

DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN NORTH SUMATERA COMMUNITIES BY STRENGTHENING CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION BASED ON LOCAL WISDOM VALUES

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Abstract

The implementation of religious moderation through cultural approach and local wisdom is very necessary due to the multicultural conditions of the North Sumatera region, the onslaught of modernisation and the presence of global cultural hegemony. A cultural approach and local wisdom can be applied by using cross-cultural communication to avoid conflicts between different cultural groups and to maintain harmony between the cultural groups. This study aims to determine the understanding of the people in North Sumatera on religious moderation and to find out the local wisdom that exists in the people of North Sumatera in accordance with the concept of religious moderation or otherwise. This study uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach. The data was collected through unstructured interviews and documentation. The informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques. The data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation and verification. The results showed that the concept of religious moderation existed in the value of local wisdom and culture of North Sumatera communities. It can be seen in the attitude of tolerance and mutual respect among adherents in North Sumatera communities from then to now. One aspect of local wisdom within North Sumatera communities that aligns with the principles of religious moderation is the Dalihan Natolu kinship system. This system allows Dalihan Natolu to create a harmonious relationship among the existing diversity in everyday life.

Keywords: *religious moderation, cross-cultural communication, the value of local wisdom*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia has a relatively high level of diversity in terms of religion, race, ethnicity, customs, language, and social status. This diversity constitutes a national asset that requires preservation and care, as it provides benefits and opportunities. However, it can be a crucial problem if only one group of people is able to understand and sustain this diversity.

Intolerant attitudes result from individuals or groups making excessive truth claims, leading some to feel they are the only ones who are right and to blame others for holding different beliefs. Further, this leads to intolerant attitudes that eventually develop into conflict and terrorist behaviour. Intolerant attitudes are avoidable by strengthening religious moderation (Rinda Fauzian et al., 2021). The state guarantees

everyone the right to believe and the freedom to choose any religion or belief. Therefore, it is essential that individuals internalise the value of moderation to achieve comfort, peace, and prosperity in their religious practices, social interactions, and cultural affiliations.

It is in accordance with the remarks of the Director General of Islamic Education, Kamaruddin Amin, at a meeting on religious moderation in Jakarta on Monday, March 2, 2020. Religious moderation is part of the social capital in National Development, as confirmed in the National Long-term Medium Development Plan (RPJMN) Year 2020 - 2024. Through this moderation programme, it is hoped that it can build a harmonious life within the framework of national and state life.

North Sumatera is a province of Indonesia with a multi-ethnic population. During the 20th century, the province experienced two significant migrations, which brought Chinese, Tamils, and Javanese as indentured coolies to the Deli plantation. Subsequently, waves of Minangkabau, Mandailing, and Acehnese tribes arrived in the area, serving as traders, teachers, and scholars (Sinaga, 2017).

A study conducted by the Setara Institute in 2018 stated that the city of Medan was one of the intolerant cities. In 2020, the Setara Institute presented data on intolerant behaviour and acts of violence committed by majority groups against minorities (Setara Institute, 2018).

Another research conducted by Rambe & Sari stated that *Forum Komunikasi Umat Beragama* (FKUB), as a religious institution in Medan City, fully accepts the concept of religious moderation and feels the urgency to apply it amid society. In its operations, it conducts various kinds of activities, including socialising the concept of inter-religious harmony through both digital and print media, in addition to holding dialogue activities by presenting various elements of society and elements of government (Rambe & Sari, 2022).

The following research, conducted by Zuhrah & Yusmasdaleni and Rambe & Sari, contradicts Syahrin's claim that North Sumatera has a great tradition of religious moderation since time immemorial and that this has been done by leaders in the past. For

example, the Sultanate of Deli has never prevented anyone from visiting Deli or Medan for religious issues. Then, there is the figure of Tjong A Fie, who does many acts of moderation with other people (Humas UINSU, 2022).

This article is the result of research related to the application of religious moderation using a cultural approach, and local wisdom is very necessary due to the condition of the multicultural North Sumatera region. It is considered important with the challenge of modernisation and the presence of global cultural hegemony. At the same time, the cultural approach and local wisdom, specifically cross-cultural communication, can be done to avoid conflicts between different cultural groups.

Based on the background of the problem and several studies that have been described above, the author tries to answer how to strengthen cross-cultural communication based on local wisdom values in building religious moderation in the people of North Sumatera. The focus of the problem is on the understanding of the people of North Sumatera about religious moderation and whether the local wisdom that exists in the people of North Sumatera is in accordance with the concept of religious moderation. The article entitled *Development of Religious Moderation of North Sumateran Community by Strengthening Cross-Cultural Communication Based on Local Wisdom Values* will not only reveal the importance of religious moderation in establishing relationships with multiethnic communities, but this writing can also be perceived wisely. It can be interpreted based on the importance of understanding, building and strengthening cross-cultural communication containing local wisdom value.

Literature Review

Religious Moderation

The word moderate in Arabic is called *Al-Wasthiyah*, as in Q.S *Al-Baqarah* verse 143:

“And likewise We have made you (Muslims) as middle men so that you can be witnesses for human beings and for the Messenger (Muhammad) to be witnesses for (deeds)”. The meaning of *ummatan washatan* is the middle person, not leaning towards the extreme left or extreme right,

that is, clinging to the revelation of Allah the Exalted"

From this verse, Islam has given a set of rules of revelation as *wasatan* (moderate) or middle, i.e., not exaggerated or underestimated. The Ministry of Religious Affairs defines religious moderation as a balanced viewpoint, attitude, and behaviour that engages judiciously with religion without any extreme inclinations. This definition of religious moderation conforms to the values exemplified in Islamic teachings (Zuhrah & Yumasdaleni, 2021).

Indonesian society should adopt a moderate approach by fostering a culture of tolerance. Tolerance is a behaviour that involves accommodating individuals of other religions, allowing them to express their opinions and practice their beliefs, even if their beliefs are different from ours. Tolerance means mutual acceptance, openness, voluntary and sincere acceptance of others' differences. A positive mindset is a prerequisite for tolerance. Social harmony is a product of religious tolerance, where the foundation stands on social capital, *civic engagement*, and cooperation (reciprocity) among interfaith citizens. (Zuhrah & Yumasdaleni, 2021).

In the current era of digital disruption, implementing religious moderation is an urgent need. The primary aim of recent efforts in this regard is to develop a moderate generation capable of resisting radical ideas propagated through cyberspace. The implementation of religious moderation among millennials in the current era of digital disruption can be described as follows: 1) Social media usage in the digital era should be strategic for distinguishing between radical and moderate ideas. 2) To prepare a tolerant generation, educational institutions should provide religious moderation training to teachers in schools and universities. 3) The family as the first *madrassa* is significant so that radical religious understandings do not develop from the family later. 4) Spaces for dialogue should be built with the millennial generation, both at home and in the community.

Zulkifli in Ismail mentions that there are two principles in religious moderation, namely fair and balanced starting from

understanding to behaviour, the opposite of fair is tyranny while the opposite of balanced is extreme. (Ismail et al., 2021).

Several factors become obstacles in carrying out the practice of *Wasthiyah* Islam, and these factors include: 1) The practice of *al-Ghuluw*, where there are individuals or groups of people whose attitudes and behaviours are excessive in textualism and rationalism in interpreting Islamic religious teachings so that they become stagnant, phobic of progress and lagging behind the times. This interpretation is frequently politicised, capitalised and de-ideologised, which is used not only by Muslims but also by others by creating acts of extremism and terrorism (Tango dalam Ismail et al., 2021); 2) the non-optimal integration of the brotherhood consisting of the Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyah*), the brotherhood of fellow compatriots (*ukhuwah wathaniah*) and the brotherhood of humanity (*ukhuwah insaniyah*); 3) there are tensions between religious believers and indigenous peoples; 4) Secularism separates religious affairs from daily life. 5) Extremism; 6) Terrorism; 7) Syncretism; 8) The disunity *da'wah* movement; 9) Disorientation of tolerant meaning; 10) Anomaly of religious figure authority (Huzaimah dalam Ismail et al., 2021).

Cross-Cultural Communication

Samovar et al. mention that cross-cultural communication occurs when members of a particular culture convey messages to members of other cultures, which involves interactions between people who have different cultural perceptions and symbol systems in communication (Samovar et al., 2010). Therefore, it can be concluded that intercultural communication occurs between people and/or groups of people with different cultures. Martin and Nakayama provide a deeper understanding of cross-cultural communication. Culture is a pattern of behaviour and attitudes learned and shared by a group of people, whereas communication is a symbolic process by which reality is produced, maintained, improved, and transformed. From these two concepts, it is clear that culture affects communication, but culture is formalised and strengthened through communication. However, communication can be used as a tool to resist

and reject a dominant culture (Martin & Nakayama, 2007).

Samovar et al. revealed that culture consists of elements that are incalculable, but there are five important things directly related to culture, including 1) History, the spread of important elements in a culture proceeds from generation to generation, and it preserves cultural views. The origin of a culture can be traced through its history, which is subsequently passed down to future generations. 2) Religion, the influence of a religion can be seen in all cultural interactions as it is a basic function that includes social control, conflict resolution, strengthening solidarity groups, explaining something inexplicable and emotional support. 3) Values, it has a function in determining how a person should behave. 4) Social organisation, which includes family, government, school, and ethnicity where it helps members of a cultural group to organise their lives. 5) Language, Merup language...(Samovar et al., 2010).

In cross-cultural communication, there are two forms of social interaction, namely: 1) interaction is formed by associative processes (cooperation, accommodation, and assimilation); 2) interactions shaped by dissociative factors (competition, controversy and conflict) (Gillin & Gillin, 1954).

The associative process involves mutual understanding and cooperation between people or groups, resulting in achievements towards common goals. Whereas the dissociative process is a resistance process of individuals and or groups in a social process in a particular community group. Dissociative processes may also be referred to as oppositional processes. Such processes can be interpreted as a means of protesting against a person, group, or social norms and values that are deemed as being unsupportive of change in achieving desired goals (Bungin, 2006).

In any communication activity, interactions are essential, particularly for cross-cultural communication, where religious groups interact with each other. These interactions can result in harmony between religious individuals, though conflicts may still arise, even if they are only minor.

Cross-Cultural adaptation theory

Adaptation is a problem that needs solving when individuals or groups communicate with others from different cultures. In cross-cultural communication studies, adaptation often relates to changes in societies and or parts of societies (Utami, 2015).

Everyone will communicate in accordance with the norms and values of the new culture, and it depends on the process of adjustment and/or adaptation that he or she undertakes. Overcoming the challenge of adaptation is crucial to be useful in the new environment. When encountering a new environment or interacting with a different culture, an individual will have to cope with a process of adaptation (Gudykunst, 2003).

The adaptation process consists of two stages: 1) *cultural adaptation*, which involves receiving messages from residents and is known as enculturation during socialisation when individuals relocate to a new environment, and 2) *cross-cultural adaptation*, which includes three main components. The first is acculturation. This process occurs when immigrant individuals who have been through the socialisation process begin to interact with cultures that are new and unfamiliar to them. Over time, the newcomer begins to understand the new culture and choose the norms and values of the local culture to adhere to. Nevertheless, previous cultural patterns also influence the adaptation process. This pattern is known as deculturation, which is the second part of the adaptation process. These changes in acculturation affect the psychological and social behaviour of migrants with new identities, norms, and cultural values. As a result, there is resistance to the new culture, and it is possible for migrants to isolate themselves from the locals (Utami, 2015). However, it must be recalled that in the process of adaptation, some do change and some remain the same. It is unlikely for individuals to have a significant impact on their environment due to the prevailing influence of the local culture, which controls daily survival and can force migrants to adapt (Gudykunst, 2003); 3) Assimilation is It is a situation in which immigrants mitigate the use of their traditional cultural practices in order to assimilate into the local culture. While theoretically, assimilation follows

acculturation changes, the reality is that assimilation is not achieved entirely.

Intercultural adaptation is an interactive process that develops through the communication activities of individual migrants in their new sociocultural environment. Intercultural adaptation is reflected in the compatibility of migrants' communication patterns with the communication patterns expected or agreed upon by the community and the local culture. Vice-versa, the suitability of these communication patterns also supports intercultural adaptation (Gudykunst, 2003).

The Value of Local Wisdom

The pillars of national culture can stand because each region has its culture and local wisdom. (Mazid, 2020) explained that local wisdom is the action of human beings using their intellect to be able to act and behave towards something. Wagiran and Supriyanto defined local wisdom as a long experience entrusted as a guide for one's behaviour, local wisdom is influenced by the surrounding environment, and local wisdom has an open, dynamic, flexible nature and always adapts to its time. Based on Wagiran's definition, local wisdom refers to the human capacity to apply reasoning adapted to their environment, guiding a dynamic and flexible social life when interacting to meet individual needs (Supriyanto, 2018).

Local wisdom has three main components. a) Thoughts, attitudes and actions in language, practising art, and literature, for example, literary works that have philosophical and original nuances; b) Thoughts, attitudes and actions in various cultural artefacts, for example, kris, decorations, paintings and so on; c) Thoughts, attitudes and actions in social society, for example, uploads and civility; These three substances have eventually become the roots of the nation's culture and have become the nation's identity. Local wisdom has shaped the nation's personality based on ancestral values (Supriyanto, 2018).

Preserving the values inherent in local wisdom implies that people live and apply local ideas with wisdom and life values. Preserving local wisdom aims to establish a national identity that aligns with the values of Pancasila and religious moderation, promoting a harmonious and supportive

environment to face modernisation and globalisation in a positive and productive direction (Supriyanto, 2018).

Conceptual Framework

This study aims to explore the understanding of religious moderation among the people of North Sumatera and the value of local wisdom in line with the concept of religious moderation. The researchers use cross-cultural communication theory and cross-cultural adaptation theory in the analysis process. The inhabitants of North Sumatera are multicultural communities, some of whom come from immigrant community groups who have lived in North Sumatera for a long time, so there are different tribes, cultures, and community beliefs.

Additionally, the author employs the grand theory of cross-cultural adaptation with the supporting theories of religious moderation, cross-cultural communication, and Local Wisdom to analyse the research results.

RESEARCH METHOD

The type of research is descriptive qualitative, which aims to describe or describe a problem. Descriptive research is focused on describing the state or status of phenomena in specific situations. In this study, researchers will describe the state and situation of society about the understanding of religious moderation in North Sumatera. Qualitative research is a research approach that produces descriptive data in written or oral data from observed people and actors (Moleong, 2012).

The informants in this study were selected using a purposive sampling technique. A purposive sampling is a data source sampling technique with certain considerations. The informants are considered to be knowledgeable about the problem being studied (Moleong, 2012). The informants in this study are: Head of the Section of the Medan Religious Education and Training Centre, Head of the Subdivision of Administration of BDK Medan, Associate Religious Instructor of Christianity, Associate Religious Instructor of Islam, Head of Administration of BDK Medan, and the *Widyaiswara* (instructor) of BDK Medan.

The process of data analysis carried out by researchers involves the following steps: 1) Reduction of data obtained from the field is immediately written in detail and in a systematic way. Each data collection is complete; 2) Display data collects data or information in an organised manner that allows concluding and taking action. The information is already compiled using text that is narrative. In addition, it can also be a matrix, graph, and chart; 3) Verification: verification aims to produce valid conclusions. Therefore, it is better for a conclusion to be reviewed by re-verifying the notes during the study and looking for patterns, themes, models, relationships and equations to draw a conclusion.

DISCUSSION

Religious moderation as understood by the people of North Sumatera

The people of the archipelago already had their own religion before the influence of major religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam came to the archipelago (Sukanto, 2017). Several indigenous religions were once adopted by the people of the archipelago, including Pelebegu, which is practised by the Nias community, arat sabulungan, which is believed by the Mentawai community living on the island of Siberut, Permalim or Sipelebegu by the Batak community, Sunda Wiwitan in the Baduy community of Banten, Kahariangan which is embraced by some Ma'anyan Dayak communities in Central Kalimantan, Towani Tolotang around the Pinrang Sidrap and Aluk Tudolo areas in the Toraja community of South Sulawesi. Furthermore, numerous indigenous beliefs persist in the archipelago, encompassing the Bima Regency area (Aksa & Nurhayati, 2020).

Certain Indonesian cultural customs promote social cohesion and cooperation. The Mapulus system in Minahasa is a prime example of this, as it has been renowned for generations (Wagiu et al., n.d.). Bugis society upholds the Mapakaleebi spirit as a powerful social cohesion tool. It values diversity and promotes love for humanity (Relevance et al., 2023).

There are common norms to be developed in building religious moderation, where each individual is a believer of any religion, ethnicity, culture and political ethnicity. It is essential that everyone is willing to listen to others. Improving self-ability by continuing to learn, manage and overcome the differences in religious understanding between them. The following is an interview conducted on 20/2/2023 with the Section Head of the Religious Education and Training Centre, mentioning that the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has made efforts to protect the community in interacting in religious life in Indonesia by strengthening religious moderation.

On this basis, the attitude of moderation must be one of embracing, protecting, and accompanying, and not the opposite, which is to fight and keep away from extreme groups. Religious moderation presents an opportunity to anticipate extremism that can destroy and threaten inter-religious harmony because the basic capital for the progress of this nation is the existence of religious and inter-religious harmony.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued a decree from the Director-General of Islamic Community Guidance, number DJ.II/802 in 2014, concerning the establishment of management standards for mosques. The aim is to provide guidelines for coaching and management in the fields of idarah (management), imarah (prosperity), and riayah (facility maintenance and procurement). Both mosques and other religious houses are centres of moderation that can undergo development through religious education activities. For instance, Muslims conduct religious education activities such as taklim, Quran education centres, and mosque youth cadre training.

Based on this, mosques and places of worship of other religions can be a medium to convey communication messages whose ultimate goal is to change attitudes and behaviour towards a better direction in maintaining religious and inter-religious harmony. Religious educators act as communicators, while mosques and other places of worship function as the medium for this communication. This is as stated by the Head of Administration Subdivision at BDK Medan in an interview on 23/2/2023, where a

religious instructor is assigned duties, responsibilities, and authority by the government. During religious counselling to build religious moderation, religious language is used to address the target group. Similarly, according to *Widyaiswara* (instructor) at BDK Medan, as expressed in an interview on 24/2/2023, Religious educators are regarded as prominent figures within their local communities and can, therefore, be referred to as religious teachers who can solve problems ranging from religious problems and social problems and state problems related to the success of government programmes such as the Religious Moderation Development Programme. On 2/3/2023, during an interview, the Head of the Administration Section at BDK Medan asserted that as leaders, religious instructors not only impart knowledge through lectures but also try to practice and implement it jointly with what has been recommended.

This is in accordance with the statement made by the Madya Islam Religious Counselor during an interview on 4/3/2023, emphasising the significance of setting an example in daily life. This encourages the community to consciously and sincerely follow or imitate as an invitation. From the findings, it can be concluded that religious leaders, both Muslim and non-Muslim, have a very important role to play in guiding the community to live in harmony both with fellow believers and with those of other religions and that a religious instructor is required to be a moderate person in religious life.

The section head of the Religious Education and Training Centre said that religious instructors need to improve their knowledge through training organised by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, North Sumatera Province. Based on the interviews conducted, it is known that the religious moderation training activities conducted are aimed at equipping religious instructors both in theory and in strategy in socialising the content of religious moderation to arrive at solutions in answering all forms of moderation problems that often occur in society. Thus, a harmonious, peaceful, and harmonious life is hopefully created.

The people of North Sumatera understand religious moderation as a form of

tolerance; the meaning of tolerance for them is an open attitude to hearing different views, where everyone has the right to express their views. Yet, certain limits must be respected by not harming the religious beliefs of each party. The result of such active tolerance is the realisation of social harmony. The foundation is social capital, civic engagement, and reciprocal interfaith citizens.

The following is the outcome of an interview discussing individuals' perceptions of other religions and tolerance in dealing with interfaith people:

1. The creation of inter-religious harmony
The indigenous people of North Sumatera are Malay and Batak tribes, each with their own religious beliefs. Despite their differences, the two tribes have coexisted for an extended period. Notably, their ethnic and religious disparities have not sparked conflicts among their members.
2. An understanding of differences
The North Sumatera region is culturally diverse, blending ethnicities, tribes, and religions. Nevertheless, its people are highly aware of these differences and respect each other for all religious believers in the region and always co-exist peacefully and maintain carrying out worship following their respective beliefs.
3. Ability to interact with people of different religions
Cooperation between Muslim and non-Muslim communities has always been established, ranging from business to education. As a result, individuals have acknowledged the importance of treating fellow believers with mutual respect and have learned to coexist harmoniously with followers of other religions.
4. Minority and majority religions
In the North Sumatera region, the terms minority and majority religion are unknown. This is shown by how the community lives, where sometimes there are different religions in one family, but they still get along. Moreover, the provision of assistance for the construction of mosques is not only involving the Muslims, as there are also non-Muslim communities that contribute a great deal to the provision of material support. Also, there are Muslim and non-Muslim communities residing adjacent to each other, as well as extending support

to each other in times of grief and times of joy.

On 7th January 2019, the Mayor of Medan received an award from the Minister of Religious Affairs as one of the figures who has a role in realising inter-religious harmony. It is a recognition of the city of Medan as the capital of the North Sumatera region, which has succeeded in building religious moderation. Until now, those living side by side is not only from the Batak and Malay tribes, but various other tribes outside these tribes have lived side by side in the North Sumatera region, including various ethnicities outside the territory of Indonesia.

Based on the research findings presented above, the interweaving of intercultural communication influences social interaction between religious people.

In the adaptation theory, there are two stages in the adaptation process, namely cultural adaptation and intercultural adaptation. During the cultural adaptation stage, cooperation arises as a result of shared interests and threats, as outlined by Soekanto that cooperation arises because (Soekanto, 2012): 1) Neighbouring communities of different religions engage in mutual assistance and support, as evidenced by their cooperation during mourning and joy; 2) Bargaining occurs during the exchange of goods and services in North Sumatera. The buying and selling actions of the people of North Sumatera are not restricted based on race or religion; 3) Co-optation refers to the acceptance of new elements in a leadership that is related to the implementation of politics to avoid shocks. The leadership of the Governor of North Sumatera, a figure of religious moderation, and the Mayor of Medan, who has received an award from the Minister of Religious Affairs for building religious moderation in Medan, are examples of this phenomenon; 4) The coalition is working to enhance the knowledge of religious extension workers of various religions through cooperation between UINSU and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia; 5) Joint venture for collaborating on certain projects. In North Sumatera, there are no limitations on carrying out projects based on any religion. All activities are conducted together.

During cultural adaptation, the phases of accommodation and assimilation occur.

Accommodation involves individuals or groups who initially contradict each other but eventually adjust to avoid conflict. Religious counsellors educate the younger generation, promoting understanding and preventing potential conflicts. At the same time, assimilation occurs because different groups become one. This can be known from families whose family members have different beliefs, and all consider them relatives or family and respect their own way of worship.

The process that occurs in the adaptation stage is an associative social interaction, but the potential to develop into a dissociative social interaction remains, where it can cause conflict.

Harmony Between the Value of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is an understanding of religion that upholds the value of wisdom. The integration of regional wisdom is key to establishing religious moderation, so there is a close correlation between religious moderation and the value of local wisdom. When discussing topics such as harmony and tolerance within religion, religious advisors should consider using regional languages to be directly understood by the community. It can be inferred that local wisdom encompasses the cultural norms and customs specific to a particular region.

Religious moderation strives to attain harmony in diversity, and achieving this harmony requires the cooperation of religious leaders, the government, and educational institutions in the North Sumatera region in particular and in Indonesia in general. By maintaining friendship, unity, and cooperation among religious communities, between the community and religious leaders, with the government and with existing educational institutions, it can minimise the issue of SARA (ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup) and the spread of hatred.

Diversity is one of the riches of the Indonesian nation because it is a treasure of Indonesian culture that no other country possesses. The preservation of this gift from God necessitates wisdom, which in turn is crucial to maintaining national harmony. The harmony that has been sounded to create harmonisation comes from the traditions of the local people.

Diversity can be expressed through various means, including art and culture. An effective way to promote the concept of religious moderation is through cultural arts, which serve as a cross-cultural communication mechanism, appreciating local wisdom. The North Sumatera region has a unique value system of local wisdom, which is the *Pantun* art. *Pantun* art offers a platform to communicate diverse aspirations and preserve cultural values currently being lost in the community due to the impact of modernity, which can dilute indigenous cultural values. Educational institutions, like North Sumatera State Islamic University (UINSU) in Medan, have initiated pantun art programmes focused on religious tolerance to preserve the value of existing local wisdom.

There is also significant value in the local wisdom of North Sumatera concerning religious moderation. The Samosir area boasts old mosques known as Kabanjahe and Nurul Iman mosques. These mosques are in a non-Muslim area where the majority of residents are Christian. However, there is no religious conflict in this area, while tolerance between religious people is determined by family ties and customs wrapped in a cultural framework called *Dalihan Natolu* (Toba) or *Daliken Sitelu* (Karo) (Setiawan, 2021).

The realisation of tolerance in the Karo community, including the Toba Batak, is determined by the traditional philosophy of the Karo people, such as tolerance and patterns of acceptance of other ethnic groups. An open attitude towards others can be determined by the values contained in the Karo customs. It can be decomposed and obtained in the philosophy of *Daliken Si Telu* (*tiga tungku batu*). *Tiga tungku batu* is a three-stone stove used for cooking and in a triangle form that has space on three sides; from that side, wood is the fuel (Setiawan, 2021).

Karo people typically utilised stone stoves fuelled by wood to prepare their meals. Three stoves were positioned as support poles around the cooking space. This cooking method did not incorporate knowledge of *Daliken Si Telu*, the traditional array of support poles and furnaces. Components of *Daliken Si Telu* include *Sembuyak/Senina/Sukut*, *Kalimbubu*, and *Anak Beru*. The *daliken Si Tellu* kinship system is utilized in various societal contexts

in the Karo community, including traditional wedding events, the settlement of new homes and allotments, and resolving social problems such as land disputes, accidents, and other matters (Setiawan, 2021).

There are no ranked positions within any particular family or clan group, as all clans are considered equal. In Karo communities, each member is considered a king and therefore, mutual respect is expected. *Daliken Si Tellu*, a traditional event, has been circularly performed for generations. Similarly, each Sack community follows customary rules based on family ties and mutual understanding. Through the implementation of *Daliken Si Telu*, diverse Karo communities from different family groups and clans can gather and engage in traditional ceremonies actively (Setiawan, 2021).

Culture is of great significance for the Karo people and serves as a means of unifying and protecting against religious differences within their society. Passed down by previous generations, it remains integral today (Setiawan, 2021).

Daliken Si Telu for karo people has great significance in reducing social problems and sentiments that trigger the birth of religious conflicts. The kinship system at *Daliken Si Telu* forms community solidarity that synergizes with each other, Respect each other and be able to move mutual cooperation, On the basis of emotional attachment to one another in a family home. Community solidarity in these cultures forms a harmonious social space without having to contradict religious differences. Cultural concepts in each ethnicity have ways and teachings to knit harmony between religious and inter-religious people (Setiawan, 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that local wisdom has a strong carrying capacity in strengthening religious moderation.

CLOSING

The people of North Sumatera understand religious moderation as a form of tolerance. The meaning of tolerance for them is an open attitude in hearing different views, where everyone has the right to express their views, but still use certain limits by not damaging the religious beliefs of each party. Thus, the tolerance set by the people of North Sumatera is an active tolerance.

The relation between the value of local wisdom and religious moderation is closely related and inseparable in achieving the goals of building harmonious relations among diversity. It is exemplified by the pantun events conducted by North Sumatera State Islamic University (UINSU), Medan educational institutions and Culture Dalihan Natolu (Toba) or Daliken Si Telu (Karo). There are no special or higher or lower degrees in any particular family or clan group. In fact, all clan groups are equal. In the Karo community, each individual is seen as a leader, and as such, all community members are expected to show respect for one another. The cultural practice of Daliken Si Telu holds immense importance for the Karo people, as it helps to reduce societal issues and prevent the emergence of religious conflicts. The kinship system in Dalikan Sitelu fosters a sense of community solidarity, promoting cooperation, respect and emotional attachment within the family environment. This solidarity creates a harmonious social space within these cultures, accommodating religious differences without conflict.

There are many cultural concepts in the North Sumatera region related to the values of harmony, tolerance and harmony that can be raised and used as valuable lessons so that further research can raise cultural concepts in each of the North Sumatera regions. Further research can then be collected to become valuable lessons and show that the value of local wisdom possessed turns out to carry religious moderation.

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