

Religions, Religious Moderation and Community Development and the Role of Higher Education to Strengthen It

Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere¹, Maison Immanuel Daud², Sudiria Hura³, Grace Natalia Birahim⁴, Virginia Rebeca Tulung⁵

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Manado

Abstract

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Religion has a significant contribution to social, economic and political development. By promoting moral and ethical values, religion is able to form a collective consciousness to promote harmony and harmony in society. In addition, religion is also a driving force in poverty alleviation, education, health, and environmental protection. However, it should be remembered that excessive religious influence can lead to extremism and disrupt social stability. Therefore, the development of religious moderation is important to maintain a balance between spiritual beliefs and the demands of modern progress, while fostering interreligious dialogue and intercultural interaction to encourage mutual respect and sustainable development. This article analyzes the role of religion in development as the development of religious moderation. In a complex and multicultural global context, the role of religion in providing moral and ethical guidance is crucial for achieving sustainable social progress. However, it is necessary to be aware of the risk of extremism and intolerance which could hinder development. Therefore, this article highlights the importance of interfaith dialogue and inclusivity in ensuring the positive contribution of religion and creating a peaceful and stable society. The results of the analysis in this article are expected to provide guidance for society and especially the world of higher education to optimize the role of religion in achieving inclusive and sustainable development goals.

Keywords: *Religious Moderation, Values, Development, Higher Education, Inclusive.*

(*) Corresponding Author: mardestenly@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and rapid technological advances, religion still plays an important role in the social and cultural life of society. Religion is not just a belief in the existence of God, but also has a significant impact on various aspects of life, including social, economic and political development. Religion's contribution to development has become a topic that has attracted the attention of academics and practitioners in various fields.

This research will explore the contribution of religion in development, focusing on the other side of the development of religious moderation. So far, debates about the role of religion in development have tended to focus on its positive aspects, such as ethics and morals which lead to the strengthening of social values and community cohesion. However, in this study, we will explore another



dimension of the influence of religion on development, namely religious moderation.

Religious moderation is the idea that religion can be an effective tool for promoting peace, tolerance and interfaith harmony in a multicultural society. The book entitled "Cultural Motivations to Progress in South and Southeast Asia" was chosen as the object of research because the content of the book is believed to provide in-depth insight into how religion plays a role in the development of religious moderation in the South and Southeast Asia region.

This study will use the content analysis method, a popular analytical approach to understand messages contained in written texts, such as books. Through content analysis, researchers hope to be able to identify views, values, and perspectives related to the role of religion in the development of religious moderation in a wide and diverse area of culture.

The purpose of this research is to provide a deeper understanding of how religion contributes to development, which in turn identifies the potential role of religion in creating peace and unity in a heterogeneous society. It is hoped that the results of this research can provide guidance and insight for policy makers, religious communities and other stakeholders to reinforce positive religious values while encouraging sustainable interfaith dialogue.

In this journal article, researchers will describe and analyze the findings from content analysis in the book "Cultural Motivations to Progress in South and Southeast Asia," as well as present interpretations of the contribution of moderation of religion in development. In the end, the researcher will describe the role of higher education in strengthening religious moderation and development.

This research will not only make a theoretical contribution to the field of religion and development studies, but also has the potential to have significant practical implications for achieving a more harmonious society in sustainable development.

METHOD

This research will use the content analysis method to explore insights regarding the contribution of religion in development with a focus on developing religious moderation. The main data source that will be used is a book entitled "Cultural Motivations to Progress in South and Southeast Asia". Through the content analysis method, the researcher will conduct a thorough reading of the book to identify relevant parts of the research topic. The data found will be coded and qualitatively analyzed to reveal patterns, themes, and meanings related to the contribution of religion in development. It is hoped that the findings from this research will provide a deeper understanding of how religion can play a role in shaping sustainable development processes and facilitating moderation.

The results of the content analysis will be interpreted carefully to draw strong conclusions about the contribution of religion in development, which then becomes a discourse of religious moderation that makes a strategic contribution to development. It is hoped that the findings of this research can provide valuable information for development stakeholders, the government, community organizations and related stakeholders to better understand the importance of

strengthening the role of religion in achieving sustainable development goals. The implications of this research will also be discussed by aligning the findings with relevant literature on the contribution of religion in development. This research is expected to be a significant contribution in underlining the importance of religious factors in an inclusive, sustainable and harmonious development process. In the end the researcher will describe what the role of higher education is in strengthening this.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Essence and Existence of Religion as a Strategic Development Element

Since Max Weber (1905) put forward his thesis regarding the encouragement of cultural values/religious values towards the economic ethos of its adherents (in Western Europe and the United States), anthropologists, sociologists, economists and even theologians have competed to research further about the truth the thesis, both in local, regional and global contexts.¹ One of them can be identified and analyzed in this book edited by Robert N. Bellah, a Weberian sociologist entitled "Cultural Motivations to Progress in South and Southeast Asia".

This book is a compendium of essays at a conference entitled "Cultural Motivations to Progress in South and Southeast Asia" in Manila, Philippines, 03-08 June 1963. this book) and all conference participants.² Both the resource persons and conference participants were actors involved as academics and researchers (usually known as reliable theorists), such as Soedjatmoko, Clifford Geertz, Koentjaraningrat, and Robert Bellah. There are also names like Rosihan Anwar, Amado A. Castro and B. Venkatappiah as "practitioners" of community development. Besides that there are many other participants.³

The Asian continent is known for having a variety of cultures, nations and hundreds of ethnic groups spread across thousands of islands. Every nation and ethnic group is known for its own characteristics, rich in traditions and natural beauty. Even more amazing, the major religions in the world were born and developed through Asia, namely Christianity and Islam in the Middle East, Hinduism and Buddhism in India, Taoism and Confucianism in China, Shinto and Tokugawa in Japan. Based on research by the authors of the article, it shows that there is a significant role of religion in the economic development of a particular society. Even the sustainability of a development (which today is one indicator of the success of development is the influence of religion/culture, either directly or indirectly). Bellah and all the authors of the articles in this book try to prove this presupposition through (theoretical) socio-religious studies and (empirical) case study reviews, all of which are enriched by literature studies at the end of each discussion.

This book begins with an essay by Soedjatmoko, a socio-political maestro from Indonesia. He proposed about the "motivational structure of society". According to him, cultural/religious values have a role in creating "meaning" for a society so that it makes them involved in development. Likewise, he proposed a terminology called "identity

¹Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin. Ltd, 1971);Max Weber. *Etika Protestan dan Spirit Kapitalisme*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2006; Marde Christian Stenly Mawikere dan Sudiria Hura.. *Merambah Etika Protestan dan Sosiologi Nilai Max Weber "Korelasi Antara Calvinisme Dengan Spirit Kapitalisme"*. Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan Vol. 8, No.1, Januari 2022 (Tidore: Universitas Bumi Hijrah, 2022).

²Robert Bellah, ed. *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia* (New York: The Free Press and Collier Macmillan Company,1968), x.

³ Robert Bellah, ed. *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, 236-237.

crisis", in which he questioned the existence and role of both traditional and modern values. Self-image and identity are formed by the values of the community itself (the interior view) which are often confronted with values from outside the community itself (the exterior view). However, he stressed that actually traditional religious values as well as modern society values will stimulate development itself and can overcome an identity crisis.

Father De la Costas considers the concept of development by conducting studies on the history of Christianity to see a complex relationship between religion and development. According to him, the Hellenistic (Graceo-Roman) view of life views today as worse than yesterday and the day to come as worse than today.⁴ Whereas the Judeo-Christian values of life view that today is better than yesterday, and the day to come is even better than today.⁵ Thus, in the essence of Christian dogma, Costas finds the concept of community development or transformation.

Senator Raul Manglapus in his study of fiesta culture in Filipino society stated that religion is a cultural component (subsystem) that has an influence on development, especially economic development proclaimed by the modernization movement.⁶ With this study, he initiated the notion of religion to be expanded as a set of beliefs, values, attitudes and norms of behavior.⁷ So that religion can have a concrete connection to the development of a whole society.

It is interesting to listen to the essay from S.C. Dube, who studies the Hindu religion which is believed by the majority of Indian society. He found that values in Hinduism often do not support development. It is as if there is a tug-of-war between traditional and modern values. One other aspect of the thesis put forward by Max Weber, is that the more rational a religion is, the higher its level of participation in development. Eating without eliminating the cultural values that are embedded in Hindu Indian society, there needs to be an in-depth study and lengthy discussion to break through the static condition of society there.

Yusif A. Sayigh, Noel J. Coulson and Clifford Geertz, conducted an interesting study of Islamic society. Sayigh questioned whether cultural and religious factors were the main motivations for development. He emphasized that development is often hindered by cultural values, based on his research in the Muslim Arab world. Coulson finds that the rigidity of traditional values in Islam hinders development. Meanwhile, Geertz, who had researched in Modjokuto or Pare, Kediri (1952–1954)⁸ and Tabanan, Bali (1957–1958)⁹ in Indonesia, poses a slightly different discussion. He proved clearly that there are Islamic institutions in Indonesia that actually yearn for and pursue progress, prioritizing development. According to him, pesantren and madrasas, for example, are educational institutions that are at the heart of the life of the Islamic community in Indonesia for learning and obtaining change (progress). Thus in Indonesian Islamic society, religion on a certain scale has a role in the development of the community of its adherents.

Ediriweera R. Sarachandra conducted an assessment of Buddhist values with a case study in Sri Lanka. According to him, there are values in Buddhism, especially those related to morality and the activities of the people/society that motivate them to progress or develop. Nevertheless, in the context of a society there is often an "identity crisis", in the

⁴ Robert Bellah, ed. *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, 19.

⁵ Same as above.

⁶ Robert Bellah, ed. *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, 41.

⁷ Robert Bellah, ed. *Religion and Progress in Modern Asia*, 41.

⁸ Look in the writing book of Clifford Geertz. *The Religion of Java* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1960); Clifford Geertz. *Abangan, Santri, Priyayi Dalam Masyarakat Jawa* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 1989); Clifford Geertz. *Mojokuto: Dinamika Sosial Sebuah Kota di Jawa*. Jakarta: Pustaka GrafitiPers, 1986.

⁹ Look in the writing book of Hildred Geertz and Clifford Geertz. *Kinship in Bali* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975).

form of a tug-of-war between traditional and modern values. So often, Buddhist values do not support the development of a modern version of society. Josefa M. Daniel conducted research in Japan specifically regarding the Meiji restoration and the religious life of the Japanese people. Previously, Robert Bellah, who edited this book, had conducted a study on the Tokugawa religion in Japan which proved that the religious values, in the form of "loyalty" had encouraged the spirit of developing a community of adherents in Japan (another version of Weber's thesis). Indeed, on a certain scale, Japan can be a relevant example of the role of religion in the development of society, especially the correlation between religion and development in Asia.

Before closing this book, Bellah summarizes that in Asian religions, both Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and other popular religions, positively or negatively play a role in the development of the community of its adherents.¹⁰ Positively, because traditional values (religion and culture) legitimize the progress that needs to be achieved by a society. Negatively, because modern values are not in harmony with the faith held by society in certain contexts. From this, we find that Weberian-Parsonian social theory is still relevant.

For Asian people, religion has been "unified" with all aspects of life. Religion is not just a matter of paradise, nirvana and hell. Religion contains social, cultural, political and economic dimensions of a society. Religion requires its adherents to have proactive and anticipatory attitudes and behaviors towards progress/development. Indeed, religion is not always welcome to development, nor is development always relevant to the values of life (as depicted by religion and culture). However, it cannot be denied that in the life of Asian people who depart from traditional societies, religion has a big role in development.

The cases that have been described by the essayists have presented a close relationship between religion and development. The great contribution of religion has spurred its adherents to change, develop, advance and develop, especially Asian societies.

Time always has three dimensions of life, namely past, present and future. Religion on this earth is still bound in the struggle of time from time to time. In the modern era (precisely postmodern) which is colored by the sophistication of industry, science, technology, communication and information, do religion and culture still play a role? Maybe our generation needs to emulate Weber, Parson, Geertz, or Bellah who have proven that religion is more than just metaphysics and aesthetics, but also a motivator and dynamist of people's ethos in development.

The explanation above shows that social, cultural and religious aspects are important elements in sustainable development. The social aspect facilitates inter-religious dialogue and harmony, eliminates discrimination, and creates an inclusive society. The cultural aspect respects cultural diversity, strengthens tolerance, and preserves cultural heritage. The religious aspect encourages cooperation between religious adherents, respects freedom of religion, and prevents religious conflicts. By paying attention to these three aspects, society can achieve harmony, mutual respect, and contribute to meaningful and comprehensive development.

Religion has a significant role in the development of a diverse society. In the context of religious moderation, the contribution of religion focuses on facilitating inter-religious dialogue, creating social harmony, and reducing the potential for religious conflict.¹¹ Based

¹⁰For Robert Bellah's research specifically regarding the link between religion and development in the context of Japanese society, it can be seen in his book Robert N. Bellah. *Religi Tokugawa* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1992).

¹¹Albertus M. Patty, *Moderasi Beragama Suatu Kebajikan Moral-Etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021), 12-18.

on the analysis of the latest data and literature, it is revealed that the integration of religious aspects in a wise and inclusive manner can have a positive impact in achieving sustainable and harmonious development goals.

The in-depth discussion in this article highlights the importance of understanding the role of religion as another side in the context of religious moderation. Religion is not a factor that can be ignored or separated from development efforts, but an element that must be accommodated wisely. By promoting the values of tolerance, cooperation and respect for religious diversity, society can achieve a meaningful balance in inclusive and sustainable development. Therefore, stakeholders and policy makers need to pay attention to the role of religion as an integral part of the discourse on religious moderation and ensure that religious freedom and social peace are upheld in order to achieve sustainable progress in a multicultural society.

The Contribution of Religious Moderation in Development

Religious moderation has a significant contribution to development. First, through religious moderation, society can create an inclusive and harmonious climate. By respecting differences in religions and beliefs, and working to build dialogue between religions, people can feel more connected and build strong brotherhood.¹² This supports social cohesion and peace, which are key factors in achieving sustainable social development. Second, religious moderation also has an impact on economic growth. Communities living in a tolerant and stable environment are more likely to encourage investment and actively participate in the process of economic development. Thus, religious moderation contributes to increasing sustainable economic growth in Asia. Third, in the context of education, religious moderation supports holistic education. This means that education does not only emphasize academic aspects, but also helps in developing the values of justice, respect for differences, and social responsibility. By promoting these values, religious moderation can help create a generation that is more aware and empathetic, which in turn will contribute to sustainable social and economic development. Fourth, the contribution of religious moderation also has an impact on aspects of tolerance and peace.¹³ When religious adherents are able to interact in a respectful manner, the potential for conflict is reduced, and energy can be diverted towards social and economic progress. In the midst of the complexity of religious diversity in Asia, religious moderation is the key to maintaining stability and reducing the risk of inter-religious conflict, which can hamper the development process.¹⁴ Fifth, religious moderation has an important role in efforts to protect the environment. Some religious teachings encourage obedience to nature and the earth and responsibility for protecting the environment. By promoting these values, religious moderation can encourage people to care more about and be responsible for the environment. This contribution is very relevant given the environmental challenges faced by the Asian region, such as climate change and environmental degradation. Sixth, the practice of religious moderation can also help mitigate the

¹²Tetra Adi Siswanto, *Mozaik Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kristen* (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Kristen Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia dan BPK Gunung Mulia, 2019), 366-368.

¹³Tetra Adi Siswanto, *Mozaik Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kristen*, xxiii.

¹⁴Karen Campbell-Nelson, ed. *Gereja Yang Menghidupkan* (Yogyakarta: Institut DIAN/Interfifei, 2023), 228.

negative impact of religious extremism.¹⁵ When religious adherents are better able to balance and understand religious teachings with social and political contexts, they are more likely to avoid actions that are detrimental and endanger the security of society. Thus, religious moderation plays a role in protecting society from radicalism and extremism which can hinder the process of sustainable development.¹⁶ Seventh, in relation to cultural diversity in Asia, religious moderation can also be a bridge for intercultural dialogue.¹⁷ By respecting differences in religion and belief, people can understand and respect other differences, including cultural differences. This cultural dialogue initiative is important to build harmonious relations and cooperation in the development process in the multicultural Asian region. Finally, religious moderation can contribute to strengthening human values. When religious teachings are interpreted in a moderate way, the focus on values such as compassion, justice, and empathy can be increased. This helps create a more caring society and encourages collective action to help those in need, in line with the goals of sustainable development.

Religious moderation has an impact on social inclusivity, tolerance, peace, economic growth, holistic education, environmental protection, mitigating extremism, intercultural dialogue, and strengthening human values. All of these contributions are highly relevant and meaningful in supporting broader and more diverse development goals.

A Glimpse of Religious Moderation and Society Transformation

Religious moderation is a concept that reflects a middle or moderate approach in carrying out religious teachings without taking an extreme or radical attitude. This is important because in the context of an increasingly complex modern world, religious moderation can play a key role in achieving a harmonious and inclusive transformation of society.¹⁸

First, religious moderation contributes to forming harmony and tolerance among religious believers. In a multicultural society, differences in beliefs are often a source of conflict and tension. With a moderate approach, community members can appreciate and respect religious differences, thereby creating space for mutual understanding and cooperation. This mutual respect can strengthen social bonds and minimize potential conflicts that can arise.

Second, religious moderation plays an important role in fighting religious extremism and radicalism. Extremism often develops in communities that feel marginalized or have no space to talk about issues relevant to their lives. Religious moderation creates a climate in which these groups can feel acknowledged and heard, so that the potential for radicalization can be suppressed. By promoting messages of balance and inclusivity, society will be more open to ideologies that are not in favor of extremism.¹⁹

¹⁵Albertus M. Patty, *Moderasi Beragama Suatu Kebajikan Moral-Etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021), 12-18.

¹⁶Same as above.

¹⁷Reuel L. Howe, *Keajaiban Dialog* (Flores: Penerbit Nusa Indah, 2004); B. Keiser, ed. *Tulus Seperti Merpati Cerdik Seperti Ular* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2001), 123-130.

¹⁸Albertus M. Patty, *Moderasi Beragama Suatu Kebajikan Moral-Etis* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2021), 12-18.

¹⁹Same as above.

Third, religious moderation plays a key role in encouraging positive transformation in society. By teaching moderate values, people are more likely to adopt an inclusive approach in various aspects of life. This has the impact of increasing participation in democratic processes and awareness to address common problems, such as poverty, social inequality, and environmental issues²⁰. Community transformation based on religious moderation will create a more harmonious, just and sustainable environment.

Thus, overall, religious moderation plays an important role in creating an inclusive and side-by-side societal transformation. By prioritizing inter-religious harmony, fighting extremism, and encouraging active participation, religious moderation is the basis for achieving a more harmonious, just and competitive society in the modern and postmodern era today.

The Role of Higher Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation and Development

It has been stated above that in the context of education, religious moderation supports holistic education. Dialectically, education should also support the strengthening of religious moderation and development, especially higher education which is engaged in the aspects of education, research and community service.

Higher education plays an important role in shaping the understanding of religious moderation among students and academics. In a diverse campus environment, students can interact with fellow students from different religious backgrounds. This process can enhance mutual understanding, reduce prejudice, and promote tolerant interreligious dialogue. Through an inclusive curriculum, higher education institutions can discuss issues relevant to religious moderation and help students develop a more open and inclusive perspective on religious differences.

Higher education also plays a role in building a more tolerant and harmonious society. Students who are exposed to the values of religious moderation tend to have a mindset that is open to cultural and religious diversity. They can become agents of change in society, spreading inclusive attitudes and reducing religion-based conflicts. Higher education institutions can also play a role in developing social and religious programs that promote interfaith cooperation in order to achieve sustainable and peaceful development.

Higher education can strengthen religious moderation as the foundation for the welfare of the nation. By teaching the values of religious moderation to the younger generation, higher education institutions play a role in producing future leaders who are able to face the challenges of religious plurality wisely.²¹ In the multicultural context of Indonesia and Asia, it is important for countries in this region to promote religious moderation in order to achieve social peace, political stability and sustainable economic growth.

²⁰Tetra Adi Siswanto, *Mozaik Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kristen*, xxiii.

²¹Karen Campbell-Nelson, ed. *Gereja Yang Menghidupkan*, 126-136.

In the context of higher education that organizes tridharma, namely education, research, and community service, the application of religious moderation can have a significant positive impact.

First, in the educational function, higher education institutions can create an inclusive and diverse campus environment, where students from various religious backgrounds can interact and understand each other. Higher education must provide a curriculum that integrates the values of religious moderation into learning materials so that students can develop a more open and tolerant understanding of religious differences. Second, in terms of research, higher education institutions have the opportunity to conduct studies and research that support efforts to strengthen religious moderation. Research on interfaith dialogue, peace and religious harmony can provide a deeper understanding of ways to overcome religious differences and conflicts and promote interfaith cooperation in society. Third, through the community service function, higher education institutions can play an active role in facilitating social and religious programs aimed at increasing tolerance, diversity and interfaith harmony in society.²² By involving students, lecturers and academic staff, higher education can become a force that drives positive transformation in society by applying the values of religious moderation in everyday life.

Furthermore, Religious moderation is an approach that advocates moderation, tolerance, and respect for differences in religious practices. In the world of higher education, Religious Moderation is an important issue because higher education is a place where diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs gather. The discussion on Religious Moderation in the context of higher education can be developed in the following three elements: First, Religious Moderation facilitates interfaith dialogue. Higher education is a place where students from various religions and beliefs study together. Religious Moderation creates a safe and inclusive environment where students can know and respect one another's religious beliefs. Constructive interreligious dialogue will broaden horizons and strengthen tolerance among students. With mutual understanding and respect, students can work together to solve global problems and promote peace among different groups.

Second, Religious Moderation plays an important role in shaping student character. Higher education is not only about mastering academic knowledge but also about developing character and moral values. Through a moderate approach, students are invited to integrate religious values with their skills and knowledge in living their daily lives and facing social challenges. Religious Moderation teaches the importance of respect, empathy and a willingness to work with people who have different views. The more students who become adherents of Religious Moderation, the greater their contribution in building a harmonious and competitive society.

Finally, Religious Moderation plays an important role in preventing radicalism and social conflict in the campus environment. College is a place where critical thinking and innovative ideas thrive. However, if there are large gaps between religious groups and misunderstanding, anger, or fear emerges, the campus environment can become a hotbed for extremist ideology. By promoting religious moderation, universities can be at the forefront of preventing radicalism and

²²Same as above.

tackling social conflicts before they spread to society. Students who adhere to Religious Moderation can function as agents of peace and tolerance among their peers as well as when they are in society.

Meanwhile, Religious Moderation in the world of higher education is a very relevant approach to building an inclusive, harmonious and competitive society. By facilitating interreligious dialogue, shaping students' character, and preventing radicalism, this approach contributes to creating an educational environment that is diverse, dynamic, and beneficial for students' social and personal development.

Higher education plays a central role in forming the next generation who have a deep understanding of religion and ethics, and are able to make a positive contribution to the development or transformation of society. One important aspect of the curriculum and learning outcomes in tertiary institutions is the strengthening of religious moderation. Strengthening religious moderation aims to teach students about inclusive values, mutual respect, and interfaith tolerance. In the context of an increasingly diverse society, understanding and practicing religious moderation will help create an inclusive and harmonious campus environment, and avoid potential social conflicts rooted in differences in beliefs.

In the context of community development or transformation, strengthening religious moderation in tertiary institutions has a strategic role in achieving sustainable development goals. When students are trained to have a thorough understanding of tolerant religious values, they will be more inclined to take an inclusive attitude in various sectors of community life. This will help reduce potential conflicts and enhance cooperation between various religious and cultural groups, which will ultimately have a positive impact on sustainable social and economic development.

The strengthening of religious moderation in the curriculum and learning outcomes in tertiary institutions also contributes to the formation of responsible and ethical leaders. When students are involved in discussions and reflections on how religious values can be applied in real-world contexts, they will learn to make decisions based on the values of justice, equality and peace. As future leaders, the ability to understand and appreciate religious diversity will help them face complex challenges in building a more just and sustainable society.

Thus strengthening religious moderation in the curriculum and learning outcomes in higher education has a very important role in forming a generation that is inclusive, tolerant and responsible. By strengthening the understanding of religious moderation, students will be able to contribute positively to the development or transformation of society. In addition, strengthening religious moderation also helps create a harmonious and inclusive campus environment, which in turn will create a more peaceful, just and sustainable society.

Overall, the application of religious moderation in the function of higher education can bring about positive changes in creating a more inclusive, harmonious and peaceful coexistence society, as well as contributing to sustainable development in various countries in Asia and elsewhere. The role of higher education in strengthening religious moderation and development is very important. By supporting an understanding of religious moderation among students and academics, higher education institutions encourage the creation of a more tolerant,

harmonious and sustainable society.²³ Through efforts to strengthen religious moderation, higher education plays a role as one of the main pillars in bringing prosperity to nations in the Asian region which are culturally and religiously heterogeneous.

CONCLUSION

It is widely known that religions have an important contribution in the development of society or the process of transformation²⁴. Religious values and meanings directly and indirectly have become the progressive motivation of its adherents to carry out work activities and participate in development. Religious moderation has an important role in development in an Asian region that is rich in cultural and religious diversity. In a multicultural society, religious moderation can be an important basis for cooperation, harmony and social stability, thereby strengthening the process of sustainable development.

Higher education is the key in strengthening this moderation approach by teaching the values of tolerance and mutual understanding to students from various backgrounds. Behind religion. Higher education institutions need to encourage interaction between students of various religions to build understanding and respect for differences. This will help reduce stereotypes and open up space for interfaith dialogue, so that religious moderation can be reflected in campus life.

Despite challenges such as an inadequate curriculum and social clustering based on religion, concrete steps such as increasing inclusive curricula, training for teaching staff, and interfaith dialogue programs can strengthen the role of higher education in creating a harmonious and inclusive society for ethical development. Sustainable and peace-oriented with fellow human beings and the environment.

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²³Tetra Adi Siswanto, *Mozaik Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kristen*, 296-316.

²⁴See in the best essays in the book by Taufik Abdullah. *Agama, Etos Kerja dan Pengembangan Ekonomi* (Jakarta: LP3ES, 1993).

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