



Religious Moderation in School Digital Culture: Negotiating Students' Religious Identities at SMAN 21 Palembang

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Abstract: This study examines the negotiation of religious moderation within the digital culture of students at SMAN 21 Palembang. The presence of social media, WhatsApp groups, memes, and other forms of digital communication has created new social spaces that influence students' religious attitudes and identity formation in multicultural schools. This study aims to analyze the process of negotiating students' religious identities in the school's digital space as well as the school's strategies for strengthening religious moderation amidst majority-minority relations. This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving 12 informants comprising the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, Christian Religious Education teachers, student organization advisors, Muslim students, and non-Muslim minority students. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results indicate that the school's digital space functions not only as a communication medium but also as an arena for identity negotiation, symbolic struggle, and the reproduction of religious narratives among students. Memes, stickers, and social media interactions serve as forms of religious expression that can strengthen group solidarity while simultaneously creating the potential for exclusion of minority groups. Nevertheless, the school strives to foster an inclusive culture through dialogic interactions, multicultural activities, and the internalization of religious moderation values in both formal and informal contexts. This study concludes that religious moderation in schools is shaped through a dynamic process of social negotiation within students' digital culture. This research contributes to the development of studies on digital religious moderation and multicultural education in Indonesian public schools.

Keywords: Digital Culture; Identity Negotiation; Multicultural School; Religious Moderation.

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Introduction

The development of digital technology has transformed patterns of social interaction among students in school settings (Poole, 2023). Social media, WhatsApp groups, memes, digital stickers, and various other forms of virtual communication have become part of students' daily culture in building social relationships and expressing their identities (Jovés et al., 2025; Hadiyanto et al., 2025). Digital spaces no longer function solely as communication tools but have also become arenas for the construction of meaning, identity, and the expression of religious diversity among the younger generation (Zaluchu et al., 2025). In the context of multicultural schools, these

digital dynamics present both opportunities and challenges for strengthening religious moderation among students (Nurhakim et al., 2024).

Digital media can expand the space for dialogue, strengthen solidarity, and foster openness among students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds (Hasyim & Junaidi, 2023). However, on the other hand, the digital space is also vulnerable to becoming a medium for the spread of intolerance, stereotypes, symbolic discourse, and jokes based on religious identity that have the potential to cause social exclusion (Zheng et al., 2024; Camacho et al., 2021). The phenomenon of memes, stickers, and digital humor among students is often viewed as harmless banter; however, in practice, it can symbolically reproduce majority-minority dynamics (Ruan et al., 2020). This situation indicates that students' digital culture has a significant influence on the formation of religious attitudes and patterns of social interaction within the school environment (Mihailidis, 2023).

Religious moderation is a crucial approach to maintaining social balance in Indonesia's pluralistic and multicultural society (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia defines religious moderation as a religious perspective, attitude, and practice that positions itself in the middle, is fair, and avoids extremism in addressing differences (Pramitha, 2022). Religious moderation emphasizes tolerance, non-violence, respect for traditions, and a commitment to the nation as the foundation for a harmonious social life (Muhammad Nur Rofik, 2021). In the context of education, religious moderation holds a strategic position because schools serve as spaces for shaping students' character, social identity, and national values (Setinawati et al., 2025; Ferreira et al., 2026).

In the context of this study, digital religious moderation is understood as the practice, attitude, and pattern of moderate religious interaction in the use of digital media and virtual communication spaces within the school environment. Digital religious moderation encompasses students' ability to express their religious identities wisely, respect religious diversity, avoid intolerant speech, and foster inclusive communication through social media, WhatsApp groups, memes, and various other forms of digital culture. This concept emphasizes that digital spaces function not merely as communication platforms, but also as social arenas in which values of tolerance, majority minority relations, and religious identities are continuously negotiated among younger generations.

To understand the dynamics of religious identity within students' digital culture, this study employs Stuart Hall's perspective on identity as a social construction that is continuously negotiated through cultural representations and social interactions (Laura & Moraes, 2019; Solomos, 2024). In the context of the school's digital space, students' religious identity is not understood as something fixed but is shaped through symbols, language, memes, and everyday digital communication practices. Additionally, this study draws upon Manuel Castells' theory of the network

society, which emphasizes that digital media creates new social spaces that influence patterns of social relations, the production of meaning, and the formation of identity in modern society (Castells, 2017). These two theoretical perspectives serve as the conceptual foundation for analyzing how religious moderation and majority-minority relations are negotiated within students' digital culture in a multicultural school.

Previous studies have shown that religious moderation in schools generally focuses on Islamic Religious Education, extracurricular activities, or character building based on the value of tolerance (Albana, 2023). Purbajati's research emphasizes Islamic moderation through contextual learning in Islamic Religious Education (Purbajati, 2020). Meanwhile, Zulkipli's research emphasizes the implementation of religious moderation through religious education and habit formation in madrasahs (Zulkipli, 2022). Other studies discuss the strengthening of religious moderation through educational management, school culture, and extracurricular activities (Saffina Muzdalifa, 2025; Alfasius Tobondo, 2025). However, research on religious moderation in students' digital spaces, particularly regarding the negotiation of religious identity in multicultural schools, remains relatively limited.

This research gap is significant given that today's youth live in a digital culture that influences how they think, interact, and construct their socio-religious identities. The school's digital space is not merely a venue for information exchange but an arena for symbolic negotiation between majority and minority identities. In this context, religious moderation cannot be understood solely as a normative concept but as a social process that is continuously negotiated through students' digital interactions.

SMAN 21 Palembang is a multicultural public school with students diverse in terms of religion, culture, and ethnicity. As a school with a Muslim majority that also accommodates the religious needs of non-Muslim students, it presents an intriguing social dynamic in the practice of religious moderation. The phenomenon of meme usage, digital stickers, and social media interactions among students plays a significant role in shaping social relationships at the school. On the other hand, the school also strives to foster an inclusive culture through religious practices, the promotion of tolerance, and the provision of equal opportunities for students of all faiths.

Given this context, this study aims to analyze how religious moderation is negotiated within students' digital culture at SMAN 21 Palembang. This study also examines how digital spaces function as arenas for the formation of students' socio-religious identities, as well as the school's strategies for fostering an inclusive culture amidst the dynamics of majority-minority relations. It is hoped that this study will contribute to the development of research on digital religious moderation and enrich the discourse on multicultural education in Indonesian public schools.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen because the study aims to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon of religious moderation within students' digital culture, as well as the identity negotiation processes occurring in a multicultural school environment. A case study was employed to obtain an empirical picture of the dynamics of students' socio-religious interactions at SMAN 21 Palembang, the research site (Moleong, 2019). The research was conducted over four months, from January to April 2026, with intensive field data collection taking place in February–March 2026.

This study was conducted at SMAN 21 Palembang, South Sumatra. The location was selected based on the school's characteristics, which include religious diversity and the diverse socio-cultural backgrounds of the students, making it a relevant setting for examining religious moderation practices within an educational environment. Additionally, the use of digital media such as WhatsApp, memes, and social media among students plays a significant role in social interaction patterns at the school. The research subjects consisted of the school principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, Christian Religious Education teachers, a student organization advisor, as well as Muslim and non-Muslim students. Research informants were selected purposively based on their involvement and understanding of students' socio-religious activities and the school's digital culture. There were 12 research informants, consisting of 1 school principal, 2 Islamic Religious Education teachers, 1 Christian Religious Education teacher, 1 student organization advisor, 5 Muslim students, and 2 non-Muslim students. Informants were selected purposively based on their involvement and understanding of students' socio-religious activities and the digital culture at school.

Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation (Sugiyono, 2017). Interviews in this study employed a semi-structured interview technique, namely interviews conducted using a flexible interview guide that allowed the researcher to develop additional questions according to the situation and the informants' responses throughout the research process. This technique was selected to obtain more in-depth data regarding the informants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations related to religious moderation and students' digital interactions within a multicultural school environment. Interviews were used to explore the informants' experiences, perspectives, and interpretations regarding religious moderation and students' digital interactions. Observations focused on school activities, student interactions, religious activities, and the use of digital media in students' social lives. During the observation process, the researcher acted as a partial participant-observer, meaning they were involved to a limited extent in some school activities while maintaining their position as a researcher. Throughout the observation process, the researcher systematically compiled field notes containing

descriptions of students' social interactions, the use of religious symbols in digital spaces, the context of school activities, and the researcher's initial analytical reflections. These field notes were then used as supporting material in the process of categorizing and interpreting the research data. Meanwhile, documentation was used to supplement the research data, including school records, activity photos, school regulations, and social media activities relevant to the research focus.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions (Miles, 2014). During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and grouped data according to the research focus. Next, the data is systematically presented in the form of narrative descriptions to facilitate the interpretation process. The final stage involves drawing conclusions and ongoing verification throughout the research process. Data validity is assessed through source triangulation and methodological triangulation (M. Djunaidi Ghony and Fauzan Almansur, 2019). Source triangulation is conducted by comparing information from various informants, while methodological triangulation is conducted by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation. This step was taken to ensure the validity and credibility of the research data so that the research results are scientifically accountable.

Results and Discussion

Digital Spaces and the Negotiation of Students' Religious Identities

The development of digital technology has shaped new patterns of social interaction among students at SMAN 21 Palembang. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and various other digital communication platforms have become an integral part of students' daily lives. The digital space is not only used for academic purposes but also serves as a means of building social relationships, strengthening group solidarity, and expressing religious identity. In the context of a multicultural school, these digital interactions reveal complex social dynamics, particularly in the relationship between majority and minority groups.

Based on interview results, the majority of students actively use their class WhatsApp groups as their primary means of communication when interacting with peers. Within these groups, students frequently share memes, stickers, short videos, and jokes related to school activities and daily life. However, in some situations, the use of religious symbols was observed that indirectly represent the identity of specific groups. For example, the use of religious terms, religious images, and religious-themed jokes is more common among the Muslim majority group.

A Muslim student explained that the use of religious symbols and terms in class groups is considered normal in everyday communication. He stated, "*In the class group,*

we often send Islamic stickers or greetings like 'Assalamu'alaikum'; to us, that's just normal, and sometimes it's just for fun" (S1, Muslim student, interview 2026).

Meanwhile, another student mentioned that social media serves as a space to express religious identity while strengthening social bonds among friends. *"Sometimes we post statuses about religious activities or Islamic quotes because that's simply part of who we are, and our friends often respond positively" (S2, Muslim student, interview 2026).*

Table 1. Forms of Digital Interaction Among Students at SMAN 21 Palembang

| No. | Forms of Digital Interaction | Media Used | Field Findings |
|-----|--|---|---|
| 1 | Class Communication | WhatsApp Group | Used to share information about assignments, schedules, , and for informal communication among students |
| 2 | Use of memes and stickers | WhatsApp and Instagram | Memes with religious humor are often shared in student friendship groups |
| 3 | Expressions of religious identity | WhatsApp and social media statuses | The majority of students use religious symbols and terms more frequently |
| 4 | Interfaith Interaction | Class groups and school organizations | Interactions are dynamic even though symbols of the majority dominate |
| 5 | Responses from students in minority groups | Social media and personal communication | Some minority students choose to remain silent or conform to certain digital jokes |

Source: Research observations and interviews, 2026.

The table above shows that the school's digital space has become a crucial arena in the formation of students' social relationships and identities. The use of digital media serves not only as a communication tool but also as a symbolic space where students express their religious social identities. The dominance of majority religious symbols in the digital space reveals the presence of subtle symbolic power dynamics within a multicultural school environment.

For Muslim students, these activities are viewed as a form of humor, religious expression, and an effort to strengthen social bonds among peers. However, non-Muslim students sometimes interpret these situations differently. Some minority students admit to feeling uncomfortable when certain jokes or religious symbols dominate the school's digital communication space. Although this does not always

lead to open conflict, it reveals symbolic dynamics that position the majority group as the dominant identity within the school's digital space.

A non-Muslim student revealed that they sometimes feel awkward when religious humor is too dominant in the school's digital groups. They said, *"Sometimes I just stay silent when there are religious memes or jokes in the group because I'm afraid of misinterpreting them and making the atmosphere uncomfortable"* (S3, non-Muslim student, 2026 interview).

Similar statements emerged from another informant who noted that minority students tend to engage in social accommodation within digital communication. *"We usually just go along with the conversation in the group to stay close with our friends, even though there are sometimes jokes that make us uncomfortable"* (S4, non-Muslim student, interview 2026).

This phenomenon indicates that the school's digital space is not a neutral space. The digital space functions as an arena where social and religious identities are negotiated through symbols, language, and daily virtual interactions. From a digital culture perspective, social media serves as a space for the production of meaning that influences how students understand themselves and other social groups. Students' religious identities are shaped not only through formal classroom learning but also through ongoing digital communication.

Digital interactions also reveal students' ability to maintain social relationships across religious boundaries. Most students choose to avoid open religious debates on school social media platforms out of concern that such discussions could spark conflict and damage friendships. This attitude reflects students' social awareness of the need to maintain harmony within a multicultural school environment. Thus, religious moderation in the digital space does not occur through formal or normative means, but rather through a process of social negotiation that unfolds in students' daily interactions.

Digital Culture and the Challenges of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Schools

The growth of digital culture among students presents new challenges in promoting religious moderation in schools. The intensity of social media use makes it easier for students to access various information, religious symbols, and narratives of identity circulating in virtual spaces. In certain contexts, the digital space can strengthen social solidarity and expand interactions between groups. However, the digital space also has the potential to trigger social exclusion through jokes, stereotypes, or religious symbols that are repeatedly produced in students' digital communication.

Observations indicate that memes and digital humor play a significant role in students' communication culture. Memes are used as a form of entertainment, social

commentary, and a way to foster friendships among peers. However, the use of religious memes sometimes leads to differing interpretations among students.

One student stated that most memes are shared without the intention of offending others. *“Usually we send memes just for fun; there’s no intention to insult a specific religion”* (S5, Muslim student, interview 2026).

Nevertheless, another student acknowledged that not all students share the same understanding of digital humor. *“Sometimes some friends think it’s normal, but others feel offended even if they don’t say so directly”* (S6, Muslim student, 2026 interview).

In some cases, the use of digital religious symbols even triggers social sensitivities among minority students.

A non-Muslim student noted that the dominance of majority symbols makes minority groups more cautious when interacting on the school’s social media. *“Since there are more Islamic symbols on the school’s social media, we usually exercise more caution when commenting or joking”* (S7, non-Muslim student, interview 2026).

Table 2. Challenges of Religious Moderation in Student Digital Culture

| No | Type of Challenge | Field Findings | Social Impact |
|----|--|---|---|
| 1 | Religiously themed memes and humor | Religiously themed jokes are shared within student friendship groups | Potentially causing discomfort for minority students |
| 2 | Dominance of majority symbols | Religious symbols and terms of the majority are more dominant on social media | Creates a symbolic relationship between the majority and the minority |
| 3 | Low digital literacy | Some students do not yet understand the impact of digital jokes | Potential for misunderstandings and social exclusion |
| 4 | Sensitivity regarding religious identity | Students from minority groups tend to be cautious in responding to jokes | Social conformity among minority groups is beginning to emerge |
| 5 | The influence of social media | Content outside of school influences students' communication patterns | Shapes students' perspectives and expressions regarding religious diversity |

Source: Research observations and interviews, 2026.

The table above shows that students’ digital culture has a significant influence on patterns of social relationships and the formation of religious identity in school. The continuous use of religious memes and symbols in digital spaces signifies a process of

reproducing the identity of the majority group. In certain contexts, this situation can strengthen internal group solidarity, but it also has the potential to create symbolic boundaries against other groups.

In several interviews, minority students stated that they prefer to remain silent or go with the flow when religious-themed online jokes arise. They adopt this attitude to maintain social relationships with peers and avoid open conflict in the school environment. This situation demonstrates that the relationship between majority and minority groups in digital spaces is symbolically manifested through daily communication patterns and students' digital culture.

On the other hand, students' digital culture also reflects tolerance and social openness. Most students are still able to build positive social relationships without making an issue of religious differences in academic activities or school clubs. Interfaith interactions on school social media generally proceed smoothly and openly as long as they do not touch on sensitive issues related to religious identity.

These findings indicate that the challenge of religious moderation in the digital age does not always manifest as overt intolerance, but often emerges through symbols, jokes, and subtle forms of virtual communication. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation in schools requires an approach that focuses not only on formal learning but also on enhancing students' digital literacy and multicultural awareness so they can use social media wisely and inclusively.

School Strategies for Building Digital Religious Moderation

SMAN 21 Palembang strives to foster an inclusive school culture through various policies and socio-religious activities. Strengthening religious moderation is not only carried out through Islamic Religious Education classes but also through social guidance, character education, and monitoring of student interactions both on campus and in digital spaces. The school recognizes that the development of digital culture has a significant influence on the formation of students' character and social attitudes, necessitating an adaptive approach to the ever-changing communication patterns of the younger generation.

One strategy implemented by the school is fostering a culture of tolerance through interfaith activities and instilling respect for diversity. The school provides equal opportunities for Muslim and non-Muslim students to participate in academic, organizational, and social activities.

The principal explained that the school strives to maintain a balanced social relationship among students through an inclusive approach. He stated, "*We strive to ensure all students feel accepted regardless of their religion, both in learning activities and school organizations*" (KS1, principal, interview 2026).

Teachers play a strategic role in maintaining harmonious social relationships among students. Based on interview results, teachers often guide students to use social media more wisely and avoid jokes that could potentially offend certain groups.

An Islamic Religious Education teacher explained, *“We often remind students that social media is not just a place for jokes, but also a space where ethics and tolerance must be upheld”* (G1, Islamic Religious Education teacher, interview 2026).

Another teacher added that a dialogic approach is more effective than direct punishment. *“If there’s an issue on social media, we usually invite students to discuss it so they understand the impact on their peers”* (G2, student organization advisor, interview 2026).

Persuasive and dialogic approaches are prioritized over punitive measures in resolving students’ social issues. Teachers also strive to raise students’ awareness that digital interactions impact the social and psychological well-being of their peers within the school environment.

Table 3. School Strategies to Strengthen Digital Religious Moderation

| No | School Strategies | Form of Implementation | Objective |
|----|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1 | Strengthening tolerance | Interfaith activities and social cooperation among students | Building harmonious relationships among students |
| 2 | Character education | Fostering mutual respect and anti-discrimination | Instilling the values of religious moderation |
| 3 | Digital Media Supervision | Teacher guidelines on social media use | Preventing conflict and intolerant speech |
| 4 | Religious facilities | Religious education tailored to students’ beliefs | Ensuring students’ religious rights |
| 5 | Dialogic approach | Problem-solving through communication and mediation | Promoting an inclusive school culture |

Source: Research observations and interviews, 2026.

The table above shows that the promotion of religious moderation at SMAN 21 Palembang is carried out in an integrated manner through school policies, social guidance, and an inclusive communication approach. The school does not only focus on the formal aspects of religious education but also strives to foster a social culture that supports the creation of harmonious relationships among students of various religions.

Additionally, student organizations and religious activities serve as important vehicles for fostering inclusive social interaction. Joint social activities, celebrations of major religious holidays, and organizational activities help strengthen social solidarity

among students. A Christian Religious Education teacher also stated that interfaith interactions at the school are going quite well. *“Students here are actually used to living side by side. The challenges now arise more in digital media than in direct interactions”* (G3, Christian Religious Education teacher, 2026 interview).

In some school activities, students of various faiths participate together, creating opportunities for dialogue and social experiences that strengthen the spirit of tolerance. Efforts to promote religious moderation also involve fostering a culture of respectful communication in digital spaces. Teachers and school administrators informally remind students not to use social media to spread jokes or content that could potentially offend certain groups. This approach aims to raise awareness that digital media is not merely a space for entertainment, but also a social space that requires ethical responsibility in its use.

Research findings indicate that religious moderation at SMAN 21 Palembang does not emerge instantly or solely through formal school policies. Religious moderation develops through a social process manifested in students’ daily interactions, both in physical and digital spaces. In this context, the school functions as a space for social negotiation that allows students to learn to respect differences, build inclusive communication, and develop moderate attitudes toward religion amidst the digital cultural diversity of the younger generation.

Discussion

Digital culture in a multicultural school environment demonstrates that social media cannot be understood merely as a means of communication, but rather as an arena for the production of identity and symbolic relations among students’ socio-religious groups. In the context of SMAN 21 Palembang, the use of memes, religious terms, and digital symbols reveals how the identity of the Muslim majority is dominantly represented in everyday virtual interactions. This situation demonstrates that the school’s digital space contains symbolic power relations that operate subtly through communication practices considered normal by the majority group, yet may be interpreted differently by minority groups. Thus, the school’s digital space functions as an arena for the negotiation of students’ identities and social relationships, not as a neutral social space (Lie et al., 2024).

The construction of students’ religious identities within digital culture reinforces Stuart Hall’s view that identity is fluid, dynamic, and continuously negotiated through cultural representations and social interactions. Students’ religious identities in school are not formed solely through formal learning in the classroom but are also produced through virtual communication practices such as the use of social media status updates, digital humor, and religious symbols within friendship groups. In this context, social media serves as a space of representation where students display their group identities while simultaneously establishing symbolic boundaries against

other groups (Laura & Moraes, 2019; Solomos, 2024). These findings indicate that digital culture holds a strategic position in shaping the social experiences and identity awareness of the younger generation.

Social relations within the school's digital space also reflect the characteristics of network society as described by Manuel Castells, where digital media shapes new patterns of social interaction that transcend the school's physical space. Social media enables students to build social solidarity, expand their friendship networks, and maintain intensive interfaith communication in daily life. However, at the same time, these digital networks also have the potential to reproduce symbolic exclusion through the dominance of majority group symbols in virtual school communication. Thus, digital culture not only strengthens social cohesion but can also create hidden social boundaries in majority-minority relationships (Castells, 2017).

Religious moderation practices in the digital age indicate that intolerance does not always manifest as open conflict but often emerges through symbolic communication practices that students consider routine. Digital humor, religious memes, and the use of certain terms can serve as forms of social exclusion that go unnoticed by the majority group. In this study, minority students tended to choose strategies of silence, conformity, or avoiding direct responses to religious jokes in order to maintain social relationships with their peers. This phenomenon indicates the existence of social adaptation mechanisms among minority groups in response to the dominance of the majority's communication culture within the digital space of a multicultural school.

Although symbolic dominance exists in the digital space, interfaith social relationships within the school environment still exhibit relatively harmonious and inclusive patterns. This indicates that students possess social awareness to maintain the stability of social relationships and avoid open conflict regarding religious issues. Interfaith interactions within school organizations, academic activities, and social events continue to take place openly and cooperatively. Thus, religious moderation in schools develops through informal daily social practices, both in physical and digital spaces, rather than solely through formal school policies.

The school's strategy in strengthening digital religious moderation highlights the importance of an adaptive educational approach to the evolving communication culture of the younger generation. The school's efforts through character education, the promotion of tolerance, social media monitoring, and a dialogic approach reflect that religious moderation cannot be achieved through normative learning alone. The persuasive approach applied by teachers demonstrates an awareness that social media is an integral part of students' social lives, requiring the reinforcement of digital ethics and multicultural awareness. This finding reinforces the view (Cam & Ballantine, 2025) that a dialogic approach is more effective in fostering social awareness than repressive approaches.

The implementation of religious moderation in schools also highlights the relevance of the concept of religious moderation developed by the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly regarding the values of tolerance, respect for diversity, and non-violence () in social life. In the context of digital culture, religious moderation is realized not only through religious education materials in the classroom but also through patterns of social communication and students' daily digital interactions (Muhammad Nur Rofik, 2021; Nadhif et al., 2025). Therefore, strengthening religious moderation among the younger generation requires the integration of religious education, digital literacy, and multicultural education within the school environment.

Compared to previous research, this study offers a different perspective by positioning digital culture as the primary arena for students' practice of religious moderation. Previous studies generally focused on religious moderation within formal learning, character education, or school culture in general (Albana, 2023; Zulkipli, 2022). Meanwhile, this study demonstrates that religious moderation also occurs in students' virtual communication through memes, social media, digital humor, and religious symbols continuously produced in their digital lives. Thus, this study expands the discourse on religious moderation by highlighting the influence of digital culture on the formation of social relationships and religious identities among students in multicultural schools.

Overall, this study affirms that religious moderation in the digital age is not only related to formal attitudes of tolerance but also encompasses communication practices, symbolic representations, and identity negotiations in the daily lives of the younger generation. Digital culture has become a new social space that influences how students build social relationships, understand religious differences, and negotiate their identities within a pluralistic and multicultural school environment.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the digital space has become a crucial arena in the formation of social identity and the practice of religious moderation among students at SMAN 21 Palembang. Social media, WhatsApp groups, memes, and various forms of virtual communication serve not only as means of communication but also as spaces for negotiating religious identity among students. In practice, digital culture reflects the dynamics of majority-minority relationships through the use of religious symbols, digital humor, and evolving patterns of virtual communication within the school environment. The study's findings indicate that religious moderation in schools is not formed solely through formal education but also through daily social interactions in digital spaces. Majority students use religious symbols as a form of identity expression and group solidarity, while minority students tend to engage in social accommodation to maintain harmonious relationships within the school environment. Nevertheless,

interfaith interactions at SMAN 21 Palembang generally take place in an inclusive and tolerant manner through a dynamic communication culture and a school environment open to diversity.

Schools play a strategic role in fostering digital religious moderation through character education, instilling tolerance, monitoring social media use, and employing a dialogic approach to resolving students' social issues. These efforts demonstrate that strengthening religious moderation in the digital age requires an approach adapted to the communication culture of the younger generation. This study contributes to the expansion of research on religious moderation by positioning the digital space as an arena for the negotiation of students' religious identities in multicultural schools. The findings of this study confirm that digital culture has a significant influence on the formation of social relationships and religious experiences among the younger generation; thus, digital literacy and multicultural education are essential components in strengthening religious moderation within educational settings.

This study has limitations because it was conducted at only one multicultural public school in Palembang with a limited number of informants; therefore, the findings cannot yet be generalized to all school contexts in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study focuses primarily on the dynamics of students' digital interactions within the school environment and has not yet examined in depth the influence of the family or the external digital media environment on the formation of students' religious identities. Based on the research findings, future studies are recommended to conduct comparative research across various schools with different social and religious characteristics to obtain a broader picture of digital religious moderation practices in educational settings. Furthermore, future research could also develop quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to measure the influence of digital literacy, social media, and virtual communication culture on the formation of attitudes toward tolerance and religious moderation among the younger generation.

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