesia have equal rights and obligations in this country. This awareness reflects an inclusive understanding and willingness to recognize diversity as an integral part of the Indonesian identity. While they may maintain specificity in their religious practices, they still respect the right of every individual and religious community to practice their faith without discrimination. In this context, their understanding of the basic principles of the Indonesian state, which recognizes religious

diversity as one of the nation's core values, provides the foundation for an attitude of tolerance and respect for religious plurality. This attitude creates a solid foundation for realizing the concept of a state that is just, democratic, and respects human rights for all its citizens, regardless of differences in religion or belief.

This awareness of equal rights and obligations between religions can also serve as a motivation to participate in efforts to foster interfaith harmony and prevent potential conflicts arising from differences in beliefs. Thus, a deep understanding of the values of democracy and religious pluralism becomes a crucial instrument in creating a society that is united, prosperous, and characterized by respect for diversity.

### ***Leadership and gender equality issues***

Non-Muslim leadership is based on the composition of the Indonesian population, which is not only Muslim, but other religions also fill the existence of Indonesian nationhood. The diverse ethnic and religious composition must be well accommodated. If the leaders of this nation require a certain religion in the context of diversity, it will lead to cultural diversity that can tarnish tolerance and human rights. This opinion was expressed by one of the student council activists from MAN I Pesisir Barat during the focus group discussion (FGD).

Similarly, ROHIS activists from MAN I Pesisir Barat had the same perspective. They do not mind if a region with a Muslim-majority population is led by a non-Muslim Governor, Regent, or Mayor. According to them, the benchmark for leader criteria is a person's performance. Honest, credible, and integrity-driven figures are considered capable of improving the welfare of the people rather than those who appear good but are merely a facade. In an interview with an interviewee, the cases of many Muslim leaders going to jail became a special note:

"I prefer to be led by a Muslim. But the reality is that today, many Muslim leaders are in jail. When I look at non-Muslims, they are even exercising leadership as befits a Muslim."

From a different point of view, most of the speakers of OSIS-ROHIS SMAN I Pesisir Selatan expressed their disagreement with non-Muslim leadership. The legitimacy of the Qur'anic verse is the sole basis for rejecting this leadership concept. It seems to have become a common consensus that integrity and good capability are not the primary criteria for choosing a leader (Regent, Governor, and President). The first requirement to be a leader must be Muslim. That is an absolute requirement, "As long as there are Muslims, why do we choose non-Muslims? Because the Qur'an threatens it. I think we only must vote for them, regardless of whether they [Governors, Regents, Mayors, and the like] are corrupt and enrich themselves; that's their business with Allah. So, our obligation has been canceled."

Here, it is quite clear that primordialism, whether we realize it or not, remains the primary basis for making choices. The seeds of primordialism itself are still commonly found in cases of social conflicts with ethnic backgrounds in Lampung. This problem is a common homework for policymakers, traditional and religious leaders, and law enforcement officials who are expected to carry out their respective duties and functions as mandated by the law.

Furthermore, gender issues are also of concern to researchers who seek to understand their perceptions of gender equality. In the social structure of society, women are often considered second-class citizens under men. This construction of reasoning is due to the patrimonial system that is still preserved. As a result, women's role in the public sphere seems quiet and tends to be limited. In this research, gender equality is understood from two different perspectives by most of the interviewees, namely the pros and cons. Those who oppose gender equality argue that it contradicts the Quran, as explained in Q.S. al-Māidah verse 34, which affirms men as leaders of women. ROHIS SMAN I Ngambur expressed this opinion in an FGD.

The student council interviewee voiced a more compromising attitude. Although they have concerns with the campaign for gender equality, which, according to them, can lead to liberalism, such as free sex, alcohol, and drug abuse behavior, as is the case in Western countries and America, they do not completely reject leadership in certain situations. In an interview, she said:

“The leader should be a man, as stated in the Quran. In my opinion, it is generally preferable for the leader to be male. However, in certain cases, such as when the female candidate is significantly more qualified than the male, it is acceptable to choose the female.

I think it's good for women to become leaders. In Indonesia, we should advocate for gender equality, ensuring that women have the same rights as men. For example, women can also go to high school and pursue their dreams as expected.”

Furthermore, the student councils at MAN I Pesisir Barat and MAS Darussalam believed that feminism should be promoted as a means of achieving equal rights and social justice. Moreover, for some female interviewees with nationalist tendencies, gender equality is a common ideal. Women should be able to play an active role in the public sphere. Women have the same opportunities as men. In this case, they all agreed on the importance of gender equality, including the activists from the student councils of SMAN I Pesisir Selatan and SMAN I Ngambur.

### ***Religion as a source of values and response to violence***

Regarding considerations in decision-making that involve religious values, some interviewees believe that religion plays a crucial role as a moral guide in all decision-making, whether theological or sociological. They see religion as an ethical foundation that provides direction in detailing a moral framework to guide daily behavior. In the context of decisions involving theological dimensions, such as worship and other religious practices, interviewees reflected obedience and discipline in following religious guidance. Their understanding of religious values in this situation is based on the norms described by their religious teachings.

They also viewed religion as a clear source of guidance for performing worship correctly, according to the principles of its teachings. Meanwhile, when it comes to sociological decisions, the interviewees still see religion as a moral guide that provides direction for social behavior. Although their primary focus is on ritual worship, they utilize religious values as an ethical framework for interacting with their surrounding social environment. For them, religion is not only limited to formal worship but also a guide that shapes their daily social practices.

This can be observed in the behavior of students who tend to refuse to engage in the euphoria of other religions' religiosity, such as wishing them a Merry Christmas. However, it should be noted that this refusal does not necessarily prevent students from building inclusive social relationships and mutual respect among those who do not share their faith. Despite limiting their participation in celebrations of other religious holidays, the interviewees admitted that they still maintain an open and friendly attitude in social interactions between religious communities. In addition, students in Pesisir Barat also demonstrate their rejection of violent and coercive methods of preaching, such as sweeping in places considered sources of immorality. This attitude reflects a rejection of religious approaches that are authoritarian and restrict freedom. The students are more inclined to a persuasive da'wah approach and promote dialogue. They consider that the use of violence in spreading religion is not to the principles of Islam itself.

In this context, the rejection of violence and coercion reflects the spirit of building an inclusive society, respecting differences, and prioritizing dialogue as a tool to strengthen religious understanding. This attitude reflects the spirit of religious moderation, which is applied in developing a balanced religious outlook and respecting the rights of every individual to practice their beliefs.

### ***Caring for a just tradition***

The reality of a pluralistic society in Pesisir Barat Regency is reflected in the attitude of its young Muslim generation towards upholding their fair culture. Students are often involved in cultural parades to promote their school's culture and traditions. The students who became research informants also admitted that they have no objection to cultural practices that have been in place for generations, especially those involving rituals that involve offerings, such as Ngumbai Lawok. Ngumbai Lawok is a community tradition in the form of an annual ritual for

fishermen, which involves throwing a buffalo head into the sea while praying together. The main purpose is to express gratitude for the fishermen's abundance of sustenance and to ask for the repulsion of bad luck for safety to be kept away from all dangers. Pesisir Barat is unique in its appreciation of cultural diversity. In an informal interview with the head of SMAN I Pesisir Selatan, he emphasized the importance of respecting the local community and its culture. According to him, Pesisir Barat can be likened to the "Yogyanya" of Lampung. This statement confirms that Pesisir Barat can be identified as a center of culture and diversity similar to Yogyakarta. This is made possible by its accommodating attitude towards a strong culture, acceptance of the presence of various social groups, and the rapid process of cultural acculturation between tribes and groups. The process of acculturation, for example, occurs quickly through mechanisms such as inter-ethnic marriages, openness to incoming cultures, and education that fosters reciprocal relationships and discursive traditions, as well as interactions in social gatherings. This ethnic and cultural diversity is recognized as a valuable asset and an integral part of the community's identity. An open attitude towards the presence of diverse social groups and the process of cultural acculturation fosters an inclusive and harmonious environment within the community. By adopting Lampung's "Yogyanya" spirit, Pesisir Barat Regency can build an image as a place that indulges diversity and values cultural heritage. This highlights the importance of inter-ethnic and cultural harmony as a key pillar in developing a strong and dynamic local identity.

## **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate that the two research objectives were met. First, the perception of high school students in Pesisir Barat Regency towards the values of religious moderation is influenced by the religious literacy they acquire. Friendships that shape identity, social and environmental factors, and the widespread dissemination of information through the use of information technology ultimately influence their religious understanding. For some students from OSIS-ROHIS activists, these components of religious identity formation have an impact on the values of religious moderation that they actualize in social and religious life. Second, the actualization of students' understanding based on their religious literacy ultimately affects how they view and adhere to the principles and values of religious moderation. As for the impact of the religious literacy they acquire on their actualization of the values of religious moderation, students' attitudes and behavior can be categorized into two categories: the moderate and semi-moderate categories. Essentially, students are not averse to facing social dimensions related to moderation issues, such as the plurality versus eternity of ethnicity, language, and religion, the truth of Pancasila, equal rights and obligations as citizens, tolerance, and condemning acts of violence in the name of religion. However, in certain situations, the acceptance of moderate values, such as tolerance based on pluralism, or matters related to principles and differences in views involving faith, like engaging in the euphoria of other religious celebrations, can limit some students' views by causing them to reject. In contrast, others try to accept carefully even though, in practice, they are reluctant to do so.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to the Directorate General of Islamic Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, which has provided funding support through the LITAPDIMAS research grant program for Fiscal Year 2023. This support is very meaningful in the implementation and completion of this research.

## **AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT**

TW and MR jointly developed the research framework and design. TW led the fieldwork process, including data collection through interviews, FGDs, and observations. MR was primarily responsible for data analysis and theoretical interpretation using Erikson's Identity Theory. Both authors collaborated equally in writing, revising, and finalizing the manuscript.

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