



The Moderating Role of Religious Moderation in Shaping Tolerance Attitudes among Generation Z in the Digital Religious Landscape

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to examine the influence of religious moderation attitudes on religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z in Kuningan Regency, particularly in the context of exposure to religious issues circulating on social media. The primary focus is to understand how the value of moderation can moderate the impact of digital religious issues—such as radicalism, moderate clerics, and foreign cultural influences—on the formation of tolerant attitudes, considering that Generation Z is the dominant age group in Indonesia's population and highly active in the digital sphere. **Methodology:** This research employs a quantitative approach with a survey design involving 360 respondents from among Generation Z students in Kuningan Regency. Data were collected using a closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire and analysed using multiple linear regression and moderated regression analysis (MRA) to assess both direct effects and the moderating role of religious moderation attitudes. Instrument validity and reliability were tested using the KMO measure, Bartlett's Test, and Cronbach's Alpha. **Findings:** The findings reveal that out of five examined religious issues, three—foreign culture, moderate clerics, and radicalism—have a direct influence on tolerance attitudes, while the other two do not show significant effects. However, when moderated by religious moderation attitudes, all five issues exhibit significant effects on tolerance attitudes. The most notable result appears in the case of radicalism, where a strong moderate attitude serves as an effective shield against the influence of extremist narratives. These results indicate that religious moderation plays a critical cognitive role in shaping how young people engage with complex religious content online. **Research Implications:** The study suggests that religious moderation can function as a cognitive filter for Generation Z in navigating digital religious content, highlighting the need to strengthen digital religious literacy based on moderation values through both formal and informal education, and through collaborative efforts among religious institutions, digital media, and youth communities. **Originality/Value:** This study contributes new insight to the field of digital religiosity by positioning religious moderation as a moderating variable—a perspective that has been largely unexplored in previous research. It enhances understanding of how internal values can function in filtering and responding to religious issues in social media, offering a contextually relevant framework for Indonesia's socio-religious landscape.

Keywords: Digital religiosity; Generation Z; Indonesia; Religious moderation; Religious tolerance; Social media.

Abstrak

Tujuan Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pengaruh sikap moderasi beragama terhadap sikap toleransi keagamaan di kalangan Generasi Z di Kabupaten Kuningan, khususnya dalam konteks paparan terhadap isu-isu keagamaan yang beredar di media sosial. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah untuk memahami bagaimana nilai moderasi dapat memoderasi pengaruh isu-isu keagamaan digital—seperti radikalisme, ulama moderat, dan pengaruh budaya asing—terhadap pembentukan sikap toleran, mengingat Generasi Z merupakan kelompok usia dominan dalam populasi Indonesia dan sangat aktif di ranah digital. **Metodologi:** Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain survei yang melibatkan 360 responden dari kalangan pelajar Generasi Z di Kabupaten Kuningan. Data dikumpulkan menggunakan kuesioner tertutup berskala Likert dan dianalisis dengan regresi linier berganda serta analisis regresi moderasi (MRA) untuk menguji pengaruh langsung maupun peran moderasi dari sikap moderasi beragama. Validitas dan reliabilitas instrumen diuji menggunakan ukuran KMO, Uji Bartlett, dan Cronbach's Alpha. **Temuan:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dari lima isu keagamaan yang diuji, tiga isu—budaya asing, ulama moderat, dan radikalisme—memiliki pengaruh langsung terhadap sikap toleransi, sedangkan dua isu lainnya tidak menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan. Namun, ketika dimoderasi oleh sikap moderasi beragama, kelima isu tersebut menunjukkan pengaruh yang signifikan

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terhadap sikap toleransi. Temuan paling menonjol terlihat pada isu radikalisme, di mana sikap moderat yang kuat berfungsi sebagai perisai yang efektif terhadap pengaruh narasi ekstremis. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama memainkan peran kognitif yang penting dalam membentuk cara generasi muda menyikapi konten keagamaan digital yang kompleks. **Implikasi Penelitian** Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa sikap moderasi beragama dapat berfungsi sebagai filter kognitif bagi Generasi Z dalam menavigasi konten keagamaan digital, sekaligus menekankan pentingnya penguatan literasi keberagaman digital berbasis nilai moderasi melalui pendidikan formal dan nonformal, serta melalui kerja sama antara lembaga keagamaan, media digital, dan komunitas pemuda. **Orisinalitas/Nilai:** Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi baru dalam kajian keberagaman digital dengan memosisikan moderasi beragama sebagai variabel pemoderasi—sebuah perspektif yang belum banyak dijelajahi dalam penelitian sebelumnya. Studi ini memperkaya pemahaman tentang bagaimana nilai-nilai internal dapat berfungsi dalam menyaring dan merespons isu-isu keagamaan di media sosial, serta menawarkan kerangka yang relevan secara kontekstual bagi lanskap sosial-keagamaan di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Keberagaman digital; Generasi Z; Indonesia; Moderasi beragama; Toleransi keagamaan; Media sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is currently experiencing a demographic bonus, with 70.72% of its population falling within the productive age range (15–64 years). Within this demographic structure, Generation Z—those born between 1997 and 2012—constitutes the largest generational group, accounting for 27.94% of the total population, or approximately 74.93 million individuals. This number surpasses that of the millennial generation, which makes up 25.87% or about 69.38 million people (IDN Research Institute, 2024). This demographic dominance indicates that Generation Z is not only poised to become the backbone of Indonesia's future development towards the “Golden Indonesia 2045” vision, but also plays a pivotal role in shaping the country's social, cultural, and religious landscape in the digital age. Therefore, understanding their religious attitudes and values is crucial, especially amid the rapid flow of information and the proliferation of religious narratives on social media.

This relevance becomes even more pronounced when viewed through the lens of digital information consumption. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), 34.40% of internet users in Indonesia belong to Generation Z (APJII, 2024). This figure affirms that Gen Z is the most active and engaged group in digital technology usage, including in accessing religious content via social media. With such high levels of exposure, Generation Z has significant potential in shaping religious discourses—both inclusive and exclusive. It is thus essential to examine how this group interprets religious issues encountered online, and how the value of moderation may serve as a crucial filter in shaping their attitudes towards religious tolerance amidst the challenges of the digital era.

Generation Z's high digital engagement is not only reflected in their numbers but also in their preference for social media platforms. According to APJII data from 2024, Gen Z exhibits high levels of engagement across various platforms, with Instagram (51.9%), Facebook (51.64%), and TikTok (46.84%) being the top three favourites (Ahdiat, 2024). These figures illustrate Gen Z's routine interaction with and production of digital content, including content of a religious nature. In contrast to millennials—who are more dominant on platforms such as Facebook and YouTube—Gen Z tends to prefer visual and interactive platforms, allowing for deeper involvement in emotionally driven and rapidly disseminated religious narratives. This pattern highlights the importance of understanding how they respond to religious issues on social media, and how religious moderation values can be effectively instilled through their preferred platforms.

Amidst the accelerating wave of digitalisation, Generation Z has grown up within a social media ecosystem that significantly shapes their perspectives on a wide range of issues, including religion.

Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have become primary spaces where they discover, share, and construct their religious understanding. This phenomenon produces a sense of ambivalence: on the one hand, it provides broad access to inclusive and moderate religious narratives, while on the other hand, it opens pathways for the spread of intolerant, radical, and hate-based religious content.

This issue becomes especially pertinent in the Indonesian context, particularly in areas such as Kuningan Regency, which has a strong reputation for interfaith harmony, exemplified by the existence of harmony villages and interreligious communities in Cigugur. Despite this socially tolerant environment, Generation Z in the region remains vulnerable to provocative digital influences. Exposure to issues such as radicalism, divergent religious interpretations, and the infiltration of foreign cultural elements presents serious challenges to maintaining a balanced and moderate approach to religion.

Research concerning Generation Z's religiosity and the influence of social media has expanded considerably, adopting a variety of approaches. Broadly, existing studies can be grouped into three main categories. The first category highlights how social media has emerged as a new space for the socialisation of values and the formation of religious identity. Moberg and Sjö (2024) as well as Pérez-Torres et al. (2024) observe that Generation Z no longer relies solely on traditional religious authorities, but instead constructs their understanding of religion through fluid and personalised digital interactions. Mansour (2022) even demonstrates that religious experiences on social media can generate spiritual engagement equivalent to that found in conventional worship. However, these studies tend to be descriptive and have not thoroughly addressed how digital narratives influence religious attitudes in local contexts, particularly with regard to interfaith tolerance.

The second category concentrates on efforts to promote religious moderation through formal institutions. Wardi et al. (2023), Ichsan et al. (2024), and Nurdin et al. (2021) show that educational programmes rooted in the values of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *tawazun* (balance) play a crucial role in fostering balanced religious attitudes. In this context, institutions such as Islamic schools, universities, and the Forum for Interreligious Harmony (FKUB) are seen as strategic actors in instilling values of tolerance. Nevertheless, these institutional approaches tend to emphasise formal mechanisms and have yet to explore how religious moderation attitudes might develop independently through digital consumption and interaction—particularly among Generation Z, who are more immersed in online spaces than in formal religious settings.

The third category includes studies on the dangers posed by extremist or intolerant content disseminated via social media. Research by Hess (2023), Achfandhy et al. (2024), and Pishchik & Lobacheva (2022) highlights how social media algorithms tend to reinforce bias and create “echo chambers” that nourish radical narratives. Chen et al. (2023) also warn of an *opinion-action gap* in digital religiosity, wherein verbal support for tolerance is not always accompanied by real-world practices. Although these studies offer critical insights, most remain focused on the negative effects of social media and have not yet examined psychological variables or internal values—such as religious moderation—as potential filters or counterbalances to the impact of extreme content.

Accordingly, there exists a gap in the literature concerning the role of religious moderation as a moderating variable in the relationship between exposure to digital religious issues and religious tolerance attitudes. Few studies have empirically examined how moderate values can enhance Generation Z's resilience against intolerant narratives on social media. This study seeks to address that gap by adopting a quantitative approach to assess the extent to which religious moderation attitudes mediate or strengthen the positive influence of digital religious exposure on the formation of tolerant attitudes among Generation Z.

This research aims to respond to the identified gap by empirically investigating the role of religious moderation attitudes as a moderating variable in the relationship between exposure to religious issues on social media and religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z. Specifically, the study focuses on five key themes frequently discussed in digital religious discourse: foreign cultural influences in religion, the role of moderate clerics, the stance of Islamic organisations, interreligious tolerance, and radicalism. Through a quantitative survey design, this study not only measures the direct influence of each issue on tolerance attitudes but also tests the extent to which religious moderation may strengthen or weaken these relationships. In doing so, it offers a novel contribution to the study of digital religiosity by demonstrating that moderation is not merely a normative principle, but also a significant psychological mechanism for filtering the influence of social media on young people's religious attitudes.

Based on the problems identified, the central argument of this study is that exposure to religious issues on social media influences the development of religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z, and that this influence can be strengthened through individuals' religious moderation attitudes. In this context, religious moderation is positioned as a moderating variable that functions as a value filter, enabling individuals to respond to religious narratives in a more rational, balanced, and inclusive manner. Building on this argument, the study proposes two types of hypotheses: first, that there is a direct influence between exposure to five digital religious issues (foreign culture, moderate clerics, religious organisations, interreligious tolerance, and radicalism) and tolerance attitudes; and second, that religious moderation attitudes enhance the relationship between exposure to these issues and religious tolerance. These hypotheses are grounded in the findings of Moberg & Sjö (2024), Pérez-Torres (2024), and Dalaylı (2023) which emphasise the importance of internal values in responding to the dynamics of religious discourse in digital spaces, particularly within the plural and dynamic digital landscape inhabited by Indonesia's Generation Z.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach using a survey design to examine the moderating effect of religious moderation attitudes on the relationship between digital religious media issues and attitudes of religious tolerance among Generation Z in Kuningan Regency, West Java. The survey was administered to 360 respondents using a structured questionnaire.

The population of this study consisted of Generation Z individuals residing in Kuningan Regency. A total of 360 respondents were selected through purposive sampling, specifically targeting senior high school and university students who are active social media users. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the respondents.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	< 20 years	216	63.5%
	> 20 years	124	36.5%
Gender	Female	190	55.9%
	Male	150	44.1%
Education	High School and Equivalent	191	56.2%
	University Student	149	43.8%

The research instrument was a closed-ended questionnaire utilising a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The questionnaire included items measuring digital religious media issues, attitudes towards religious tolerance, and attitudes of religious moderation. Data were collected over a one-month period and processed using SPSS software.

Validity was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The KMO value was 0.691, and Bartlett's Test was significant at $p < 0.001$, indicating sampling adequacy. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted and showed acceptable factor loadings for all variables. Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. All constructs demonstrated reliability with values above 0.60, indicating internal consistency.

Descriptive statistics were used to examine respondent perceptions. Classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and autocorrelation) were conducted prior to regression analysis. Multiple linear regression was applied to test the direct effects, and moderated regression analysis was conducted to test the moderation effects of religious moderation attitudes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Awareness of Religious Moderation among Generation Z

Religious moderation is commonly understood as a balanced and fair approach in practicing religion—one that avoids extreme positions, either overly rigid or excessively permissive. It upholds principles of tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence, especially in multi-religious societies where diversity can become both a strength and a point of tension (Fadil, Moors, & Arnaut, 2021; Masykur, Hermawan, Masruri, & J, 2024). Beyond theological neutrality, religious moderation promotes inclusive and humanistic values such as friendship, brotherhood, and solidarity (Azis, Pabbajah, & Pabbajah, 2024; Tinambunan, Gegel, Sarbini, & Baik, 2024). These values are particularly relevant in the context of Indonesia's religious landscape, where pluralism is supported by both community practices and state policy, albeit not without challenges (Cholil, 2022). In Kuningan Regency, West Java—a predominantly Muslim area—religious diversity is embraced through six officially designated religious harmony villages and the visible coexistence between Muslim and Christian communities in Cigugur Village. This local culture of tolerance provides fertile ground for the development of moderate religious attitudes, especially among Generation Z, who are shaped not only by traditional teachings but also by digital narratives that they encounter daily.

This study involved 360 respondents from Generation Z in Kuningan Regency. They were asked to respond to a survey item reflecting an indicator of religious moderation: "A moderate attitude in religion lies in the middle—not too strict and not too permissive." The survey results showed that 53.5% of respondents agreed, and 33.2% strongly agreed, while 12.9% responded neutrally, and 0.3% disagreed. This means that cumulatively, 86.7% of respondents expressed acceptance of the concept of religious moderation as defined in the research indicator.

To visually support this explanation and clarify the distribution of responses regarding the indicator of religious moderation attitudes, Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage for each response category:

Table 2. Response to Religious Moderation Attitude

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	119	33.2%
Agree	193	53.5%
Undecided	46	12.9%
Disagree	1	0.3%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%

This high percentage indicates that the majority of Generation Z in Kuningan possesses a strong awareness of the importance of maintaining a moderate approach to religion—avoiding both rigid right-wing extremism and overly permissive liberalism. These findings suggest that the values of moderation have begun to take root in the religious understanding of the younger generation, which aligns with the religious and tolerant character of Kuningan society, as reflected in the existence of harmony villages and interfaith communities throughout the region.

Thus, it can be concluded that most members of Generation Z in Kuningan Regency exhibit a high level of awareness regarding the values of religious moderation. This is evident from the large proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that a moderate stance in religion lies between the extremes of rigidity and permissiveness. The findings indicate that they not only understand the concept definitionally, but also actively endorse and adopt it as part of their ideal worldview in everyday religious life.

Based on the collected data, several key trends emerge that reflect Generation Z's attitudes towards religious moderation. First, the majority of respondents demonstrated a strong positive stance, as evidenced by the combined percentage of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses reaching 86.7%, indicating broad acceptance of a balanced and non-extremist religious outlook. Second, the level of rejection towards this value was extremely low—just 0.3%—suggesting that resistance to the concept of religious moderation is virtually non-existent. Third, 12.9% of respondents selected the "neutral" option, which may be interpreted as a group still in the process of exploration or in need of further value reinforcement through education or social experience. Fourth, when viewed in relation to demographic data, the under-20 age group, which dominates the respondent pool (63.5%), significantly contributes to this trend, indicating that the youth of Kuningan possess strong potential to become future agents of religious moderation.

The high level of awareness regarding the values of religious moderation among Generation Z in Kuningan cannot be separated from their characteristics as digital natives—individuals who have grown up in a digital ecosystem and consider technology an integral part of their daily lives. This generation not only accesses religious information from traditional institutions such as schools or religious study groups (*majelis taklim*), but also actively constructs their religious understanding through digital media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. As noted by Moberg and Sjö (Moberg & Sjö, 2024) and Bingaman (Bingaman, 2023), digital media plays a significant role in the religious socialisation of young people, who tend to blend online and offline practices in their religious life. In this context, inclusive and pluralistic religious narratives become more accessible and appealing than normative and closed approaches.

Generation Z's Response to Issues of Moderation on Social Media

This section presents the responses of Generation Z in Kuningan Regency to five key issues commonly discussed on social media in the context of religious moderation. These issues include: (1) foreign cultures linked to religious practices, (2) perspectives of moderate Islamic clerics or scholars, (3) the stance of Islamic mass organisations on religious differences, (4) interfaith tolerance values, and (5)

radicalism emerging from various socio-religious incidents. These topics were selected because they reflect the dominant themes in religious discourse encountered by young users in digital spaces and have the potential to shape their religious perspectives.

Among the 360 respondents involved in this study, the “strongly agree” category received the highest percentage in response to the issue of religious organisations (54.1%). This was followed by moderate clerics (51.8%), radicalism (50.9%), interfaith tolerance (49.1%), and lastly, foreign cultures associated with religion (48.5%). This data reveals a consistent pattern of positive attitudes across the five main issues circulating on social media, with slight variations in the degree of acceptance among young people for each topic.

The distribution of “strongly agree” responses across the five religious moderation issues on social media shows a consistent pattern. The issue of religious organisations ranked highest (54.1%), followed by moderate clerics (51.8%), radicalism (50.9%), interfaith tolerance (49.1%), and foreign culture and religion (48.5%). This order suggests a stronger inclination among respondents to engage with issues involving public figures and organisational dynamics, rather than more symbolic or normative issues.

A detailed breakdown of the percentage of responses to each issue of religious moderation on social media is provided in Table 3 below, which illustrates the distribution patterns and preference rankings among respondents.

Table 3. Generation Z Responses to Religious Moderation Issues on Social Media

Issue	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)
Islamic mass organizations	54.1	39.5
Moderate clerics	51.8	42.9
Radicalism	50.9	39.1
Religious tolerance	49.1	42.4
Foreign culture & religion	48.5	45.9

These findings indicate that, in general, Generation Z in Kuningan Regency responds positively to various religious issues that appear on social media. In all five key issues, more than half of the respondents consistently selected “strongly agree”, reflecting a high level of acceptance towards religious narratives that embody the values of moderation. This pattern suggests that religious issues rooted in tangible social realities—such as the presence of religious organisations and the role of moderate clerics—are more readily accepted than more abstract or normative issues, such as foreign cultural influences or the concept of tolerance itself.

Four key trends can be observed from the data. First, socially grounded issues such as religious organisations and the role of moderate clerics received the highest “strongly agree” responses, indicating emotional closeness and direct relevance to the everyday lives of Generation Z. Second, although tolerance is conceptually a core principle of religious moderation, it received more varied responses, with a higher proportion selecting “agree” rather than “strongly agree”. Third, the issue of foreign culture ranked lowest in the “strongly agree” category, suggesting that religious symbols tied to cultural identity are not a major focus of attention for respondents. Fourth, the high level of agreement on the issue of radicalism implies that Generation Z is highly sensitive to religiously motivated violence and extremism frequently encountered on social media, and that they possess a collective awareness to reject destructive religious narratives.

These findings reveal that Generation Z in Kuningan Regency demonstrates a high level of sensitivity to issues of religious moderation on social media, particularly those that are concrete, current, and socially relevant—such as the role of religious scholars, Islamic organisations, and radicalism. This can be explained by the defining characteristics of Generation Z as digital natives—individuals who, from an early age, have been accustomed to digital interaction and independently obtain information through social platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Research by Moberg & Sjö (Moberg & Sjö, 2024) and Pérez-Torres (Pérez-Torres, 2024) highlights that digital media has become a primary space for processes of self-socialisation, where young individuals actively shape their religious identity through the consumption and production of diverse religious content. This digital space enables more inclusive and reflective interpretations of religious issues, making them more responsive to tolerant narratives rather than exclusive or normative dogmas.

Furthermore, the link between awareness of moderation and the local social context in Kuningan—such as the existence of Harmony Villages (*Kampung Kerukunan*) and interfaith communities in Cigugur—reinforces the understanding of moderation values as part of daily lived experience. This is consistent with the findings of Hamdi et al. (2024) and Khairiah et al. (2024), who state that tolerant social environments—facilitated through education and interfaith community initiatives such as FKUB—serve as crucial catalysts in the internalisation of moderation values. Therefore, the positive responses of Generation Z to religious issues on social media should not be viewed as passive, but rather as an active form of adaptation to the dynamics of religiosity they encounter within a pluralistic digital ecosystem and a multicultural society.

Influence of Moderate Attitudes on Religious Tolerance

This study examines both the direct and moderating effects of religious moderation attitudes on religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z in Kuningan Regency. Involving 360 respondents, five initial hypotheses (H1–H5) were tested to assess the extent to which religious issues circulating on social media—such as foreign cultural influences, moderate clerics, religious organisations, interfaith tolerance, and radicalism—affect attitudes of religious tolerance. Subsequently, five additional hypotheses (H6–H10) were tested to explore how these effects change when moderated by the variable of religious moderation attitudes.

The results show that of the five direct-effect hypotheses, three were accepted—H1 (foreign culture), H2 (moderate clerics), and H5 (radicalism)—each shows a statistically significant p-value, the p-value for H1 is 0.000 while the p-values for H2 and H5 are below 0.01. In contrast, H3 (religious organisations) and H4 (tolerance) were rejected due to a lack of statistical significance. However, after introducing the moderating variable, all five hypotheses H6 through H10 yielded highly significant results, confirming that religious moderation attitudes play a crucial role in strengthening the relationship between exposure to religious issues on social media and the formation of tolerant attitudes.

The most striking finding was observed in hypothesis H10, which tested the influence of radicalism on religious tolerance moderated by moderate attitudes. This hypothesis recorded the highest T-value of 5.772 with a p-value of < 0.000, indicating that respondents with strong moderate attitudes possess greater resilience when encountering extremist religious narratives on social media.

A detailed summary of these hypothesis tests is presented in Table 4, which includes the T-values and p-values for both direct and moderated effects.

Table 4. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result	P-Value	T-Value	Description
H1	Accepted	0.000	3.748	Strong Positive Effect
H2	Accepted	0.009	2.626	Weak Positive Effect
H3	Rejected	0.743	0.328	Not Significant
H4	Rejected	0.236	1.187	Not Significant
H5	Accepted	0.006	2.778	Weak Positive Effect
H6-H10	All Accepted	0.000	>4.6	Strong Moderating Effect

Based on the analysis results, it can be concluded that religious moderation attitudes play a crucial role in shaping and strengthening religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z. Although not all religious issues on social media directly influence tolerance, the presence of moderate attitudes as a moderating variable renders all relationships statistically significant. This indicates that moderation values are not only normatively important but also function as psychological and cognitive safeguards for young people in responding to complex and sometimes provocative religious issues.

From the data obtained, four key tendencies can be identified. First, although not all religious issues had a direct impact on tolerance attitudes (as seen in the rejection of H3 and H4), the presence of moderate attitudes consistently strengthened the influence of all issues. Second, radicalism showed the strongest influence when moderated, as indicated by the highest T-value (5.772), suggesting that moderate attitudes serve as the primary shield against exposure to extremist content. Third, the effects of foreign culture and moderate clerics, which were already significant, became stronger when moderated, highlighting that understanding figures or symbols within a moderation framework is key to shaping tolerant attitudes. Fourth, positive responses to issues concerning religious organisations and tolerance only became significant when mediated by moderate attitudes, indicating that balanced understanding enables acceptance of issues that were previously neutral.

The findings of this subsection indicate that religious moderation attitudes play a central role as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationship between exposure to religious issues on social media and religious tolerance among Generation Z. When issues such as radicalism, foreign cultural influences, or inter-organisational religious differences do not always directly influence tolerance attitudes, the presence of a moderate outlook enables individuals to respond with greater balance and openness. This affirms that moderation is not merely a normative value but also functions as an interpretive lens for navigating the complexity of digital religious content.

Theoretically, these findings reinforce the concept of digital self-socialisation (Moberg & Sjö, 2024; Pérez-Torres, 2024) wherein Generation Z actively shapes their religious outlook through social media rather than relying solely on traditional authorities. In this process, religious moderation acts as a “value filter”—helping individuals to sift through extreme, provocative, or manipulative religious narratives while encouraging acceptance of difference. Furthermore, Dalaylı (2023) argues that the relevance of issues and proximity of social context heighten Generation Z’s sensitivity; however, this effect is most potent when accompanied by a moderate attitude. Thus, religious moderation is not only a personal value but also an adaptive strategy for engaging with a dynamic and polarised digital religious landscape.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the extent to which religious moderation attitudes influence religious tolerance attitudes among Generation Z in Kuningan Regency, particularly in the context of their interactions with religious issues circulating on social media. The findings indicate that Generation Z

generally exhibits a high level of awareness regarding the values of religious moderation, with over 86% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the principle of balanced religiosity. Furthermore, they expressed positive attitudes toward current issues such as the role of moderate clerics, religious organisations, and radicalism—especially when such issues are presented through digital media. The most notable finding lies in the moderating role of religious moderation attitudes: five hypotheses that were not initially significant became statistically significant when moderated by this variable.

These findings suggest that awareness of moderation among Generation Z is not merely a product of normative teachings formally passed down through educational institutions or families, but also the result of a process of digital self-socialisation. In line with Moberg & Sjö (2024) and Pérez-Torres (2024), social media has become a vital arena for shaping religious identity among young people, enabling them to choose, affirm, and even reconstruct religious narratives that they consider relevant and moderate. In this context, religious moderation functions as a value filter, helping Generation Z respond to extreme religious content more rationally and tolerantly.

These research findings are consistent with previous studies emphasising the importance of integrating moderation values in shaping balanced religious attitudes. Studies by Wardi et al. (Wardi et al., 2023) and Ichsan et al. (Yazida Ichsan et al., 2024) demonstrated that formal education—particularly through moderation-based curricula in Islamic boarding schools and universities—can systematically instil values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance) in students. More broadly, this study reinforces the role of social institutions such as the Forum for Religious Harmony (FKUB), as highlighted by Khairiah et al. (Khairiah et al., 2024) and Nurdin et al. (Nurdin et al., 2021), which stress the importance of interfaith collaboration in maintaining harmony and promoting tolerance at the community level. However, this study goes beyond institutional and educational approaches by introducing the digital domain as a space for constructing Generation Z's religious identity. Unlike previous studies that focused on the direct influence of social media on value shifts (Hajdini & Iaia, 2024; Wang, Balakrishnan, Wan, Yu, & Ye, 2024), this research introduces a novel contribution by identifying the role of religious moderation as a moderating variable that strengthens the relationship between exposure to digital religious issues and attitudes towards tolerance. In other words, moderate attitudes are not only normatively important but also function strategically as a value filter and cognitive tool in navigating religious polarisation in the digital age.

This study further demonstrates that religious moderation plays a strategic role in shaping religious tolerance among Generation Z, particularly in the context of their interactions on social media. Socially, the findings underscore that digital media serve not only as a means of communication but also as an effective space for the socialisation of religious values. Generation Z are no longer passive recipients of religious teachings from formal institutions; instead, they act as active agents who selectively adopt religious narratives they find relevant, balanced, and moderate (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Pajarianto, Pribadi, & Galugu, 2023).

Historically, these findings indicate a paradigm shift in religious socialisation—from orthodox institutions such as family and school to the fluid space of the digital realm. This transformation reflects an increase in the autonomy of young people in shaping their religious identities (Cusack, 2011). Digital media have created alternative spiritual spaces that transcend geographical and ideological boundaries, forming a new, fluid, and transnational religious landscape. Religious experiences are no longer confined to physical spaces, as shown in Mansour's (Mansour, 2022) study on virtual churches, which can evoke emotional and spiritual responses comparable to traditional places of worship. Moreover, the digital realm enables the formation of *translocal* spaces, where religious practices and dialogues occur beyond

institutional authority, extending religious narratives to global audiences (Ostrovskaya, Badmatsyrenov, & Vasilieva, 2023). Concepts such as *hybrid* and *hypermediated* spaces, as proposed by Gao et al. (2024) further reinforce the understanding that digital life has naturally and interactively integrated religious practices into everyday routines. In this context, the digital generation does not merely adapt to tradition, but actively reconstructs religious values based on personal experience and digital conditions—challenging institutional boundaries and fostering a more contextual and autonomous spirituality.

Ideologically, this study affirms that religious moderation is not merely a moral norm but also functions as an ideological tool to counter digital polarisation and extremism. In a social media environment rife with hoaxes and hate speech based on religion, religious moderation acts as a cognitive filter that enables young individuals to sift through information while maintaining emotional and rational balance (Hess, 2023; Wang et al., 2024). Furthermore, this aligns with Romanova et al. (2021) findings on the importance of *rhizomality* in digital religious identity—that is, how values can grow in multiple directions simultaneously, flexibly, and transformatively.

Thus, the primary contribution of this study lies in reinforcing the perspective that religious moderation among Generation Z is not merely the result of structural indoctrination, but rather a product of active negotiation between values, digital spaces, and contemporary challenges. This opens up new avenues in the study of Muslim youth culture, indicating that the religiosity of today's youth is contextual, adaptive, and heavily influenced by their engagement in a transnational digital landscape. Therefore, for policymakers, educators, and religious leaders, understanding this pattern is a crucial first step towards developing strategies for a peaceful, critical, and contextually relevant approach to religious life.

The findings of this study reflect two interrelated sides of the same coin. On the one hand, religious moderation among Generation Z functions positively as a moral compass in navigating extremist religious content on social media. This attitude enables them to remain rational, inclusive, and open to diversity, while also leveraging digital media as a space for constructing adaptive and humanistic religious identities. On the other hand, several dysfunctions warrant critical attention. Firstly, the ideological inconsistency of moderation poses a fundamental challenge. Moderate attitudes among Generation Z tend to be situational and reactive to specific digital discourses, rather than deeply rooted as a consistent value system. This supports the findings of Puchalska-Wasył et al. (2022) who noted that inconsistency in adolescent religious identity can lead to *deconversion* and internal conflict when religious values are not fully integrated into an individual's cognitive framework. Secondly, there is an emerging ambiguity in religious behaviour: while Generation Z often expresses verbal support for tolerance, it is not always accompanied by tangible action. This *opinion-action gap* is echoed in the studies of Chen et al. (Chen et al., 2023) and Pishchik & Lobacheva (Pishchik & Lobacheva, 2022), which describe forms of immature religiosity where spiritual expression is not matched by social commitment. Thirdly, the uncontrolled openness of digital platforms allows space for the dissemination of manipulative religious narratives. The study by Achfandhy et al. (Achfandhy & Ariyanto, 2024) found that campaigns for moderation on social media often lose ground to extremist content, which is more persuasively framed and widely distributed by religious influencers. Indeed, the deliberate framing of extremist messages within a moderate tone presents a serious challenge to efforts aimed at building healthy religious discourse. Therefore, while the results of this study inspire optimism, critical reflection is needed to ensure that moderate attitudes are not merely symbolic or transient trends, but evolve into stable, reflective ideological values capable of addressing the demands of a changing era.

Based on the identified dysfunctions, a number of strategic policy actions are needed to strengthen religious moderation among Generation Z in a more substantial and sustainable manner. Firstly, it is

essential to design digital religious literacy curricula in schools and universities that not only instil the values of moderation but also equip students with critical thinking skills to evaluate manipulative religious narratives on social media. Secondly, the capacity of young religious communities should be enhanced so they can become authentic, creative, and digitally relevant producers of moderate content—for instance, through training in content creation based on values of moderation and tolerance. Thirdly, cross-sector collaboration among the government, religious institutions, social media platforms, and moderate youth figures must be strengthened to build a digital ecosystem that promotes peaceful narratives and suppresses the dissemination of veiled extremism. Fourthly, regulation and oversight of digital religious influencers must be improved by enforcing ethical standards and transparency, to prevent public legitimisation of figures who propagate intolerant messages under the guise of moderation. Lastly, research-based approaches must be carried out regularly to monitor the evolving religious attitudes of Generation Z, ensuring that policy responses remain contextual and adaptive to societal changes.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious moderation plays a crucial role in shaping and strengthening religious tolerance among Generation Z in Kuningan Regency, particularly in the context of exposure to religious issues on social media. The main findings indicate that while not all religious issues have a direct impact on tolerance, the presence of a moderate attitude consistently enhances this relationship. This is evidenced by the acceptance of all moderation hypotheses (H6–H10) with high levels of significance, especially concerning radicalism, which demonstrated the strongest influence. These findings suggest that the values of moderation are not merely abstract norms but serve as cognitive and psychological filters in responding to the complexity of digital religious narratives.

Scientifically, this study offers a novel contribution to the field of digital religiosity by introducing religious moderation as a key variable that has been largely overlooked in previous research. In addition to enriching theoretical understanding of the role of internal values in navigating digital religious dynamics, the study also expands the local Indonesian context, particularly in socially religious regions such as Kuningan. Employing a quantitative approach and moderation analysis, the study demonstrates that young people's religious understanding is shaped not only by content exposure but also by the value frameworks they internalise.

Nonetheless, this research has certain limitations, particularly in terms of geographical scope and data approach. The study focuses solely on a single region with a relatively tolerant social character, which limits the generalisability of the findings on a national scale. Moreover, the quantitative method does not fully capture the qualitative dimensions of personal and dynamic interpretations of digital religiosity. Future research is therefore encouraged to adopt a mixed-methods approach and expand the geographical scope to better reflect the multifaceted nature of Generation Z's religious engagement in more diverse and contextual settings.

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