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Lower to Middle-Class Communities**

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RESISTANCE TO RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIAN'S LOWER TO MIDDLE-CLASS COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Lower-to-middle-class communities in Indonesia continue to exhibit resistance to religious moderation, frequently perceiving it as a foreign concept influenced by Western ideologies. This misconception persists even though religious moderation is deeply rooted in Islamic tradition and represents neither a new religion nor a secular invention. Such resistance often manifests through overt, semi-covert, and covert strategies, reflecting varying levels of opposition ranging from open rejection to more subtle forms of disengagement. This study employed a qualitative approach, drawing on data from online media platforms to analyze patterns of resistance and their underlying causes. The findings revealed that resistance was frequently driven by misinformation, distrust of government-led initiatives, and a limited understanding of the historical and theological foundations of religious moderation. These attitudes fostered intolerance and social fragmentation, posing a serious threat to national resilience, democratic values, and social harmony. Furthermore, the study emphasized that addressing resistance required not only educational interventions but also inclusive policymaking that bridged the gap between state narratives and grassroots religious experiences. The research offers crucial insights for policymakers and educators in developing culturally sensitive and community-based strategies to promote religious moderation and counteract the growing tide of intolerance in diverse socio-religious contexts across Indonesia.

Keywords: Resistance; Religious Moderation; Lower to Middle-Class Communities.

A. Introduction

Religious moderation is often rejected by lower-to-middle-class communities due to a lack of understanding or misconceptions about its meaning. This resistance manifests in intolerant attitudes and even zealous religious practices (Lubis et al., 2023; Hanif et al., 2024). Alissa Wahid, a prominent advocate for religious moderation in Indonesia, has also encountered numerous challenges stemming from intolerance within the country. In some regions, individuals prefer to live exclusively among those who share their faith and resist coexistence with followers of other religions (Dirgantara & Asril, 2023; Muhtar, 2023). Provinces in Indonesia identified as having high levels of intolerance include Aceh, Lampung, South Sumatra, Riau, West Nusa Tenggara, and West Sumatra (Setiawan, 2024). Therefore, resistance to religious moderation warrants a comprehensive examination (Marjani, 2023).

The rejection of religious moderation among lower-to-middle-class individuals is a significant phenomenon that requires thorough analysis. Existing studies on this topic have primarily focused on three main areas. *First*, they address the rejection of various forms of radicalism in Indonesia, which pose a threat to the country's foundational philosophy, Pancasila (Muhammad & Hiariej, 2021; Nafi'a et al., 2022; Umar & Woodward, 2020). *Second*, they explore the compatibility of religious moderation with the concept of a pluralistic state (Rahmah et al., 2024; Susilo & Dalimunthe, 2019; Zuhdi, 2018). *Third*, they emphasize the importance of integrating religious moderation into educational curricula (Jamilah, 2021; Muhaemin et al., 2023; Trisnowali et al., 2022). These studies suggest that lower-to-middle-class communities often lack an understanding of the origins of religious moderation itself (Jati & Bachtiar, 2024). To address this gap, the genealogy of religious moderation must be introduced to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of resistance.

This article seeks to fill the gaps left by previous studies, which have largely overlooked the genealogy of religious moderation in cases of resistance.

Most existing research examines the acceptance of religious moderation from an objective standpoint but does not sufficiently explore the root causes of resistance. In line with this perspective, this study aims to answer three key questions: *first*, how do lower-to-middle-class individuals perceive and resist religious moderation? *Second*, what factors contribute to this resistance? *Third*, what are the consequences of this resistance for lower-to-middle-class communities, particularly in terms of their relationship with governing authorities?

Answering these questions will not only provide a deeper understanding of the values held by lower-to-middle-class communities but also enable the development of a religious moderation model that aligns with the interests of these communities, religious groups, and the state. Unlike previous studies that focus mainly on acceptance and theoretical constructs, this research specifically uncovers the underlying psychological and political factors driving resistance to religious moderation among lower-to-middle-class communities.

Resistance to religious moderation among lower-to-middle-class communities can be better understood through established resistance theories, such as cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) and motivated reasoning (Kunda, 1990). Cognitive dissonance theory argues that individuals experience psychological discomfort when confronted with ideas contradicting their deeply held beliefs, leading them to reject or rationalize opposing views (Festinger, 1957). This theory underscores how conflicting information about religious moderation can cause discomfort among community members, prompting them to resist or avoid engagement with the concept altogether.

Motivated reasoning further explains how individuals selectively process information to affirm their existing beliefs, reinforcing resistance to new or challenging concepts, such as religious moderation (Kunda, 1990). When exposed to ideas that challenge their established religious beliefs or practices, individuals tend to dismiss these ideas through biased assimilation, favoring information that confirms their pre-existing views while



disregarding contradictory evidence (Hart et al., 2009). Consequently, efforts to introduce religious moderation must account for these psychological processes to effectively overcome resistance.

Additional insights can be drawn from social identity theory, which posits that resistance can also emerge from group identity dynamics, where religious moderation may be perceived as a threat to group cohesion and distinctiveness (Tajfel et al., 1979). Individuals within these groups may resist moderation efforts as a means to protect their group identity and solidarity.

This article argues that resistance to religious moderation stems from a lack of understanding and misconceptions about the concept among lower-to-middle-class communities. Many perceive religious moderation as posing long-term moral risks for their children. On the other hand, governing authorities approach the issue from the perspective of national interests. The root of this resistance appears to lie in misunderstandings and inadequate comprehension. The involvement of lower-to-middle-class communities in the dissemination of religious moderation concepts, such as those promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI), plays a crucial role in shaping acceptance or resistance. As a result, resistance to religious moderation cannot be examined in isolation from the differing perspectives of governing authorities and lower-to-middle-class communities.

B. Method

This qualitative study aims to explore resistance to the concept of religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities in Indonesia. These communities, often considered laypeople, frequently misinterpret or struggle to comprehend emerging concepts, perceiving them as unfamiliar including religious moderation, which is the focus of this study. Various forms of resistance to religious moderation are widespread and frequently disseminated across numerous online news platforms. Online media was chosen as the primary data source due to its accessibility and

prevalence in the digital era, with Indonesia ranking highest in Southeast Asia for online media usage. Primary data collection involved analyzing online news articles, government websites, and academic journals.

Data acquisition was conducted systematically, gathering information from online news sources, government portals, and scholarly publications. This approach was selected for its efficiency in swiftly accessing diverse data sources. The selection of data followed established criteria, identifying different levels of resistance: overt resistance, which was evident through intolerant demonstrations, arson attacks on places of worship, and bombings targeting religious sites; semi-covert resistance, characterized by protests, critical commentary, and demands; and covert resistance, which manifested as disengagement from religious discourse, avoidance of religious moderation materials, and tendencies toward hate speech. The collected data was meticulously organized and categorized based on these predefined criteria. Data collection spanned three months, from January to April 2023.

This study employed a data processing approach that prioritized data exhibiting characteristics of intolerance and high levels of engagement (measured through followers, comments, and likes). After categorization, data related to the rejection of moderate religious teachings was presented in a tabular format to improve readability and comprehension of the various forms of resistance. The categorized data was then analyzed interpretively using a historical approach, along with resistance theories in psychology related to changes in religious practices in a pluralistic society like Indonesia and in politics, particularly concerning government policies that require public understanding, such as the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia today. Data validation was achieved through triangulation, involving cross-verification among multiple online news sources, government portals, and academic references to ensure accuracy and reliability.

C. Results and Discussion

This research focuses on identifying various forms of resistance to religious moderation as expressed by lower-to-middle-class communities in Indonesia. Through qualitative analysis of online media content, patterns of



resistance were systematically examined and grouped into thematic categories. These categories reflect the spectrum of responses—ranging from overt rejection to subtle disengagement—and offer insights into the psychological, social, and political dimensions underlying such resistance. The following section outlines the main findings and discusses their implications within the broader context of religious discourse, societal dynamics, and policy relevance in Indonesia.

1. Results

a. Resistance to religious moderation

Resistance to religious moderation within lower- to middle-class communities is often expressed in overt, semi-covert, and covert forms. These different forms of resistance can be observed, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Forms of resistance to religious moderation teachings

Resistance Type	Form	Narrative	Source
Overt	Demonstration	Large-scale public marches demanding legal action against the Governor of DKI Jakarta, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, exemplify a form of intolerance based on the belief that only individuals of the Muslim faith are qualified to hold leadership positions in Indonesia.	https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/aksi-demo-tuntut-ahok-berakhir-ricuh-/3581751.html
	Arson attack on place of worship	The burning of the HKI Suka Makmur Church in Aceh Singkil, Aceh Province, ignited the conflict. Churches in the area were either set on fire or demolished due to intolerance from local communities unwilling to accept religious differences.	https://www.bc.com/indonesia/indonesia-50471436
	The bombing of a place of worship	A suicide bombing took place outside Makassar Cathedral in South Sulawesi. The attack was driven by an extremist	http://web.iaingorontalo.ac.id

Resistance Type	Form	Narrative	Source
Semi-covert	Protest	interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, which promotes the belief that the sole purpose of life is to attain paradise – an ideology that contradicts the principles of religious moderation. Residents of Jadimulya in Tasikmalaya, West Java, protested the construction of Saint Filipus Church on BKR Street, near Nurul Huda Mosque, calling on the mayor to intervene.	https://banjarkota.go.id/berita-banjar/protes-pembangunan-tempat-ibadah-warga-jadimulya-datangi-wali-kota/
	Criticism	The concept of moderation as practiced in the West – rooted in liberal democracy, secularism, and a specific interpretation of tolerance – is often considered incompatible with the cultural and religious values of Eastern societies, particularly those shaped by Islamic tradition.	https://www.pesantrenmuadalah.id/berita/risalah-tegalsari-kritik-moderasi-beragama/
	Demand	The hashtag (#RejectReligiousModeration) reflects public opposition, portraying religious moderation as a Western construct similar to radicalism, which instills fear among Islamic communities regarding their faith.	https://www.sindosumsel.com/masyarakat-islam-indonesia-belum-banyak-tahu-dan-paham-tentang-
Covert	Refusal to engage in interfaith dialogues	Among 1,200 respondents, 33.4% expressed unwillingness to live alongside individuals of different religions, 25% lacked trust in followers of other religions, and 68% opposed the construction of places of worship for other religious groups in their communities.	https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2012/06/06/03234293/toleransi.jadi.tantang.an?page=al

Resistance Type	Form	Narrative	Source
	Avoidance of information related to religious moderation	Individuals affiliated with radical ideologies, terrorist activities, organizations like ISIS, and acts of suicide bombing tend to selectively avoid information that promotes religious moderation.	https://jesoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/KC4_81.pdf
	Hate speech	Religious moderation is depicted as a major government initiative, carefully planned to impose a Western interpretation of Islamic life on Muslims.	https://www.tintasiyasi.com/2021/12/tolak-moderasi-beragama-berkedok.html

Sources: Online news and scholarly article

Table 1 provides an overview of the various forms of resistance exhibited by lower- to middle-class communities against the teachings of religious moderation. Additionally, it highlights three crucial contexts regarding resistance to religious moderation within these communities.

First, overt resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities manifests through public demonstrations, arson attacks on places of worship, and bombings targeting religious sites. Notably, the large-scale protests in 2017 led to the criminalization of Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, a leader who had made significant contributions to Jakarta as the Governor of DKI Jakarta at the time. These demonstrations, driven by intolerance, prioritized identity politics over humanitarian principles. Furthermore, resistance to religious moderation is evident in incidents such as the burning of the HKI Suka Makmur Church in Aceh Singkil, Aceh Province, and the bombing near Makassar Cathedral in South Sulawesi. These acts reflect a lack of awareness within certain community groups regarding religious diversity. Such resistance arises from misunderstandings and a lack of knowledge about government policies promoting religious moderation, leading to self-centered attitudes and an inability to accept differences.

Second, semi-covert resistance to religious moderation is characterized by protests, criticisms, and demands. For example, residents of Jadimulya in Hegarsari Village, Pataruman Subdistrict, Banjar City, West Java, opposed the

establishment of Santo Filipus Church, which was planned to be built adjacent to Nurul Huda Mosque. Criticism of religious moderation often stems from the perception that it originates from the secular and liberal West, contradicting Islamic values. Additionally, opposition is expressed through hashtags such as (#RejectReligiousModeration), portraying religious moderation as a Western ideological influence. It is essential to clarify to lower- to middle-class communities that such assumptions are unfounded. Religious moderation does not originate from the West but is inherent in Islam itself, as evidenced by Islam's moderate nature since its revelation in Mecca in 610 AD. A historical example is the peaceful conquest of Mecca (*Fathu Mecca*) in 630 AD, which demonstrated Islam's emphasis on moderation.

Third, covert resistance to religious moderation manifests through passive actions, such as avoiding participation in interfaith dialogues—an implicit form of defiance to uphold existing beliefs. Avoiding discussions on religious moderation serves as a means of maintaining commitment to their established faith. When individuals feel their beliefs are challenged, their resistance can intensify, potentially leading to aggressive behavior, including hate speech, both in person and through online platforms. A nationwide survey conducted by CSIS in 2012 highlighted concerning attitudes, with significant portions of respondents expressing anti-non-Muslim sentiments and distrust. Extremist groups, including terrorist organizations and those affiliated with ISIS, actively reject information promoting religious moderation because they have internalized exclusive ideologies and refuse to accept alternative perspectives. This form of resistance represents political opposition, reinforcing ideological identity.

These insights underscore the multifaceted nature of resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities. Such resistance is not merely a spontaneous reaction but is deeply rooted in both psychological and political factors. From a psychological perspective, individuals who reject religious moderation often employ avoidance mechanisms, cognitive dissonance, and even hostility to defend their beliefs. From a political perspective, resistance takes the form of silent



defiance, ideological reinforcement, and even digital mobilization, which strengthens exclusivist attitudes. As a result, religious moderation continues to be misunderstood, as those who resist it tend to filter information, avoid dialogue, and spread hate speech to maintain the status quo. This resistance is not solely driven by ignorance but is also shaped by deeply ingrained ideological and psychological factors, making it increasingly difficult to foster a more moderate understanding.

b. Factors of resistance to religious moderation

Resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities is influenced by various factors. These contributing factors can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors of resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities

Aspect	Factor	Narrative	Source
Ideology	Fear	The perception that religious moderation is a Western import aimed at Muslims as a potential threat can foster fear and undermine unity within Muslim communities.	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2-N7I74dI
	Distrust	A fundamental issue often encountered is the failure to convey the authenticity of the normative aspects of religious moderation as derived from religious teachings (the Quran and Hadith).	https://www.kompas.id/baca/opini/2023/01/12/penguatan-moderasi-beragama
Values	Discontent	Religious moderation has yet to take root as a set of values and teachings within lower- to middle-class communities. Instead, it is often reduced to mere rhetoric, serving as an organizational identity rather than a lived practice.	https://fsyariah.uin-khas.ac.id/berita/detail/rekonstruksi-moderasi-beragama
	Disagreement with	To date, no place of worship for non-Muslims has been	https://kemenag.go.id/opini/mengurai-

Aspect	Factor	Narrative	Source
Intent	values	established in Cilegon, Banten Province. The community opposes their presence, perceiving them as a potential threat to the Muslim population in the area.	polemik-penolakan-pendirian-gereja-di-cilegon-jr7bvt
	Specific interests	State authorities often engage in intolerant practices by formulating policies driven by specific interests, disregarding the constitutional rights of religious communities to freely practice their faiths.	https://kemenag.go.id/kolom/mengapa-moderasi-beragama-02MbN

Source: Compilation by the authors, 2024

Table 2 highlights the factors contributing to the rejection of religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities. Additionally, it outlines five key contexts that shape this resistance.

Firstly, resistance to religious moderation within lower- to middle-class communities is influenced by ideological factors, particularly fear and distrust. This aligns with the concept of motivated reasoning, where individuals are more inclined to accept information that supports their beliefs while rejecting information that contradicts them. There is a prevailing perception that religious moderation is a strategic effort to assimilate Islam, which is viewed as a potential threat to the Muslim community. Moreover, many believe that religious moderation lacks a solid foundation in the Quran and Hadith (Zuhdi, M. N. 2024; Mursyid et al., 2024). Therefore, addressing this resistance requires more than just educational efforts; it necessitates strategies to alleviate fear and build trust through religious, social, and political approaches.

Secondly, resistance to religious moderation is driven by value-related factors, such as discontent and disagreement, indicating that opposition is not solely ideological but also stems from perceptions of the values associated with religious moderation. Many feel that the concept has yet to incorporate Islamic principles in a way that resonates with lower- to middle-class communities. Instead, it is often perceived as a superficial organizational slogan rather than a genuine practice. For instance, in Cilegon, Banten

Province, places of worship for non-Muslims remain prohibited, as the local community resists religious integration, fearing that it may threaten the purity of Islamic teachings.

Thirdly, resistance is reinforced by goal-oriented factors, driven by specific interests. This suggests that opposition is not solely about religious beliefs but is also linked to perceptions of government policies and social justice. In some cases, state authorities engage in intolerant practices by prioritizing political and state interests over the rights of religious communities to practice their faith freely.

These three interrelated factors ideological (fear and distrust), value-related (discontent and disagreement), and goal-oriented (specific interests) contribute to the complexity of resistance to religious moderation. From a psychological perspective, resistance is fueled by fear, distrust, dissatisfaction, and specific interests, making it difficult for communities to embrace religious moderation. From a political perspective, resistance is often exploited in identity politics, struggles for religious legitimacy, and mobilization for certain political agendas. To address this resistance, two key solutions can be implemented: (1) Building Public Trust – The government must demonstrate that religious moderation is not merely a political tool but genuinely aims to protect religious freedom and promote social harmony; (2) Dialogue and Inclusivity – Lower- to middle-class communities must be actively engaged in discussions and policies related to religious moderation so that they feel a sense of ownership and participation in the process.

c. Implications of resistance to religious moderation

The resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities has various implications. These implications can be observed in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Implications of resistance to religious moderation among lower- to middle-class communities

Implication	Narrative	Source
Disharmony	There is ongoing disharmony between Islamist groups and cultural Islam groups in Indonesia.	https://scholar.google.co.id/scholar?oi=bibs&cluster=15280343621707

Implication	Narrative	Source
	Islamist groups remain resolute in their pursuit of establishing an Islamic state, while cultural Islam groups uphold their commitment to the principles of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), founded on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.	724768&btnI=1&hl=id
Negative reputation	Acts of terrorism, although often justified using religious rhetoric, fundamentally contradict the core teachings of Islam. Such acts contribute to the negative perception of the religion as a whole.	https://jurnal.lp2msasbabel.ac.id/
Tension	Tensions surrounding Sunni-Shia conflicts in Jember and Sampang, both in East Java, persist as extensions of past incidents. These include attacks by groups targeting followers of IJABI (Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia, or the Association of Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia) and assaults on a Shia-affiliated boarding school under YAPI (Yayasan Asrama Pelajar Islam, or the Islamic Students Dormitory Foundation).	https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/substantia/article/download/4930/3255
Conflict	The Poso conflict in Central Sulawesi tragically illustrates how political power struggles can manipulate religion. In their pursuit of regional control, local elites may exploit religious differences—particularly between Muslims and Christians—resulting in violence and bloodshed.	https://www.pskp.or.id/2020/08/06/konflik-agama-dan-krisis-intoleransi-tantangan-atau-
Violence	The prohibition and dissolution of worship at the Kemah Daud Christian Church Congregation (GKKD) in Bandar Lampung, Lampung Province, escalated into violence. Ongoing issues related to church permit processing triggered	https://kupastuntas.co/2023/02/20/viral-pembubaran-ibadah-gereja-di-

Implication	Narrative	Source
	acts of intolerance, with residents resorting to violence.	

Source: Compilation by the authors, 2024

Table 3 examines the consequences of resistance to religious moderation within lower to middle-class Indonesian communities. It identifies three key contexts underlying this resistance and its resulting impacts.

Firstly, resistance to religious moderation among lower to middle-class communities fosters social disharmony. In this case, extremist Islamic groups perceive themselves as protectors of the “purity of Islam” and view moderate groups as a threat to their religious teachings. Social media and exclusive religious lectures reinforce this polarization by promoting the narrative that “Islam is under threat” from religious moderation. Regional elections (Pilkada) and national elections frequently become platforms for exploiting the moderation-versus-radicalism debate, further deepening societal divisions. Governments often struggle to navigate these conflicts—if they adopt a repressive approach, they risk being perceived as *anti-Islam*, whereas a lenient stance may enable extremist groups to grow stronger.

Secondly, resistance to religious moderation among lower to middle-class communities leads to heightened sectarian tensions. Sunni-Shia conflicts in Jember and Sampang, for example, are continuations of past hostilities, exacerbated by attacks on followers of IJABI (Ikatan Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia, or Association of Jamaah Ahlul Bait Indonesia) and a school affiliated with YAPI (Yayasan Asrama Pelajar Islam, or Islamic Students Dormitory Foundation) by groups identifying as Aswaja (Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama’ah) militias. In this case, the Laskar Aswaja group considers itself a “pure” Sunni faction, while Shia groups, such as IJABI and YAPI followers, are seen as deviants from their interpretation of Islam. This polarization is further reinforced by the long-standing “Sunni vs. Shia” conflict, which exists both locally and globally.

Thirdly, resistance to religious moderation within lower to middle-class communities results in violent conflict. The Poso conflict in Central Sulawesi, which erupted in 1998, divided society into two main groups—

Muslims and Christians—who became increasingly polarized due to social and political competition. The root cause was a struggle for political power and economic dominance, though religion was used as a justification for the violence. Poso cleric Yahya Al-Amri asserted that religion had been manipulated as a tool for political power struggles. Competing interests among local elites fueled the conflict, leading to massacres and widespread bloodshed driven by temporary political ambitions.

These three contextual frameworks highlight the far-reaching implications of resistance to religious moderation among lower to middle-class communities. From a social-psychological and political perspective, limited access to in-depth religious education, the growing influence of digital media, and the polarization of religious identities contribute to disharmony, tension, and conflict. The rise of viral preachers (Ustaz) on social media, who offer simplistic and instant interpretations of Islam, has made their teachings more appealing compared to traditional scholars (ulama), who emphasize deeper and more contextual religious understanding. This phenomenon is further reinforced by confirmation bias, where individuals actively seek information that aligns with their preexisting beliefs. As a solution, a combination of educational, dialogical, and policy-based strategies must be implemented to strengthen the understanding of Islam as *rahmatan lil 'alamin*—an inclusive and peaceful faith.

2. Discussion

Models of resistance to religious moderation among lower to middle-class communities can be categorized into three key factors. *First*, dissatisfaction with the socioeconomic and political system significantly contributes to resistance, particularly when individuals perceive religious moderation as contradictory to their established beliefs. Additionally, this resistance is intensified by the perception that religious moderation could weaken their group identity (Sani, 2005; Hasan & Mujahidin, 2023; Rozi et al., 2024; Sabiruddin et al., 2024).

Second, fear of change and distrust also drive resistance. Many individuals experience significant anxiety over changes that threaten

traditional religious values and practices (Bunzli et al., 2015). Such fears frequently manifest as distrust towards entities advocating for religious moderation (Alvian, 2023; Lathif & Ulum, 2022). The findings align with resistance theories, notably cognitive dissonance and motivated reasoning, which argue that individuals actively seek information consistent with their beliefs and reject opposing views.

Third, political identity and power struggles are significant sources of resistance. Groups may resist religious moderation to maintain their political exclusivity and identity politics (Pande, 2025; Táíwò, 2022). This phenomenon often connects with mass mobilization strategies rooted in religious or ethnic sentiments. Globally, extremist movements exploit socioeconomic grievances to recruit adherents (Saputra, 2023), utilizing fears and distrust to promote radicalism. Addressing this requires structural reforms—including equitable policy-making, inclusive education, and economic empowerment—to effectively tackle the roots of resistance.

Implications of resistance to religious moderation among lower to middle-class communities are profound, spanning various societal dimensions: (1) Social polarization and tension resulting from inter-religious conflicts undermine stability and cohesion; (2) Economic instability emerges due to disruptions in productive activities stemming from religious-based conflicts, negatively impacting community welfare; (3) Resistance also hampers educational growth, as exposure to diverse perspectives and critical thinking diminishes; (4) Increased radicalization arises from feelings of marginalization, facilitating extremist recruitment; (5) Resistance perpetuates gender inequality and restricts women's empowerment, reinforcing patriarchal norms and limiting women's societal participation (Akmaliah et al., 2022; Atkinson et al., 2011; Lakoni et al., 2023).

Efforts to promote religious moderation face considerable challenges, notably misunderstandings about its historical roots and misconceptions framing it as a foreign ideology (Lakoni et al., 2023; Hashemi, 2009; Somer, 2007; Mutawali, 2023). Pre-existing negative perceptions and misinformation also contribute significantly to community

resistance (Zhang et al., 2010). Additionally, the prevalence of online religious content, often extremist and exclusive, increases susceptibility to radical ideologies (Lessy & Rohman, 2022; Rogers, 2018; Larasati & Fernando, 2023; Pabbajah et al., 2021; Nil & Ishfaq, 2023).

Academic discussions on religious moderation primarily focus on Muslim communities' support and engagement (Iman et al., 2023). Religious moderation is viewed as a corrective approach to religious misconceptions (Wibowo & Nurjanah, 2021; Riyanto, 2024). Studies emphasize the role of educators in fostering religious moderation through character education (Muhammad, 2021), particularly in Indonesia's diverse society (Kashvi, 2024). Research also highlights how religious scholars play a crucial role in spreading moderation principles within local communities (Faisal et al., 2022; Montasir et al., 2023; Munjiah, 2023; Salleh et al., 2024). However, there remains a gap in exploring the resistance to religious moderation.

The findings of this research contribute to government efforts in fostering a peaceful and stable Indonesia. As the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, Indonesia serves as a model for integrating religious moderation into national policies without triggering major social conflicts (Mubarok & Candra, 2020). Other nations can look to Indonesia's approach as a form of soft power diplomacy (Mazya et al., 2024; Mukhibat et al., 2023; Kurniawati, 2023; Idi & Priansyah, 2023). This research, therefore, offers valuable insights for global efforts to promote peace, strengthen tolerance, and develop religious moderation strategies adaptable to various social and political contexts.

The approach to teaching religious moderation to lower to middle-class communities requires re-evaluation (Mu'in et al., 2023; Syarif et al., 2024; Anwar et al., 2024). Resistance often stems from misunderstandings and misinformation, particularly the misconception that religious moderation originates from secular Western ideologies (Hashemi, 2009; Somer, 2007; Kosim et al., 2024). To counter this, religious moderation should begin with an explanation of their historical lineage from Mecca to

Indonesia. Religious moderation is not a novel concept but an enduring principle presented in a contemporary framework. With a clearer understanding, lower to middle-class communities may become more receptive, reducing resistance and fostering a more inclusive religious environment.

The phenomenon of resistance to religious moderation in Indonesia provides critical insights for global society, particularly for countries managing diverse religious populations and seeking to prevent extremism and radicalization. The strategies and insights developed from this research can serve as a model for countries with similar contexts, such as India, Nigeria, and Myanmar, to mitigate social conflicts arising from religious misunderstanding and intolerance. Moreover, Indonesia's experience in promoting religious moderation through culturally sensitive and historically informed education and policy initiatives positions the country as a global leader and valuable partner in international diplomacy and interfaith dialogue.

Furthermore, international bodies and policymakers could leverage Indonesia's successful experiences to develop frameworks and best practices that can be adapted globally. Collaborative efforts in international forums can foster deeper understanding and knowledge exchange, promoting sustainable peace and coexistence across diverse societies. Thus, Indonesia's insights and methodologies offer not just national but also substantial international significance, potentially guiding global initiatives aimed at reducing conflict, promoting intercultural dialogue, and enhancing global stability.

Building upon this international relevance, it is essential to recognize that resistance to religious moderation, while deeply rooted in local contexts, is increasingly shaped by transnational discourses and digital influences that transcend national boundaries. The rapid circulation of extremist ideologies through global media platforms underscores the urgency for countries like Indonesia to articulate religious moderation not merely as a domestic policy, but as part of a broader global narrative grounded in peace, tolerance, and intercultural understanding (Amri et al., 2024; Usman et al., 2024).

In this regard, Indonesia's unique integration of traditional Islamic education, such as *pesantren* values and intercultural religious dialogue, offers a rich framework that other nations can adapt to their sociocultural landscapes (Salim et al., 2024; Athoillah et al., 2024). As resistance in many societies arises from identity-based anxieties and historical grievances, Indonesia's approach—which emphasizes theological authenticity, historical continuity, and cultural rootedness—demonstrates how religious moderation can be contextualized without compromising its universal ideals (Jakfar et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2024). This model affirms the potential of a localized yet globally resonant form of religious moderation, one that not only mitigates conflict but also contributes to a more stable and pluralistic international order (Syahbudin et al., 2023).

To ensure the sustainability and global relevance of religious moderation efforts, it is imperative to foster stronger transnational collaboration between educational institutions, religious authorities, and civil society organizations. Such cooperation can facilitate the exchange of pedagogical methods, narratives, and grassroots strategies that have proven effective in promoting tolerance and countering extremism. For instance, initiatives that promote counseling-based approaches within Islamic higher education, as demonstrated in Indonesia, could be adapted to similar institutional settings across Asia and Africa to strengthen students' critical awareness and inclusive values (Syahbudin et al., 2023).

Furthermore, reimagining the role of religious leaders and educators—not merely as transmitters of doctrine, but as cultural interpreters and peacebuilders—will be crucial in addressing resistance that stems from both theological rigidity and sociopolitical distrust. In this context, Indonesia's nuanced approach to reconciling textual and contextual interpretations of Islam (Jakfar et al., 2023; Nugroho et al., 2024) sets a compelling precedent for countries navigating similar religious and ethnic complexities. By advancing these collaborative and integrative strategies, the global community can work toward a more inclusive framework for religious coexistence rooted in mutual respect and shared moral values.

D. Conclusion

The phenomenon of resistance to religious moderation in Indonesia offers valuable lessons for the global community, particularly for countries facing similar challenges in managing religious diversity and preventing radicalism. This study highlights that one of the primary challenges in promoting religious moderation is the gap in understanding between the government and lower to middle-class communities. Other nations can learn from Indonesia's experience by developing more inclusive communication strategies that incorporate cultural and linguistic approaches suited to each society's social context. This ensures that the concept of moderation is more easily understood and accepted, reducing the risk of misinterpretation. Many multicultural nations, such as France, India, Nigeria, and Myanmar, struggle to prevent radicalization stemming from religious misunderstandings.

The model implemented in Indonesia for promoting religious moderation can serve as a reference in designing more effective deradicalization programs, particularly those focused on education and the empowerment of lower to middle-class communities. Additionally, Indonesia's success in managing pluralism and religious moderation positions the country as a valuable asset in global diplomacy. Indonesia has the potential to lead international interfaith dialogues and share its experiences in fostering a tolerant society amidst religious and cultural diversity.

The theoretical framework used to analyze resistance among lower to middle-class communities toward religious moderation has provided valuable insights. Negative perceptions of religious moderation often reflect concerns about the increasing threats of suicide bombings, social disharmony, conflict, and violence that endanger national stability. However, the government must address the root causes of this resistance rather than merely reacting to its symptoms. This study suggests that one effective way to mitigate resistance is by revisiting and contextualizing religious moderation within early Islamic history. Demonstrating that religious moderation is not a new concept but has been an integral part of

Islamic tradition since the time of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina can help lower to middle-class communities perceive it as authentic rather than as a modern construct.

This study primarily focuses on the widespread rejection of religious moderation as observed in online media, which presents certain limitations. One key limitation is the relatively small sample size, underscoring the need for further research that employs a more contextualized approach. Future studies could examine the positive effects of refining the religious moderation narrative and countering accusations that it is a novel or foreign doctrine. By incorporating new data, researchers may observe a shift from resistance to acceptance. Scientific inquiry is continuously evolving, adapting to changes in the social landscape and emerging phenomena. Given that the dissemination of religious moderation to lower to middle-class communities aims to reduce the threats of terrorism, social disharmony, and violence, this research should not be seen as conclusive but rather as a foundation for ongoing study and policy development.

Practical recommendations include the implementation of educational campaigns highlighting the historical roots of religious moderation in Islam and structured interfaith dialogues at the community level to foster mutual understanding and reduce resistance.

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