

The Role of Religious Leaders in Indonesia's Multicultural Society in Preventing Conflict

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Abstract

The goal of this research is to find out how religious leaders may help to avert conflict in a multicultural society. This study took place in Medan, Indonesia's North Sumatra Province. To conduct the study, the author employs a qualitative method in the form of a case study. Direct interviews with religious leaders from Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, religious organization leaders, and government officials were used to gather data. The Miles and Huberman approach was used to examine the interview data thematically. According to the findings of the study, religious leaders make three efforts to prevent conflict: i) use online applications such as YouTube, Facebook, websites, and zoom meetings to disseminate religious teachings, and ii) using online applications such as youtube, Facebook, websites, and zoom meetings to disseminate religious teachings. iii) They hold regular meetings, both online and offline, to debate religious moderation and conflict prevention; iii) develop collaboration between religious harmony forums and security forces in the prevention of religious disputes. Religious leaders' involvement in a multicultural society plays a vital role in conveying information about religious moderation. Furthermore, the findings of this study show that religious leaders were successful in mediating religious moderation in order to create a moderate and tolerant community. Religious leaders' functions of monitoring and direction in conflict resolution are able to maintain religious moderation and avert disputes in Indonesia's multicultural society.

Keywords: *The role of religious leaders, conflict, religious moderation, multicultural society*

Abstrak

Penelitian bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana peran tokoh agama dalam mencegah konflik di tengah masyarakat yang multikultural. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan di Kota Medan Provinsi Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Untuk menjalankan penelitian penulis menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan jenis studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara langsung kepada sembilan orang informan yang terdiri dari tokoh agama Islam, Kristen, Protestan, Hindu, Budha, Khonghucu, tokoh organisasi keagamaan dan pemerintahan. Seluruh data wawancara kemudian dianalisis secara tematik dengan teknik Miles dan Huberman. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan ada tiga upaya yang dilakukan para tokoh agama dalam mencegah konflik yaitu, i) memanfaatkan aplikasi-aplikasi online seperti youtube, facebook, website, dan zoom meeting dalam menyebarluaskan ajaran-ajaran keagamaan, ii) melaksanakan secara berkelanjutan pertemuan-pertemuan baik secara online maupun offline untuk mendiskusikan moderasi beragama dan pencegahan konflik keagamaan, iii) menjalin kerjasama antara forum kerukunan umat beragama dengan aparat keamanan dalam mencegah terjadinya konflik

keagamaan. Keterlibatan tokoh agama dalam masyarakat multikultural memiliki peran penting dalam menyebarkan arus informasi terkait moderasi beragama. Disamping itu hasil penelitian ini membuktikan bahwa tokoh agama telah mampu menjadi penengah moderasi beragama sehingga melahirkan masyarakat yang moderat dan toleran. Fungsi pengawasan dan pengarahan dalam manajemen konflik baik oleh tokoh agama mampu menjaga keharmonisan moderasi bergarama, serta mencegah terjadinya konflik pada masyarakat multikultural di Indonesia.

Kata kunci: *Peran, tokoh agama, konflik, moderasi beragama, masyarakat multikultural*

Introduction

Indonesia is a diverse country with a wide range of ethnicities, languages, traditions, and socioeconomic and religious standings. The state recognizes the existence of religious diversity in Indonesia and requires all believers to appreciate one other's differences. As a democratic country, Indonesia believes that variety is a fate that must be accepted. However, due to a failure to understand the essence of a religion's teachings with local socio-cultural modifications, confrontations in the form of hate speech or disparaging a belief cannot be avoided. (Yunus & Salim, 2018). Stereotypes between religious groups can lead to conflict, which can result in people attacking each other, burning places of worship, and, worst of all, killing each other. (Yunus, 2014). Each group believes that their tradition is always correct, whereas the other group believes that their way of thinking is incorrect (Bertrand, 2004). This stereotype subsequently causes a dispute, which we commonly refer to as conflict. (Hanafi, 2018).

Conflicts can arise as a result of a lack of religious tolerance, among other things. Religious tolerance refers to human tolerance in matters of belief and is concerned with the views they hold. (Abror, 2020). Tolerance means that there is no discrimination against other groups or groups in society in terms of religion, society, or culture (Bakar, 2015). The ideal religious tolerance should be established by active engagement of community members based on togetherness, mutual regard, and respect (Casram, 2016), as well as being open and unafraid of individuals, religion, color, ethnicity, or specific groups (Sosyad *et al.*, 2021). Because diversity is a blessing from God Almighty, it is a requirement in national and religious life, and religious

moderation is required to sustain Indonesianness and diversity within the framework of tolerance.

The word moderation comes from the word moderate. The adjective moderate means "not excessive," "moderate," or "moderately." It is absorbed as moderation in Indonesian, which is described as the decrease of violence or the avoidance of extremism (Yulianto, 2020), therefore the word moderation becomes religious moderation when coupled with the word religion. The word refers to a mindset that encourages a moderate religious existence by eliminating violence and avoiding excessive religious activities while respecting each other's religious ideas and customs (Junaedi, 2019). Religious moderation is a value practice that must be preserved in social life; therefore, it becomes a subject that restricts itself to not being overly extreme and dismissing differences in religious beliefs. The public must be able to be moderate in their religious lives in light of the current diversity, particularly by refraining from using social media to spread specific misinformation (Syatar *et al.*, 2020). Such as Facebook, which is the most widely used social media, including in terms of spreading related messages. religious moderation (Wibowo, 2019). We can't deny that digital technology's sophistication in the 5.0 era has an impact on every part of life, including religion. This necessitates everyone's ability to use technology properly in all activities (Novebri, 2021).

Space or digital era in which new media is connected to the internet and technological sophistication, allowing everyone to get information quickly, precisely, and easily (Riza & Hidayah, 2021), so that all information can be spread widely in seconds without us realizing whether the information is valid or simply a lie, potentially causing religious conflict (Riza & Hidayah, 2021). Long before, it would have seemed unimaginable that someone on the other side of the planet could communicate simply by staring at a digital screen in his palm of his hand. Given the rapidity with which information circulates in cyberspace, there is nothing wrong with individuals and groups playing a role in spreading religious symbols while maintaining the authenticity of the message conveyed (Wibowo, 2019).

As a result, controlling is required as one of the management functions in disseminating information that is spread in cyberspace today, as management has four main functions known as POAC (Planning, Organizing, Actuating and Controlling). This is where religious leaders' roles as supervisors and mediators of religious moderation come into play, particularly in a multicultural society like Medan. The multicultural society, which is characterized by various ethnicities, religions, and languages, is a reality that people who live in metropolitan cities must accept. The existence of these differences enriches the values that exist in society, so that it can serve as an example for other countries to see Indonesia with its diverse diversity but living in harmony side by side, respecting each other, working together in society, and strengthening each other. Diversity in social life is a natural phenomenon and a gift from God Almighty for which we should be grateful (Abdin, 2020). Diversity will be a challenge in achieving a harmonious life in a multicultural society, and if not managed properly, will lead to discrimination, particularly in terms of religion agama (Noor, 2020). As a multicultural country, Indonesia is still regarded as having a relatively high level of solidarity, including one in socio-religious solidarity (Alwi, 2020).

Medan, the capital of North Sumatra province and one of Indonesia's major cities, is known for the ethnic diversity of its people, which can be seen in the region's ethnicity, religion, and language. The population of Medan city was recorded at 2,279,894 million people in 2019, according to data collected from the Central Statistics Agency. The Batak tribe accounts for 35.39 percent of the population in Medan (Toba 20.93 percent, Mandailing 9.36 percent, Karo 4.10 percent, and others 1.00 percent), Javanese 33.03 percent, Chinese 10.65 percent, Minangkabau 8.60 percent, Malay 6.59 percent, Aceh 2.79 percent, Tamil and others 2.93 percent. Islam accounts for 68.30 percent of Medan's religious adherents, Christian 26.10 percent (Protestant 19.88 percent, Catholic 6.52 percent), Buddhist 3.32 percent, Hindu 1.97 percent, and Confucian 0.01 percent. The data is shown in Table 1 below:

Table: 1. Description of community diversity in Medan City

No	Religion	Number of Population	Percentage (%)
1	Islam	1.722.176	68,30%
2	Protestan	501.171	19,88%
3	Chatolic	164.439	6,52%
4	Hindus	49.546	1,97%
5	Budhas	83.777	3,32%
6	Khonghucu	230	0,01%
Total		2.521.339	100%

Meanwhile The people speak Indonesian, Malay, Batak Toba, Javanese, Hokkien, Minangkabau, Acehnese, Tamil, Mandarin, and English. North Sumatra also has the highest percentage of internet users in the Sumatran archipelago. Data obtained from the online publication Bisnis.com The Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (APJII) released the results of a survey on internet penetration and behavioral profiles of internet users in Medan, noting that 75.3 percent of the population in North Sumatra is online. This information was gathered from 5,900 samples via questionnaires and interviews.

The survey quality control sample is 10% of the total sample. The survey was conducted from March 9 to April 14, 2019. According to this data, only 24.7 percent of the total population of North Sumatra has never used the internet. The internet can be used to communicate information about religious activities (Christina, 2021), which is now known as cyberda'wah, which is a da'wah activity that employs social media and the internet as symbols (Rustandi, 2020). On the one hand, social media presents unique challenges for religious leaders in conveying religious symbols; on the other hand, because social media is so freely available, it generates a wide range of information that does not always correspond to the existing truth (Fakhruroji, 2020), Religious moderation in practice must strike a balance between practicing one's own religion and respecting other religions with beliefs that differ from ours (Sutrisno, 2019).

If we relate this to religious moderation in a multicultural society in the city of Medan in the digital era, there is a huge potential for religious conflict to arise if the

information that is widely circulated in cyberspace is not monitored and managed with good management, and this is supported by prominent figures. Religion in its role as a figure who is verbally respected, appreciated, and trusted.

We can see from the data that the people of Medan are very multi-cultural in all aspects, multi-religious, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and of course multi-racial, but with the diversity that exists, the people of Medan are able to remain moderate and tolerant between religious adherents, live in harmony and peace. This is evident from the city of Medan's low potential for conflict, which can be said to be almost non-existent (the author's interview with six religious' leaders in the city of Medan). This is what drew the author to conduct research on the management of religious moderation in the digital era through the eyes of six religious' figures in the city of Medan.

Literature Review

Humans live in a society full of differences, including differences in social status, intelligence, talent, personality, knowledge, competence, religion, ethnicity, race, culture, and class, all of which, if not managed properly, can lead to problems. Small problems can grow into large conflicts, and conflict management is required to anticipate and resolve them (Tjabolo, 2017). Many conflicts in today's society are caused by intolerant attitudes toward certain groups or religions (Hanif, 2013). Religious conflict is one of the most common types of conflict in Indonesia. Some examples include religious conflicts in Poso, Madura, and conflicts between the Ahmadiyya and Muhammadiyah religious sects. Responding to this necessitates a religiously moderate attitude.

Moderate, as opposed to extreme, means not going overboard in addressing differences and diversity. The term "moderate" is derived from the Arabic word *al-washatiyyah*, which means "best" or "most perfect" (Akhmadi, 2019). Moderation can also be defined as fair, good, in the middle, or balanced (Hanafi, 2009). *Wasthiyah* (moderation) is defined by Yusuf al-Qardhawi as being in the middle between two extreme and opposing parties (Aziz, 2020). *Wasath* is the Arabic word for it, and it has a good meaning (Muhtarom, 2018), as previous scholars have stated:

خير الأمور أوسطها

The meaning : *“The best affairs are awsatuhuha (in the middle), because those in the middle are shielded from reproach or disgrace, which usually hits the ends or edges (Al-madani, n.d.).”*

Religious moderation can be defined as an attitude of promoting tolerance for differences. There are several characteristics related to moderate attitudes in understanding and practicing religion, namely i) understanding reality, which is based on that the dynamics of human life is always changing and developing, ii) understanding priority fiqh, in Islam commands and prohibitions are determined in a structured manner, which is under no can beat the position above, iii) understand the sunnatullah in creation, iv) make it easy for others in carrying out religious teachings, but still do not deviate from what has been stipulated in the Qur'an and hadith, v) understand texts comprehensively, not partial, and vi) open in opinion by promoting dialogue and tolerance (Hanafi, 2009).

In a country where Muslims constitute the majority of the population, this implies that religious moderation includes tolerance, respect for differences of opinion, recognition of the existence of other groups, and, of course, not imposing their will through violence (Sutrisno, 2019). Religious moderation includes, in addition to supporting gender equality rights, worship, respecting differences, and opposing forms of violence (Pratama, 2020). Moderate also refers to glorifying humanity, regardless of religion, ethnicity, nation, position, or social status (Imarah, 2006). Social conflict and violence will not occur in a multicultural society if moderation is properly applied.

To maintain balance and avoid conflicts between differences, religious moderation must be developed and understood collaboratively. Religious moderation is closely related to maintaining unity while responding to differences with tolerance (Akhmadi, 2019). It is hoped that by instilling religious moderation values, the community will be able to maintain an attitude of wisdom, tolerance, and avoid radicalism (Hiqmatunnisa & Zafi, 2020), thereby avoiding religious conflicts.

Religious conflict does not mean a conflict between religious teachings and the religious scriptures they embrace, but rather a conflict between adherents of different religions, because religion and scriptures should not teach their adherents to hate each other and kill people (Tjabolo, 2017), because religion and scriptures should not teach their adherents to hate each other and kill people.

As we know, one of the causes of religious conflicts in the past has been an exclusive paradigm of diversity and religiosity in society (Irwan & Khairudin, 2020), a lack of openness, the dissemination of information that is not always true (hoax), and conceptual differences between groups and adherents Both internal and external (Widiantara & Jaya, 2019), the use of inappropriate words or diction in accordance with social norms will invite the emergence of conflict (Fatih, 2019), these are some things automatically that we should be concerned about in order to prevent conflicts.

Religion teaches us to live in harmony, peace, help, and love one another despite the fact that we live in a world full of differences and multiplicity. The national philosophy is "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," which means "different but still one in the diversity that exists." Indonesia is a multicultural nation, which linguistically means a diverse range of cultures and local wisdom in a given area or society. A multicultural society is one that is made up of different types of culture (Arifin, 2012).

A multicultural society is defined as a community of people from various cultural backgrounds who live together (Lestari, 2017). This diversity has the potential to serve as a bridge in the resolution of religious conflicts. The role of local wisdom as a conflict resolution medium. i) Diversity and local wisdom are central to a society's or community's identity. This identity then demonstrates that the community has a culture of peace, which describes its self-image as a people who love peace; ii) Diversity and local wisdom are elements that connect religions, people, and beliefs; The existence of these various cross-interests is an effort to build peace and reduce the potential for greater conflict between crosses, (iii) Diversity and local wisdom as conflict resolution are able to invite all parties to negotiate by utilizing emotional and cultural closeness, iv) Diversity and local wisdom can encourage the building of

togetherness, appreciation, and minimize various possibilities that can lead to conflict (Haba, 2017), (Azeharie & Sari, 2020) Tolerance is another factor that can help to prevent and reduce conflicts. Tolerance founded on religion will transform a culture of conflict into a culture of peace (Nurhayati & Agustina, 2020).

The primary goal of conflict resolution in a multicultural society is to instill attitudes and values of sympathy, mutual respect, respect, and empathy among community members toward adherents of other religions and cultures in the environment or society. Conflict resolution is the act of unraveling, solving, removing, or removing a problem (Levine, 1998). Conflict resolution can also be defined as a problem-solving action (Weitzman & Weitzman, 2000) or as an attempt to deal with conflict and build good relationships between conflicting groups (Fisher, 2001).

According to some of these expert opinions, conflict resolution is an attempt to resolve problems or differences that arise between groups/communities through negotiation, compromise, and negotiation in a democratic, constructive, and fair manner. Religious leaders must play a role in conflict resolution. Religious leaders are prominent individuals with extensive religious knowledge and experience who serve as role models/role models in the community (Burhan, 2017). Religious leaders serve as religious broadcasters, spiritual leaders, God's trustees, community leaders, community guides, and truth enforcers (Hasyim, 2004).

The main tasks of religious leaders in society are as follows: i) Developing various thoughts as a reference for the people in living their daily lives, ii) Guiding, and being a reference in explaining the halal and haram things, iii) Being able to communicate well with the people, iv) Maintaining, preserving, and enforcing teachings in accordance with the demands and rules of religious teachings, v) Willing to defend and defend the rights (Eksan, 2000). In addition to the foregoing, religious leaders play a role in minimizing conflicts or clashes between groups of religious adherents of different faiths, because what religious leaders teach is usually easily accepted and believed by their people (Basuki & Isbandi, 2008).

The community also views religious leaders as playing a role in guiding, educating, counseling, motivating, and even serving as role models for their congregations (Zuhriah, 2020), and all of their attitudes and behavior, including how they deal with conflicts in society, are exemplary. When a conflict arises, public trust in religious leaders, including acting as a mediator (Sholeh, 2013), demonstrates that religious leaders play an important role, and their presence and opinions are respected in resolving conflicts.

Method

This research was conducted in Medan City, North Sumatra Province, Indonesia. The author chose Medan City as a research location because it has a very multicultural society in terms of ethnic and religious diversity. The author conducts the research using a qualitative method and a case study (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Yin, 2011; Murniyetti *et al.*, 2016; Engkizar *et al.*, 2018; Rahawarin *et al.*, 2020; Syafril *et al.*, 2021). Direct interviews were conducted with nine informants, who included five religious' leaders from Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, religious organizations, and government figures.

All of the above informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, while the selected informants had met four criteria, namely having a good understanding of the problems being studied, still active in the field being studied, having time to provide information to researchers, and providing information in accordance with the facts that occurred in the field. field (Sugiyono, 2014; Syafril & Yaumas, 2017; Amnda *et al.*, 2020; Eriyanti *et al.*, 2020; & Maputra *et al.*, 2020). All interview data were then analyzed thematically with the Miles and Huberman technique by conducting a transcription process, then the authors took themes that were in accordance with the research needs.

Findings and Discussions

A great nation is one that values diversity while maintaining unity. Indonesia is a large, multicultural country with thousands of islands, languages, races, cultures, and religions. If diversity is not managed properly, it will lead to conflicts, whether

between ethnic groups, religions, races, or specific groups. *Bhineka Tunggal Ika* is a slogan that later became the philosophy of this nation, diverse but still one within the framework of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. It is well known that multicultural societies are extremely vulnerable to what is known as conflict (Darlis, 2017).

Depending on how we handle conflict, it can have a positive or negative impact. The first root cause of conflict is communication that is ineffective, feels undervalued, and is not respected and appreciated, resulting in misunderstandings in responding to or responding to a problem, sometimes extending to differences in ethnicity, religion, race, social status, and class. If left unchecked and unmanaged, conflict will escalate and last for a long time. In the context of religious moderation, humans live in society in a moderate and tolerant manner, including tolerance for adherents of existing religions by not spreading slander or false news that is not necessarily true through digital media (hoax).

Hoaxes are no less dangerous than other crimes such as narcotics and pornography, which if left unchecked can cause conflict and harm the social welfare of the community (Nugraha, 2019). As a result, religious leaders act as dismounts and explain to the public the truth of the information circulating, particularly regarding religion, because hoaxes can cause provocation and hatred, which can lead to insulting and killing one another (Aminah & Sari, 2019).

To prevent this, religious organizations in Medan have an official website dedicated to the dissemination of religious information in Medan, with the goal of preventing and minimizing the occurrence of religious conflicts in the city. The author's research on multicultural communities in the city of Medan discovered the importance of religious leaders' roles as mediators and supervisors of religious moderation in the midst of a multi-religious, ethnic, racial, and cultural society, particularly in the current digital era, where communicating online is becoming increasingly popular. Without exception, all aspects of life use technology and online media in communicating, including religion (Kementerian Agama Republik

Indonesia, 2019), in an era where all information can be easily accessed and disseminated in seconds, with just one touch on the smartphone screen.

To keep track of everything, conflict resolution is required. Of course, religious leaders play an important role in religious moderation conflict management, one of which is acting as a mediator and supervisor in the dissemination of religious information in the digital era, an era in which almost all activities are carried out via the internet. Distance and time are no longer barriers to sharing information and communicating with one another; in fact, the study's findings show that 54.37 percent of the younger generation, such as students, learn religious knowledge from the internet, blogs, and websites (Syafuruddin & Ropi, 2018).

According to the data gathered by the researcher through interviews with six religious' leaders (Islam, Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) and one of Medan's city government representatives, the city of Medan has very few conflicts. Data from the city of Medan's Ministry of Religion, they are:

Table: 2. Description of community diversity by Population in Medan City

No	Districts	Total population						Total
		Islam	Protestan	Katolik	Hindu	Budha	Konghucu	
1	Medan Kota	57,062	13,443	9,075	3,592	6,323	12	89,507
2	Medan Timur	103,098	14,060	9,501	1,545	4,437	10	132,651
3	Medan Barat	68,987	23,875	5,718	3,979	3,387	10	105,956
4	Medan Baru	40,353	22,244	6,067	1,779	3,444	7	73,894
5	Medan Belawan	83,859	24,052	8,426	972	5,864	13	123,186
6	Medan Labuhan	118,323	36,258	3,093	1,675	4,227	11	163,587
7	Medan Deli	98,564	25,670	9,100	2,940	5,532	15	141,821
8	Medan Sunggal	107,986	17,819	8,632	2,747	3,226	12	140,422
9	Medan Tuntungan	37,496	30,316	10,491	352	805	12	79,472
10	Medan Denai	109,870	47,728	8,921	411	2,706	9	169,645

No	Districts	Total population						Total
		Islam	Protestan	Katolik	Hindu	Budha	Konghucu	
11	Medan Johor	107,567	24,639	8,508	216	2,052	6	142,988
12	Medan Amplas	98,462	25,120	10,067	1,458	3,476	7	138,590
13	Medan Tembung	108,678	27,099	15,100	1,846	5,279	12	158,014
14	Medan Helvetia	92,897	43,881	10,099	2,494	4,114	12	153,497
15	Medan Petisah	52,795	22,620	2,470	7,168	3,741	13	88,807
16	Medan Polonia	37,881	17,201	8,004	2,612	4,225	11	69,934
17	Medan Maimun	47,253	5,821	3,062	2,746	6,567	15	65,464
18	Medan Selayang	66,750	37,872	2,904	2,764	882	9	111,181
19	Medan Perjuangan	78,453	22,969	10,096	1,063	4,191	12	116,784
20	Medan Marelan	119,369	10,739	8,000	6,095	3,547	9	147,759
21	Medan Area	86,473	7,745	7,105	1,092	5,752	13	108,180
Total		1,722,176	501,171	164,439	49,546	83,777	230	2,521,339

Medan is a city with a diverse culture and ethnicity, in addition to being a city of various religions. According to the data obtained by the author, the Batak ethnic group has the highest percentage, followed by Javanese, Chinese, Minangkabau, Malay, Acehnese, and the remainder from Indian ethnicity, such as Tamils, at 2.95 percent, as shown in Table 3 below:

Table: 3. Description of ethnic diversity in Medan City

No	Ethnic	Percentage (%)
1	Batak	35,39
2	Jawa	33,03
3	Tionghoa	10,65
4	Minangkabau	8,60
5	Melayu	6,59
6	Aceh	2,79
7	Others	2,95
Total		100%

This is what makes Medan interesting and unique; as we all know, the city has a multicultural society in terms of religion, race, ethnicity, culture, and class, but the name conflict is minimal. The six religious leaders interviewed by the author all had the same answer when it came to the secret of religious moderation in Medan. Mutual respect, respect, and tolerance for followers of other religions, according to the six figures, is the key to harmonious religious moderation in a multicultural society in the city of Medan (Siagian *et al.*, 2021).

"When there are Islamic religious activities such as the Ira'Mi'raj or the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad SAW or other religious holidays, followers of other religions, such as Christians, help maintain security and order." "I'm going to run the event until it's over."

Another example would be:

"In the city of Medan, the Christian religious organization PGWI (Union of Indonesian Regional Churches) has a program to provide assistance in the form of business capital to underprivileged communities in order for them to open their own businesses, the profits of which can then be given to other parties." It also requires that it continue to roll on indefinitely, regardless of religion, ethnicity, location, ethnicity, or race."

In addition to the above, responding to the development of the digital era and its relationship to religious moderation today, several religious organizations in the city of Medan also take a role in monitoring (management) of the dissemination of information related to religious matters conveyed in the community of Medan city, so as not to cause hoaxes. or fake news through digital media platforms/applications, because as we all know distortions in communication are often a factor in conflicts,

information that is not guaranteed to be true, the use or difference of language that is not understood by the communicating parties and different speaking styles can sometimes be offensive. feelings of the interlocutor and ultimately trigger conflict (Tjabolo, et al., 2017; Rafles *et al.*, 2018; Auni & Hermanto, 2020; Azmi & Wardi, 2020; Rahawarin *et al.*, 2021).

Differences in language, culture and mindset in communicating indirectly can also cause conflict, so one way to prevent it is to communicate using the national language hirul, (Aakhirul, 2018). Now to minimize the spread of information that triggers religious conflicts or hate speech between religious adherents (Tjahyanti, 2020) in the city of Medan, religious organizations in the city of Medan have several platforms for disseminating information through digital media as shown in Table 4 below:

Tabel: 4. Description of community organizations and social media platforms used in Medan City

No	Community Organization	Social media used
1	MUI Kota Medan	Website, TV, youtube, facebook, instagram, zoom meeting
2	FKUB Kota Medan	Website, zoom meeting
3	PGIW Kota Medan	Youtube, facebook
4	Kemenag Kota Medan	Website, youtube, facebook, zoom meeting
5	Pemerintah kota Medan bidang Kesra	Website
6	Majelis Tinggi Agama Khonghucu Kota Medan	WhatsApps Group
7	Parisada Hindu Dharma Indonesia Wilayah Kota Medan	WhatsApps Group, zoom meeting
8	Perwakilan Umat Budha Indonesia Wilayah Kota Medan	WhatsApps Group, zoom meeting

Even though communication between religious leaders and the community changed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the intention and desire of the people of Medan to continue listening to religious studies delivered by religious leaders via

digital media remained strong. The use of digital social media as a means of religious moderation in the digital era is, of course, accompanied by existing religious leaders' supervisory function of conflict management. Another secret behind the lack of religious moderation conflict in the multicultural community of Medan is the city government's good conflict management with the principle of preventing conflict before it occurs, and if it occurs, handling it as much as possible by involving the security forces (TNI/Police). Religious leaders and community leaders, as well as the Medan city government, issued a perwal (mayor regulation) regarding religious moderation in Medan.

The above regulation is inextricably linked to the efforts and hard work of the Medan City Religious Harmony Forum (FKUB) in maintaining moderation and harmony of religious communities in the city of Medan, as a manifestation of FKUB's seriousness, hard work, and success in maintaining moderation and harmony of multicultural religious communities in Medan. In 2020, the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia presented appreciation in the form of a harmony award in the city of Medan. Furthermore, the Medan city government routinely provides a special budget for FKUB to hold activities that support, maintain, create, and supervise (manage) the moderation of harmony in a multicultural society in the city of Medan.

One of the FKUB's annual routine activities is a religious moderation dialogue attended by religious leaders and community leaders to maintain and create a harmonious, harmonious, and peaceful society in the city of Medan away from potential conflicts, which includes discussing the use of digital technology as a means of communication. To communicate and disseminate information or understandings related to religion managed by each religious organization in the city of Medan through religious leaders as key speakers or sources of information validity in the era 5.0 (digital era). Medan is one of the cities in Indonesia with the highest percentage of internet users. If used correctly, the internet will provide a more complete religious experience than television (Dawson & Cowan, 2004).

This shows that the people of Medan are open to social changes that become a way of life in the community. The phenomenon of society changing habits due to the internet or cyberculture is also used by religious leaders in the city of Medan as an opportunity to supervise and direct information communication in realizing religious harmony moderation in a multicultural society. The researcher interviewed Informant 2 as one of the Islamic religious leaders in the city of Medan, who is also the administrator of the Community Harmony Forum (FKUB) in the city of Medan, and said, "In today's digital era, messages related to religious tolerance, religious moderation, and religious harmony must be voiced through various social media, not just dialogue or seminars held face-to-face, this is necessary considering that most urban people M

The third informant from the Medan city MUI interviewed by the writer also argued,

"Religious leaders see the use of the internet and social media as having an influence on the spread of religious teachings, especially Islamic da'wah during the current covid-19 pandemic, the Medan city MUI itself uses the website, facebook, instagam, twitter and youtube to help the effectiveness of the delivery of Islamic teachings in in the midst of society, for example facebook, the MUI of Medan city uses a fanspage so that it can be followed by more people who are not only from the people of the city of Medan, but also from outside the region, there MUI will answer religious questions addressed to the MUI city of Medan , so that the public can get enlightenment or clear answers to questions addressed to the Medan city MUI".

Moderation and religious harmony in Medan are inextricably linked to the city government's full support. According to the findings of an interview with the Mayor of Medan, who was represented in the field of public welfare (4th Informant),

"Medan is a city with minimal inter-religious conflict; even if there is a potential for conflict, it usually occurs because of personal/social issues that are then drawn to religion, such as problems with the construction of houses of worship that have not received permits or problems changing the status of their residence to a migrant worker." Mediation is chosen as a solution for resolving existing conflicts, with religious leaders and security forces acting as third parties who help clarify and clarify the problems that occur to find the best solution that does not harm both parties (win-win solution)."

Furthermore, religious leaders play an important role in achieving inter-religious harmony; however, there are several challenges for religious leaders in achieving inter-religious harmony, including: i) Religious leaders must be responsive and wise in utilizing and utilizing technological developments. ii) Religious leaders must be wise in communicating and disseminating information related to religious teachings, iii) The community is not entirely prepared to face the challenges of the digital era, particularly in communicating and using social media, iv) The emergence of religious figures who do not fully understand religion, so that the information circulating cannot be confirmed, v) Lack of wisdom (Burhan, 2017), Especially in this day and age of virtual communication, all information is widely disseminated quickly, and anyone can produce information, disseminate it, and become a consumer of information from various existing platforms (Arung Triantoro, 2019), so be cautious and wise in consuming information exists, vi) Directing each religious adherent to prioritize group togetherness over personal interests (Iman, 2019).

In addition to the challenges above, there are also several obstacles in creating moderation harmony between religious communities, namely i) The greater the desire of a religious community to increase the number of adherents of their religion rather than improving the quality of religious people, ii) Socio-cultural conditions that are easily tampered with by community, so that harmony can still be achieved but the religion loses its meaning, function and meaning, iii) The will to build a house of worship regardless of the situation and condition of the number of adherents of the local religion so that it offends religious people, iv) Shifting the procedures for family life or mutual cooperation to individualistic life direction (Wirman, 2018).

Things like this then make it difficult to achieve harmony in religious moderation. Harmony in diversity should be the unanimous determination of all community members and religious leaders to realize it (Hakim, 2019) in the midst of a multicultural society in the city of Medan. Several efforts are made by religious leaders in creating religious moderation in a multicultural society, according to the author's interviews and observations with six religious' leaders in the city of Medan, including:

i) strengthening the basics of internal harmony between religious communities and the government, ii) building harmony social and national unity in the form of efforts to encourage and direct all religious communities to always live-in harmony within themselves. Creating a harmonious relationship by fostering and developing a sense of tolerance, solidarity, mutual respect among fellow believers, and preventing conflict before it occurs (if properly managed) are all important factors to consider when overcoming a conflict (Hendriks, 2001) Creating a conducive life for fostering internal harmony between religious communities, iv) Creating a community life that supports and tolerates each other in an inter-religious activity, helping each other in other religious activities such as Christianity, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam (Santoso, 2019), v) Provide socialization of love in inter-religious and social life, vi) Provide understanding to the community that differences in beliefs are a reality of life that can beautify the meaning of religious life, vii) Eliminate suspicion of adherents of other religions, viii) Make full efforts to instill spiritual values about divinity so that there are no deviations in social values and religious social values, because religious leaders must have consistency between social values and religious social values (W.Dewantara, 2019). ix) Making social media a positive forum for disseminating information about inter-religious harmony; and x) Encouraging the public to use social media wisely without involving SARA elements in every post made. Religious moderation combined with good conflict resolution will be able to manage the multicultural city of Medan in the midst of information development in the current digital era (Arifinsyah *et al.*, 2020).

Conclusion

The use of the internet in an effort to realize the harmony of religious moderation, particularly in the multicultural community of Medan City, is a must in the digital era 5.0, especially during the current covid-19 pandemic. The challenges of spreading hoax news among people whose truth is unknown, content that spreads propaganda causing chaos, and easy access to pornographic and action porn content will almost certainly lead to conflict if not managed with conflict resolution and the

assistance of religious leaders who are the main actors in it. Conflict management was chosen as a method of dealing with conflict that leads to conflict resolution through communication channels and persuades interested parties to cooperate in reconciling conflict situations.

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