

Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities

Submission date: 15-Jan-2026 10:04AM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 2857075116

File name:

Tes_Akhir_3_Exploring_the_Challenges_and_Opportunities_of_Religious_Moderation_Policies_in_Islamic_Education.docx
(4.07M)

Word count: 5351

Character count: 33441

Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities of Religious Moderation Policies in Islamic Education

ABSTRACT: This study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak, Indonesia, in relation to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, SDG 5, and SDG 10. This research is important for understanding the contribution of religious moderation in fostering an inclusive and peaceful society. A qualitative approach was employed through a case study in Pontianak, using in-depth interviews and field observations. Data were collected from religious figures, community leaders, and members of society from various religious and ethnic backgrounds, and were analysed thematically. The findings indicate that the main challenges include the politicisation of policies and conservative groups that view religious moderation merely as passive tolerance. Opportunities are driven by high acceptance among youth and academics, which strengthens social capital. A significant impact is found in the field of education, where initiatives for integrating religious moderation have reinforced tolerance and inclusivity. Public acceptance varies, showing critical interpretational gaps. This study is limited to Pontianak and may not fully represent the situation across Indonesia. The limitations of data and observation time also affected the depth of analysis. This research provides an important contribution to the development of more inclusive and contextual religious moderation policies in Indonesia, with opportunities for further research in other regions with different social conditions.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi tantangan dan peluang dalam penerapan kebijakan moderasi beragama di Pontianak, Indonesia, terkait dengan pencapaian Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), khususnya SDG 4, SDG 5, dan SDG 10. Penelitian ini penting untuk memahami kontribusi moderasi beragama dalam menciptakan masyarakat yang inklusif dan damai. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan melalui studi kasus di Pontianak dengan metode wawancara mendalam dan observasi lapangan. Data dikumpulkan dari tokoh agama, pemimpin masyarakat, serta masyarakat dari berbagai latar belakang agama dan etnis, dan dianalisis secara tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan tantangan utama meliputi politisasi kebijakan dan kelompok konservatif yang memandang MB hanya sebagai toleransi pasif. Peluang didorong oleh penerimaan tinggi dari pemuda dan akademisi, yang memperkuat modal sosial. Dampak signifikan terdapat di bidang pendidikan, di mana inisiatif integrasi moderasi beragama memperkuat toleransi dan inklusivitas. Penerimaan publik bervariasi, menunjukkan kesenjangan interpretasi yang kritis. Penelitian ini terbatas pada Pontianak dan mungkin tidak sepenuhnya representatif untuk seluruh Indonesia. Keterbatasan data dan waktu observasi juga mempengaruhi kedalaman analisis. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting untuk pengembangan kebijakan moderasi

beragama yang lebih inklusif dan kontekstual di Indonesia, dengan membuka peluang untuk penelitian lebih lanjut di daerah lain dengan kondisi sosial yang berbeda.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Religious Pluralism, Quality Education, Gender Equality.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has become a global agenda focused on achieving inclusive and equitable economic, social, and environmental progress (Nations, 2023). In the context of Indonesia, a country known for its diversity in religion, culture, and ethnicity, the challenges in achieving these goals have become increasingly complex (Wardati et al., 2023). Indonesia holds tremendous potential for creating a more inclusive society; however, social tensions and conflicts between groups often arise, many of which are rooted in religious differences. Among the 17 SDGs, Goal 4 (Quality Education), Goal 5 (Gender Equality), and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality) are closely linked to the implementation of religious moderation policies, which play a crucial role in fostering a just and peaceful society. Through religious moderation, it is hoped that tensions between social groups can be mitigated, and interfaith relations can be strengthened within the context of religious pluralism (Saifuddin, 2019).

Globally, many countries face significant challenges in creating social stability and harmony among religions. For instance, the 2020 Global Peace Index report reveals that countries with high levels of religious pluralism often experience social tensions rooted in religious differences. In Indonesia, despite the extraordinary potential for interfaith harmony, there are still significant tensions and social conflicts involving religious factors (Rohman, 2021). Therefore, religious moderation is a highly relevant and necessary approach. Religious moderation is not only about tolerance but also about managing differences constructively, promoting mutual respect, and preserving diversity. This approach is crucial for achieving the SDGs, which emphasise community empowerment and improving the quality of life.

However, the implementation of religious moderation policies in Indonesia faces several challenges. As a concept, religious moderation is often misunderstood or accepted only partially by various groups (Latifa et al., 2022). Some factors that hinder the implementation of these policies include religious radicalisation, the politicisation of religion, and inequalities in resource distribution that affect interfaith relations (Sagap et al., 2023). Moreover, a narrow understanding of religious moderation often poses a barrier to broader policy implementation (Cholil, 2023). Therefore, there is a need for more in-depth studies to understand the challenges and opportunities in implementing religious moderation policies in Indonesia, adopting a more holistic and contextual approach, supported by concrete data.

The challenges in implementing religious moderation policies are not only limited to managing conflicts between religious groups but also involve the acceptance of these policies by communities, which often have varying views and understandings of religion and religious practices (Syawaludin & Fikri, 2024). For example, some more conservative groups may view these policies as a threat to their traditional values, while others see them as an important step toward maintaining social peace. This creates social

dynamics that influence the extent to which the policy can be accepted and implemented broadly. Nonetheless, the opportunities provided by this policy are vast, particularly in education, women's empowerment, and reducing inequalities. For instance, through the application of religious moderation, education can emphasise the values of tolerance, empathy, and respect for differences, which, in turn, can strengthen the commitment to sustainable development and foster a just and peaceful society.

This research begins with preliminary observations conducted in Pontianak, a city with a distinctive social and cultural background, especially in terms of religious and ethnic diversity. Pontianak, the capital of West Kalimantan Province, is a highly representative city in the context of Indonesia's religious pluralism. Here, Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, and other religious groups live together relatively harmoniously, although not without challenges (Safithri et al., 2022). In the initial observation, it was identified that the people of Pontianak tend to have a high level of tolerance towards religious differences, yet there are still segments of the population vulnerable to polarisation and potential conflict due to differing beliefs.

The importance of religious moderation as part of government policy is strongly felt in Pontianak. This is reflected in the support from the Head of the West Kalimantan Ministry of Religious Affairs for the Ministry's religious moderation programs aimed at fostering a tolerant and harmonious society. Additionally, one of the Islamic universities in Pontianak, IAIN Pontianak, has urged its community to become moderate Muslims, understanding and practising religious moderation. However, the people of Pontianak have shown varied reactions to the religious moderation policies launched by the central government, both optimistic and sceptical. Some conservative groups view this policy as a challenge to their traditional values, while others see it as an important effort to maintain social peace amidst the existing diversity. On the other hand, religious moderation-based educational initiatives are increasingly found in schools and higher education institutions in Pontianak, providing an important platform for educating the younger generation about the importance of tolerance and respect for differences.

This policy has also begun to attract significant attention among religious leaders and local community leaders. Informal meetings with several religious leaders have revealed diverse views regarding the implementation of this policy within their respective religious communities. Some religious leaders fully support the policy, while others believe that it should be implemented carefully to avoid offending their religious teachings. Additionally, issues such as social inequality, economic disparities, and education-related challenges, which remain prevalent in some regions, are linked to the implementation of religious moderation policies.

This initial observation provides a clear understanding of the importance of this study to explore the challenges and opportunities, as well as to analyse how religious moderation policies can contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals in Pontianak. The diversity in this city, in terms of religion, culture, and socio-economic status, makes it a highly relevant location for this study, with the potential to provide broader insights into religious moderation policies across Indonesia.

This study will focus on the challenges and opportunities faced in implementing religious moderation policies in the social and cultural context of multicultural Indonesia, with a particular emphasis on how these policies directly relate to the achievement of SDGs, especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). The study will be limited to the concept of religious

moderation that relates to tolerance, mutual respect, and managing religious differences in everyday social life. The focus of this study is on the application of policies that aim to create a more inclusive and just society, which can support the achievement of sustainable development goals.

II. METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative approach to examine the challenges and opportunities in the implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak, Indonesia. A case study methodology was selected, as it is particularly effective for exploring complex and context-specific phenomena in multicultural and religiously diverse settings. The focus of this research is on understanding how religious moderation policies are perceived and implemented in Pontianak, with particular attention to their alignment with the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequality).

To gather data, this study employed two primary methods: in-depth interviews and field observations. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants, including religious leaders, community leaders, educators, and local government officials. These individuals were chosen due to their influential roles in shaping or being affected by religious moderation policies in Pontianak. The aim of these interviews was to capture their perspectives on the implementation of these policies, exploring both the challenges they face and the opportunities they perceive for promoting interfaith harmony and social inclusion.

Field observations complemented the interviews by providing insights into the everyday practice of religious moderation in the community. Observations were conducted at various sites in Pontianak, such as religious institutions, schools, and community centres. This allowed for a direct understanding of how religious moderation is reflected in social interactions and in the implementation of educational and community-based programs that promote tolerance and inclusivity.

The data collected from both interviews and field observations were analysed using thematic analysis, following the guidelines outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is particularly suited for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data. The first step in the analysis involved transcribing the interview data and familiarising myself with the content. Key points and recurring themes were identified, allowing for the development of a coding framework. This framework was informed by the research questions and issues that emerged during the data collection process.

The next stage involved applying the coding framework to the data, with each significant statement, action, or interaction related to the implementation of religious moderation being coded. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that reflected the key challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of religious moderation policies. Themes such as religious tolerance, community integration, education, gender equality, and social inequality were identified as central to understanding the role of religious moderation in achieving the SDGs.

Finally, the themes were interpreted within the context of the SDGs, particularly focusing on their implications for fostering a more inclusive and peaceful society through religious moderation. The findings were compared with existing literature on

religious moderation and SDG implementation to situate this study within broader academic discussions.

Pontianak, as the capital of West Kalimantan, was chosen as the research site due to its religious and ethnic diversity. The city is home to a range of religious communities, including Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, and others, making it an ideal setting to examine the dynamics of religious moderation. This diversity provides a rich context for understanding how religious moderation policies are implemented and how they can contribute to achieving social harmony and the SDGs.

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights, they are specific to Pontianak and may not fully represent other regions of Indonesia, which have different religious and cultural contexts. The study is also limited by the scope of data collection, which was conducted within a relatively short time frame, influencing the depth of the analysis.

Ethically, the study adhered to established guidelines for qualitative research. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the study's purpose and their right to confidentiality. Participants were assured that their responses would be kept confidential and used solely for research purposes.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Faced in Implementing ⁵ Religious Moderation Policies

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak, a city with a dynamic multi-religious community, faces various complex challenges that require in-depth analysis. Issues such as misinformation, deep-rooted prejudices, and the potential for political manipulation often cloud the atmosphere, hindering constructive dialogue between religious communities (Simarmata et al., 2024). Additionally, instilling an inclusive and tolerant understanding of religion is crucial in addressing the challenges of harmony in urban areas with high levels of diversity (Munawiroh et al., 2025). Although acceptance of religious and cultural diversity is high, this does not always correlate with a lower potential for conflict, indicating the need for more focused moderation strategies (Mazya et al., 2024).

The religious moderation approach in Islam, known as *wasathiyah*, emphasises the principles of justice, balance, and tolerance, offering a strong theological foundation for strengthening unity and preventing radicalism in a diverse society (Rahmadani et al., 2025). However, challenges in implementing religious moderation in Indonesia, including Pontianak, often arise from a lack of comprehensive understanding and diverse interpretations of the concept of moderation itself, which requires a holistic and inclusive approach in practising religious teachings (Saumantri & Hajam, 2023; Walad et al., 2024). The absence of a consensus on the definition and interpretation of religious moderation, coupled with different backgrounds and experiences, can trigger doubts and misunderstandings among the community, especially for those who are new to adapting to a new religious identity (Zakiyah et al., 2023).

This challenge is exacerbated by the implementation of hierarchical policies and a lack of clarity in understanding among the public, which has the potential to lead to labelling and obscure the essence of religious moderation itself (Jati & Bachtiar, 2024). Therefore, systematic efforts are needed to socialise and internalise the values of religious moderation evenly, avoiding ambiguities in interpretation that can hinder

program implementation (Ikhwan et al., 2023; Wiguna & Andari, 2023). Strengthening the capacity of educational actors and community leaders is essential to effectively campaign for the values of moderation, fostering a character that is accommodating to the existence of different groups.

This campaign for religious moderation aims to respond to various acts of intolerance between religious communities that often occur in Indonesia. The spread of extremism among high school and university students highlights the urgency of disseminating the values of religious moderation as a strategic step toward creating a more inclusive and harmonious Indonesia (Arimatea & Sukarna, 2024; Zakiyah et al., 2023). However, challenges in accepting the concept of religious moderation itself persist, where some people misinterpret it as a mixing of religious rituals or consider it leading to liberalism, thus causing reluctance to accept this government initiative. This requires the government and stakeholders to formulate more effective communication strategies, emphasising that religious moderation is a middle ground to overcome conflict and extremism in religious practice, not an attempt at syncretism (Farida & Sukraini, 2021).

Efforts to implement religious moderation as a national program by the Ministry of Religious Affairs have even been realised through the establishment of Religious Moderation Houses in various State Islamic Religious Universities (Afwadzi, 2023). This step aims to strengthen the role of higher education institutions in socialising and internalising the values of religious moderation among the academic community and the wider public (al-Fikri et al., 2020). However, significant challenges arise in transforming the concept of religious moderation from the policy level to actual practice on the ground, especially in the context of education, which is often still stuck in a conceptual approach rather than contextual implementation (Chotimah et al., 2025). This highlights the need to develop innovative and relevant pedagogical strategies that can effectively translate the principles of religious moderation into the curriculum and extracurricular activities, thereby shaping students' characters to be tolerant and respectful of diversity (Albana, 2023).

In addition, it is important to involve local communities and religious organisations in the formulation and implementation of religious moderation programs to ensure they are relevant to the specific needs of Pontianak's diverse society (Kaur & Puspitasari, 2024). Research has shown that religious moderation can serve as a unifying force for the nation, overcoming ideologies that spread conflict (Anzaikhan et al., 2023). His concept encompasses views, attitudes, and behaviours that align with inter- and intra-religious tolerance, as well as maintaining the unity of the Republic of Indonesia (Damopolii et al., 2024). The application of religious moderation is not only a campaign for the public sphere but is also crucial in educational institutions, especially to overcome intolerant attitudes and realise multicultural education. Therefore, it is necessary to systematically integrate religious moderation into formal and non-formal education curricula, given its crucial role in shaping inclusive attitudes among students (Lie, 2024; Wahid, 2024).

Educational institutions, including universities, play an important role in spreading the values of religious moderation through curricula and religious activities, forming a balanced theoretical, practical, and ideological understanding (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Various Islamic universities in Indonesia have implemented policies that integrate religious moderation through socialisation, lecturer training, and making religious moderation material a criterion for student entrance tests and a theme for Real Work

Lectures (Aslati et al., 2022). However, this integration is often sporadic and has not become an integral part of all academic aspects. Hence, its effectiveness in shaping the moderate character of students still requires further evaluation (Mukhibat et al., 2024). Studies show that the implementation of religious moderation at various levels of educational institutions has been carried out, although these efforts have not yet been explicitly realised in shaping the character of religious moderation in students (Mahpur et al., 2023).

These obstacles are often caused by complex regulations, resistance from local communities, and a lack of support from local governments, all of which hinder the practice of religious freedom and social justice (Girivirya, 2023; Muchtar et al., 2022). The importance of multi-sectoral support, including from local governments, educational institutions, and community leaders, is crucial in overcoming this resistance and ensuring the successful implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak (Al Qolbi, 2019). Additionally, the concept of religious tolerance, which is one of the indicators of religious moderation, is often misinterpreted as an attitude that goes beyond the limits of specific religious laws, thereby triggering rejection among conservative groups (Putri & Witro, 2022). The implication of this rejection is the emergence of challenges in harmonising the interpretation of religious moderation with a rigid doctrinal framework, which ultimately complicates efforts to achieve consensus in a pluralistic society such as Pontianak.

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak faces various challenges that affect its effectiveness in creating an inclusive and harmonious society. Despite a high level of awareness of the importance of religious moderation, various obstacles such as religious radicalisation, social inequality, and differences in understanding remain significant barriers. Therefore, a more comprehensive and systematic approach to socialising and internalising the values of religious moderation is urgently needed.

Moreover, it is important to develop more effective communication strategies, avoid misunderstandings about the concept of moderation, and strengthen the capacity of educational actors and community leaders. The success of this policy's implementation depends not only on government policy but also on the active involvement of the community, educational institutions, and religious organisations that have a strategic role in creating a tolerant and inclusive society.

Therefore, to overcome these challenges, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community is needed to create religious moderation policies that are contextual and relevant to the needs of the Pontianak community. Only with an inclusive, integrated, and adaptive approach can religious moderation make a significant contribution to creating social harmony and supporting the achievement of sustainable development goals in Indonesia, especially in Pontianak.

Opportunities to Leverage Religious Moderation Policies

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak holds significant potential to foster social harmony and support the achievement of sustainable development goals. One of the main opportunities lies in the integration of religious moderation into education, which can provide a solid foundation for building a cohesive society that is adaptable to the dynamics of globalisation. This approach integrates values of tolerance, national commitment, anti-violence, and accommodation of local

cultures, all of which are crucial for inclusive development amidst Pontianak's diverse society (Ikhwan et al., 2023; Rahmadani et al., 2025).

Religious moderation not only plays a role in maintaining harmony among religious communities, but it also contributes to the development of a more cohesive society, overcoming polarisation and reducing radicalisation. This is increasingly relevant in Pontianak, a city characterised by cultural interactions and language crossovers, as well as the role of education in shaping the region's new identity (Ruslan, 2024). The implementation of religious moderation within the education curriculum, especially in Islamic education, can be a strategic step in raising students' awareness about the dangers of intolerance and extremism, while also strengthening the profile of Pancasila-based students (Azis, 2024).

Moreover, a holistic approach and collaborative learning that emphasises contextual problem-solving will shape students' characters to be wise, critical, and creative. This character development aligns with the internalisation of religious moderation within education, which is relevant to both religious and Pancasila values. It helps create individuals who are not only tolerant but also committed to national values and respect differences (Bahar, 2022; Ramadhani & Setyoningrum, 2023).

Religious moderation education also has the potential to create an inclusive learning environment, where interfaith dialogue is encouraged, and the importance of tolerance is emphasised. Religious moderation education, particularly in the context of Islamic religious education, plays a key role in realising multicultural education that prioritises tolerance and good character (Wahid, 2024). It also serves as an effective means of combating extremism through inclusive Islamic education, teaching the importance of recognising others, tolerance, and respect for differences without coercion (Mughtar et al., 2022).

Furthermore, integrating religious moderation education in educational institutions, such as Islamic boarding schools, offers significant opportunities to implement more inclusive educational practices. Interfaith dialogue programs and discussions about religious diversity in these institutions can foster a more balanced approach to tolerance and reduce intolerance (Thoyib et al., 2024). A pluralistic approach to religion in education is an important strategy for strengthening interfaith harmony and building a more inclusive and harmonious society (Walad et al., 2024).

Religious moderation education not only shapes students' characters to be tolerant and respectful of diversity but also instils a commitment to Pancasila ideology and rejects the use of violence in religious conflicts. As demonstrated by the views of new religious adherents on religious moderation (Zakiyah et al., 2023), this education has the potential to produce individuals who are committed to national values and who introduce a moderate, tolerant, and friendly Islam (Al Qolbi, 2019).

Additionally, the development of an inclusive curriculum at Islamic boarding schools can serve as an effective model for instilling an understanding of nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local cultures (Suwendi et al., 2023). This curriculum is a relevant means of shaping a generation that is ready to actively contribute to creating an inclusive and tolerant society that respects religious and cultural diversity (Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

In addition to formal education, it is also important to involve community service programs that engage students in promoting the values of religious moderation to the

broader public. This approach can strengthen an inclusive and harmonious religious ecosystem in the Pontianak community (Sudiono & Madkur, 2019).

By leveraging these opportunities, religious moderation education can be a strategic step in creating a more inclusive and equitable society, as well as supporting the achievement of SDGs in Pontianak and Indonesia as a whole.

The Policy of Religious Moderation Has Been Accepted by Communities from Various Religious Backgrounds

Pontianak, as a city characterised by religious and ethnic diversity, faces unique challenges in implementing religious moderation policies. However, these policies have significant potential to foster a harmonious, inclusive, and prosperous society. In this context, religious moderation can play a crucial role in supporting the achievement of three key SDGs: Quality Education (Goal 4), Gender Equality (Goal 5), and Reduced Inequalities (Goal 10). By promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and effective management of differences, religious moderation policies provide a solid foundation for realising these goals, particularly in a diverse society such as that of Pontianak.

The implementation of religious moderation in Pontianak can be analysed through a framework that includes commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture, which are aligned with the principles essential to the multi-religious context of the city. The concept of religious moderation is rooted in the principles of justice, balance, and tolerance, primarily derived from Islamic teachings, particularly the principle of *wasathiyah* (Rahmadani et al., 2025).

1. Impact on Quality Education (SDG 4)

Quality education is one of the main pillars of sustainable development, and religious moderation policies can make a significant contribution to realising inclusive and quality education in Pontianak. By integrating the values of religious moderation into educational curricula at all levels—from elementary to higher education—a generation can be formed that is tolerant, open-minded, and respectful of religious and cultural diversity. This approach goes beyond merely teaching theories about tolerance and moderation; it also emphasises the practical application of peaceful coexistence in diversity.

Inclusive religious education through the value of moderation equips students with the ability to understand, respect, and accept differences in belief. Thus, quality education does not only encompass academic aspects, but also focuses on character-building, grounded in a deep understanding of the importance of harmony and mutual respect. Through teachings that highlight balance, inclusiveness, and tolerance, Islamic educational institutions can shape moderate religious behaviours that positively influence society (Al Qolbi, 2019).

2. Impact on Gender Equality (SDG 5)

Religious moderation policies also play a pivotal role in advancing gender equality. Inclusive religious moderation is not just about fostering interfaith relations but also about empowering women and recognising their rights. In many societies, including Indonesia, conservative and exclusive religious interpretations often restrict women's roles in social, political, and economic spheres. Religious moderation offers an avenue to deconstruct these patriarchal views that are often justified using religious arguments.

By emphasising the values of justice, balance, and managing differences, religious moderation can alter social narratives that confine women's roles, particularly in patriarchal cultures like those in Pontianak. The integration of religious moderation into education and interfaith dialogue can broaden the understanding of gender equality, which will reduce gender inequality and strengthen women's empowerment. Increased understanding of gender equality within the framework of religious moderation allows women to play a more active role in education, the economy, and politics, in line with SDG 5.

Religious moderation offers a space to challenge the gendered roles prescribed by some interpretations of religion, fostering a society where women are empowered to contribute to every aspect of social life. The transformation of gender relations through religious moderation in education can lead to significant changes in societal attitudes towards women's rights and their active participation in public life (Azis, 2024).

3. Impact on Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10)

The principles of balance and justice promoted by religious moderation, such as *tawasuth*, *tawazun*, and *tasamuh*, can also serve as the basis for more inclusive and equitable policies in the distribution of resources. These principles are particularly relevant in addressing social and economic inequality, a persistent issue in Pontianak, despite its reputation for high interreligious tolerance.

The main challenge lies in how religious moderation policies can support efforts to reduce inequality, particularly among marginalised religious and ethnic groups. Religious moderation can reduce inequality by shifting social paradigms that have long viewed certain groups as inferior. In Pontianak, education based on religious moderation can instil values of social justice and recognition of the rights of every individual, regardless of their religious background or economic status, thus aligning with sustainable development goals that emphasise gender inclusion and women's empowerment.

Furthermore, religious moderation helps break down the social barriers separating religious and ethnic groups, which often contribute to social inequality. By facilitating constructive interfaith dialogue, these policies open opportunities for marginalised groups to gain better access to education, health services, and employment opportunities, thus helping to reduce existing disparities. Moderate and inclusive religious education, as emphasised in Islamic teachings, is crucial in eradicating extremism and promoting values such as *tawazun*, *i'tidal*, and *tasamuh* (Mughtar et al., 2022). These principles emphasise fairness, balance, and tolerance towards differences, which contribute to reducing social tensions and creating a more inclusive society.

Thus, religious moderation policies in Pontianak can encourage more equitable distribution of opportunities and resources—key factors in achieving SDGs related to poverty reduction and inequality (Zakiyah et al., 2023). By fostering an environment where diversity is seen as a strength, religious moderation supports efforts to reduce inequality and contributes to building a more just and equitable society.

Despite the potential benefits, the implementation of religious moderation policies faces several challenges. One of the key obstacles is the persistence of narrow religious views held by some groups, which can hinder the creation of an inclusive society. Additionally, high levels of economic inequality in specific segments of society can

exacerbate existing social disparities, making it harder to achieve the goals of religious moderation.

To overcome these challenges, a comprehensive approach is necessary. This includes not only government action but also the active involvement of educational institutions, community leaders, and religious organisations. By strengthening collaborative efforts, promoting more inclusive curricula, and engaging in interfaith dialogue, religious moderation can help bridge divides and contribute to a more peaceful and equitable society in Pontianak.

The implementation of religious moderation policies in Pontianak has profound implications for quality education, gender equality, and reducing inequalities in the city. By integrating these values into education and community engagement, Pontianak can foster a society that is more tolerant, inclusive, and respectful of diversity. However, the success of these policies will depend on continuous efforts to educate, engage, and collaborate across all sectors of society. Only through a sustained and inclusive approach can religious moderation contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the SDGs in Pontianak and Indonesia as a whole.

IV. CONCLUSION

The implementation of the Religious Moderation (RM) policy in Pontianak demonstrates significant positive impacts on education, gender equality, and social cohesion. The integration of tolerance and respect for diversity into educational curricula fosters a more inclusive learning environment, reduces the risk of faith-based conflict, and supports students' academic and social development. In addition, RM promotes gender justice by embedding values of non-discrimination and balance, thereby expanding women's access to education, employment, and political participation while gradually challenging traditional gender constraints. Furthermore, RM contributes to reducing social and economic inequalities by mitigating ethnic and religious discrimination and promoting dialogue, tolerance, and social solidarity. These principles enable more equitable access to public resources and economic opportunities for marginalised groups, aligning with SDG 10 on reducing inequality. Despite these achievements, challenges such as ideological resistance and persistent economic disparities remain, highlighting the need for sustained cross-sectoral collaboration and continuous monitoring. Overall, RM in Pontianak represents an effective model of evidence-based policy that supports inclusive and sustainable development.

V. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the informants who generously shared their time, insights, and experiences, making this research possible. I am also profoundly thankful to the Institute for Research and Community Service (*Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat/LP2M*) of IAIN Pontianak for their invaluable support in facilitating the research process and providing the necessary resources. Their guidance and assistance were crucial in ensuring the smooth execution of this study. Without the collaboration of these individuals and institutions, this research would not have been successful.

VI. REFERENCES

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