



Moderate Islam and its Implementation among Indonesian Migrant Workers: A Case Study of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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Abstract

Religious moderation is a movement that embodies important commitments to maintaining harmonious interfaith relations. The implementation of moderate Islam refers to applying Islam in a balanced manner, neither extreme nor liberal. This study aims to explore religious life, particularly among the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh Cholil in Malaysia, and how they implement moderate Islam. Most of the congregation members are Indonesian migrant workers (PMI) who have lived in Malaysia for a long time and established the surau as a center for religious activities. This study is descriptive qualitative research that describes the conditions at the location according to the reality on the ground. The study found that the congregation of Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque has implemented moderate Islam, as evidenced by four indicators of religious moderation: first, national commitment. The congregation still has a strong sense of patriotism despite having lived in Malaysia for a long time, as evidenced by their continued celebration of Indonesian Independence Day and their love for Indonesian domestic products. Second is tolerance, as the congregation members respect others of different ethnicities and religions. Third, anti-violence, which is reflected in their attitudes and teaching methods that prioritize wisdom and avoid violent behavior, whether verbal or physical. Fourth, adaptability to local culture: the congregation continues to observe Islamic holidays such as Maulid Nabi and participates in local traditions such as distributing food according to local customs.

Keywords: *Surau Syaichona Cholil Malaysia, PMI Malaysia, moderation, tolerance, religious moderation.*

Introduction

Moderation is a fundamental principle in maintaining religious harmony, especially amid the dynamics of a diverse society. In Indonesia, religious moderation is one of the government's strategic priorities to prevent the spread of extremist and radical ideologies that could undermine national unity. The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia has identified four key indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, opposition to violence, and acceptance of local traditions or cultures that do not conflict with religious values (Compilation Team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

National commitment refers to upholding the values of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI). Tolerance includes respecting others' differences in beliefs, views, and religious practices. Anti-violence emphasizes the rejection of all forms of violence in the name of religion, whether physical or verbal. Meanwhile, acceptance of local traditions encourages an open attitude toward cultural diversity, provided it does not conflict with the core teachings of religion (Compilation Team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

In the context of Indonesian migrant workers' lives abroad, particularly in Malaysia, the implementation of moderate Islam has become increasingly relevant. Malaysia is one of the leading destinations for Indonesian migrant workers, with a significant number working in the formal and informal sectors (Arisman, A., & Jaya, 2020). Amid their often stressful and

constrained lives, upholding moderate Islamic values becomes more complex. This is further compounded by the fact that migrant workers usually live in highly diverse environments, both in terms of religion, culture, and ethnicity (Monica, 2024).

Malaysia is one of the most popular destinations for migrant workers. In fact, it is the country with the largest number of Indonesian migrant workers in the world. History records that the migration of Indonesian people to this neighboring country has been ongoing for a long time, with various patterns of movement or migration. Diverse ethnic groups and communities in Indonesia are represented in Malaysia. Among them are the Bugis, Malay, Minangkabau, Javanese, Madurese, Acehnese, Mandailing, Batak, Banjar, and others (Sari, 2020). Based on the researcher's initial observations up to the end of 2024, data from the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur in 2024 shows that there are more than 63 associations established based on ethnicity, regional origin, and religion (Shohenuddin, Staff of the Cultural and Education Section of the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, 2024).

Diversity can be an integrating force that binds society together but can also cause friction between cultures, races, ethnic groups, and religions with their respective values. Cultural diversity is a natural phenomenon resulting from the convergence of various cultures and their interaction, not only among communities but also among various institutions (Saputri, R. A, 2023).

The Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is a center for Islamic religious activities and where Indonesian migrant workers gather. This mosque serves as a place of worship and a venue for religious, social, and cultural development. As a center for these activities, the mosque plays an important role in shaping its congregation's religious attitudes and behavior, including instilling moderate Islamic values.

However, the implementation of moderate Islam in religious activities at this mosque still requires in-depth study. Several key questions arise, such as how the programs implemented can instill a sense of national commitment in migrant workers far from their homeland. Additionally, the attitude of tolerance toward religious differences among the congregation, particularly in the context of diverse schools of thought or denominations, presents a challenge that must be addressed. It is also important to assess systematic efforts to instill an anti-violence stance in response to differing viewpoints, while preserving Indonesia's rich and diverse local traditions amidst their lives abroad. All of this indicates that the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, has excellent potential to become a model for implementing moderate Islam that is relevant and contextual for Indonesian migrant workers.

The Qur'an has mentioned moderate Islam as the middle path, as reflected in the Prophet Muhammad's attitude when facing critical and sensitive issues, so the Prophet did not act hastily. The Prophet always took the middle path, often interpreted as consultation. Similarly, moderate Islam values the preservation of traditions while striving to adapt to the demands of the modern era today (Anzaikhan, 2022).

This study aims to explore the implementation of moderate Islam at Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, focuses on the religious dynamics of Indonesian migrant workers. It is important to understand that moderate Islamic values are not limited to the religious sphere but rather represent a way of life that encompasses spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. Thus, it is hoped that this study will contribute academically to understanding the application of moderate Islam within the Indonesian migrant community, while offering practical recommendations for strengthening moderate Islamic values within the multicultural lives of migrant workers.

This also aligns with the expression *ummat wasatan* in Surah Al-Baqarah: 143, which means not leaning to the right or left (choosing the middle path) (Ma'arif, 2021). Imam Al-Ghazali emphasized the principle of *wasatiyah* as the foundation of a moderate religious life. According to him, extremism, fanaticism, and materialism can destroy individuals' and

society's spiritual and moral balance (Pahri, 2024). Nature will not benefit humans without balance because the two are interrelated. Therefore, wasatiah is in accordance with human nature (M. Q. Shihab, 2019).

Literature review

Research on moderate Islam was conducted by Sharifah Umairah Syed Mustaffa and Abdul Muein Abadi from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia in a study entitled *The Development of the Concept of Moderate Islam and Its Implications for the Legitimacy of the Emirate of the United Arab Emirates (UAE)*. This research aims to uncover the history and factors that have driven the development of moderate Islam in the UAE. The researchers put forward the initial hypothesis that the UAE government takes three main approaches in shaping the concept of Islam: harsh measures against Islamist groups, control of religious institutions, and promoting a narrative of simplicity through various domestic and international platforms. Additionally, the government supports opposing currents, such as Neo-traditionalism and Anti-traditionalism, but both share a commonality in supporting the separation of religion from political interference. Therefore, this study seeks to analyze the concept of Moderate Islam in the UAE and its impact on the legitimacy of the monarchical regime in the country (Mustaffa, S. U. S., & Abadi, 2024).

A study on moderate Islam was also conducted by Mansoureh Ebrahimi and her team from the Academy of Islamic Civilization at the University of Technology Malaysia, who researched moderation among West Asian students compared to students from other parts of Asia. The study found that West Asian Students (WAS) had a lower understanding of Islamic moderation than students from other parts of Asia. Chi-square statistics were used to test the unique results of this study critically. The overall findings revealed biased and hostile views among WAS students toward Islamic moderation and toward non-Muslim communities. Such chauvinism appears to be a consequence of deeply ingrained Arab culture and the doctrines taught. Such perceptions and disregard for authentic Islam have profoundly negative implications for the entire world (Ebrahimi, 2022).

Research on the implementation of moderate Islam was conducted by Aridlah Sendy Robikhah and her team from Lamongan Islamic University, Indonesia, in an article titled *Implementation of Religious Moderation Indicators in the Local Wisdom of the Mejing Tabon Community in Yogyakarta to Realize the United Nations SDGs*. This study found that the application of religious moderation in the local wisdom of the Paguyuban Mejing Tabon community is evident through various aspects, such as the use of the Paguyuban Mejing Tabon logo, which reflects a commitment to national unity; the conduct of interfaith prayers during religious celebrations as an expression of tolerance; the application of the Mejing Tabon philosophy: Rawuh, Lungguh, and Aruh to prevent the spread of radical ideologies; and the use of traditional Gagrak Ngayogyakarta attire as a form of respect and accommodation for local culture (Robikhah, 2023).

Meanwhile, a study on religious moderation in a specific community, namely the Jamaah, was conducted by Uup Gufron from Unindra Jakarta in research titled *Patterns of Religious Moderation in Chinese Muslim Families (Case Study of the Jamaah Masjid Lautze Jakarta Pusat)*. This study found that the background of Chinese converts to Islam was driven by three main factors, namely (1) spirituality, (2) rationality, and (3) identity. Among the three, spirituality was the dominant factor, so their understanding of religious moderation emphasized values such as compassion, gentleness, love, and respect for others. The character of moderation possessed by the converts nurtured at the Lautze Mosque was also influenced by Haji Karim Oei, a Chinese Muslim figure active in Muhammadiyah. He is known for his

modernist (*tajdīdi*), inclusive (*istī'ab*), moderate (*tawāsuṭh*), tolerant (*tasamuh*), and anti-extremist (*tatharruf*) understanding of Islam (Gufron, 2019).

Hasniar Rofiq and colleagues have researched the religious life of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia in an article entitled *Communication of Da'wah in the Community of Female Migrant Workers in Malaysia*. This study found that in the lives of immigrants, Muslim communities play a social role as centers of da'wah activities and platforms for expressing piety, while also strengthening Islamic brotherhood and building networks of Muslim women of faith. This communal dimension is as important as individual efforts to become pious women. In examining women as part of a devout Muslim community, where da'wah takes place, Islamic knowledge is absorbed, experiences are shared, and relationships with like-minded peers are formed, the authors emphasize the importance of collective aspects in fostering piety. Therefore, this communal dimension of piety should be a focus in future research on piety (Rofiq, H., 2022).

Regarding the lives of immigrants or diasporas in relation to national life, Arundati Shinta has conducted research in an article titled "Enhancing Diaspora Understanding of the Archipelago Perspective as an Effort to Ensure the Success of the 2019 General Elections." This study found that the Indonesian diaspora's participation level in elections is still relatively low, a phenomenon that requires critical attention. In addition, the diaspora is also vulnerable to the influence of identity politics, which raises concerns about its impact on Indonesia's image on the international stage. Nevertheless, the existence of the diaspora still needs to be accommodated, as they have the potential and values that can significantly benefit Indonesia. Efforts made by the Indonesian Embassy and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in managing the diaspora are expected to enable them to become ambassadors who represent Indonesia positively. Sociologically and anthropologically, diaspora communities tend to change due to interaction and adaptation with local communities, including religious diversity, identity, social life, and ritual practices (Admin, A., & Shinta, 2020).

Considering previous studies, it appears that research on the implementation of moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia has a novelty that has never been explored before. This study also serves as a regional study as it focuses on a specific geographical area and local context (Malaysia), involves cross-border dynamics (Indonesia-Malaysia), uses a multidisciplinary approach to understand the phenomenon, and highlights the interaction between Indonesian migrant groups and local communities in social, cultural, and religious contexts.

Several relevant theoretical studies from various disciplines are available for research on implementing moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. These include the theory of moderate Islam, religious moderation, Henri Tajfel's social identity theory, Ravenstein's migration theory, and Émile Durkheim's theory of community and social solidarity. This research uses these theories as a form of scientific integration and interconnection to seek new findings and theories about the implementation of moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia.

First, the Theory of Moderate Islam. This theory is an approach in Islam that emphasizes tolerance, peace, equality, and inclusiveness. This concept was born as a response to extreme and radical religious ideas. Through the concept of *maqāsid al-syarīah*, Yusuf al-Qardhawi emphasizes the importance of adapting sharia to relevant social, cultural, and temporal conditions so that understanding and practicing religious teachings in a modern context can be carried out without losing the essence of sharia (Al-Qardhawi, 2001). Moderate Islam has connotations as Islamic values built on a background of straight and moderate thinking (*i'tidal* and *wasatiyah*), oriented towards the principle of politeness in behavior, and having a harmonious attitude towards society in interactions to promote peace and anti-violence (Huda,

2021). Using this theory, the researcher will analyze the daily activities of Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in applying moderate Islamic values.

Second, the Theory of Religious Moderation explains a moderate religious perspective, which is understanding and practicing religious teachings without extremism, whether right-wing or left-wing extremism (M. Q. Shihab, 2017). Extremism, radicalism, and hate speech will cause rifts in interfaith relations (M. Q. S. & N. Shihab, 2021). Using this theory, researchers can better understand the application of religious moderation in the lives of Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia. By referring to indicators of religious moderation (such as tolerance, national commitment, anti-violence, and acceptance of local traditions), this theory is used to analyze the extent to which moderate values are practiced in their daily lives (Zahdi, 2021).

Third, Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1992). This theory is important for understanding how Indonesian migrant workers form their identities in religious and social contexts (Saloom, G., & Ismail, 2022). As part of the diaspora, they interact with the local Malaysian community, which has different cultures and religions. This research can explore how migrant workers maintain their Muslim identity while adapting to local culture and how identity politics can influence their attitudes toward moderate Islam.

Fourth, Ravenstein's Migration Theory, which views population movement as occurring due to differences in economic conditions between the country of origin and the destination country (Ravenstein, 1889). The integration of two neighboring countries will be more conducive if the politics are stable, security is guaranteed, and the economy is strong (Abao, 2019). The study explores how Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia adapt to their new lives, including religious practices and how they respond to cultural challenges and local policies. To review immigration patterns in the Southeast Asian region, this study uses references from research results compiled in the book *Migration in Southeast Asia* (Capaldi, 2021).

Fifth, Émile Durkheim's Theory of Community and Social Solidarity (Durkheim, 1995). This theory will be helpful to for analyzing how social solidarity is formed in migrant worker communities (Fathurrozie, T. N., n.d.). This theory is necessary to examine social life, particularly in places such as surau or mosques. Social solidarity can play an important role in building religious moderation, where migrant workers support each other in maintaining their religious values and creating a harmonious life amid social and cultural diversity in Malaysia.

By combining these theories, researchers can explore the dynamics of moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and the factors influencing it, including identity, community, and social and cultural adaptation.

Research method

Researchers examined research on implementing moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, using research methods, including approaches, types, data collection, analysis, and methods of concluding.

1. Research approach

The approach used is qualitative, as this study aims to explore a deep understanding of moderate Islamic practices among Indonesian migrant workers in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The focus is on the experiences, perceptions, and values that exist within the community. The qualitative approach allows for the exploration of the meaning that respondents give to moderate Islam and how it is applied in their daily lives (Creswell, 2009).

2. Type of research

The type of research used is a case study, considering that this research highlights a specific phenomenon, namely moderate Islam among Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia

(Rahardjo, 2017). This research will focus on one community, namely Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil Kuala Lumpur Malaysia, to analyze in depth the implementation of moderate Islam in that local context.

3. Data collection

Data collection is a very urgent process in research, which can be obtained through interviews, observation, and documentation (Dewi, 2022). From these three activities, the researcher collected data as described below.

a) In-depth interviews

Data collection through interviews is a basic data collection method that involves asking participants direct questions and recording their responses (Karunarathna et al., 2024). In this case, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with Indonesian migrant workers, religious leaders, and other community members to explore their views on moderate Islam, religious moderation, personal experiences, and the challenges they face in applying the principles of moderation in Malaysia. The key informants in this study were migrant workers who were members of the Surau congregation and the head of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil, Surau administrators, and local leaders involved with the migrant community.

b) Participatory observation

Observation at the mosque where the migrant community gathers is important for understanding moderate Islamic practices firsthand. Researchers can observe religious activities, interactions between members, and rituals performed. Direct observation is carried out by researchers in order to fulfill several dimensions, namely the naturalness of the setting, the degree of observer participation, and the amount of detail (Morgan, G. A., & Harmon, 2001).

c) Documentation

Data collection using documentation involves data from documents, archives, or other written materials relevant to the research phenomenon (Daruhadi, G., & Sopiati, 2024). In this case, researchers also collected documentation from digital content on social media belonging to Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil Kuala Lumpur.

4. Data analysis

Data analysis is a critical step undertaken by researchers to generate usable information. In this study, researchers used several data analysis methods: thematic analysis, data triangulation, and narrative analysis.

a) Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis will help identify and organize the main themes from interviews and observations. In addition, thematic analysis is important as a core skill or basic knowledge for analyzing research (Heriyanto, 2018). Researchers will code data based on themes such as tolerance, national commitment, anti-extremism, and acceptance of local traditions, which are indicators of the implementation of their diversity.

b) Data triangulation

Researchers use data triangulation to ensure the validity and reliability of research results to enhance the theoretical, methodological, and interpretative strength of the research (Nurfajriani, W.N., 2024). Data can be obtained from various sources such as interviews, observations, and documentation. Researchers can gain a more comprehensive understanding by comparing the results from these various sources.

c) Narrative analysis

If in-depth interviews produce individual stories or narratives, a narrative analysis approach can be used to understand personal experiences in the context of moderate Islam. This can explore how migrant workers feel and define moderate Islam. As James Schreiber and Kimberly Asner-Self explain, narrative analysis allows researchers to deeply understand a

person's identity and worldview by referring to the stories they share daily (Schreiber, J., & Asner-Self, 2011).

5. Drawing Conclusions

Drawing relevant and accurate conclusions requires sharp analytical skills to produce valid conclusions. In this section, researchers describe several steps taken in concluding.

a) Interpretation of findings

After analyzing the data, researchers can conclude by linking the findings to relevant theories, such as moderate Islam theory, religious moderation theory, social identity theory, migration theory, and community and solidarity theory. The conclusions should include how migrant workers apply moderate Islam, the factors that influence this, and the influence of identity politics or cultural interactions between Indonesia and Malaysia.

Simply put, the interpretation of these findings is done to give a deeper meaning to the data by comparing the research results with the theories used and interpreting them critically to produce more comprehensive insights (Gay et al., 2012).

b) Drawing conclusions based on indicators

Furthermore, conclusions can also be drawn based on predetermined indicators of moderate Islam, such as whether migrant workers are more tolerant, more inclusive, or more respectful of local traditions in their religious practices. By using the right indicators, conclusions will be more objective and accurate.

c) Policy recommendations

Based on the research findings, conclusions can also take the form of recommendations for policies related to managing migrant workers and efforts to improve understanding of moderate Islam, both by the Indonesian and Malaysian governments and civil society organizations working with migrant communities.

Using these policy recommendations, the research results can provide deep insights into how Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia apply moderate Islam, build religious harmony with local communities from different backgrounds, and demonstrate a work ethic based on honesty and professionalism.

Results and Discussion

One job that promises a high income is working as an Indonesian migrant worker (PMI) abroad. According to data on the placement and protection of PMI in 2019, the number of PMI whose records were tracked was approximately 21,358 people. The factors contributing to the large number of Indonesian citizens working abroad include the lack of job opportunities in their home country, the high demand for labor and the availability of numerous job openings in other countries. According to data from the National Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers (BNP2TKI), most PMI placements in Southeast Asia are in Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, and Thailand. These migrant workers are employed in various sectors, including agriculture, domestic work, retail, home industry, shipping, fishing, construction, and many others (Syamsiah, 2020).

Malaysia is an attractive immigration destination due to the geographical proximity between Indonesia and Malaysia, and many Indonesian regions share a direct border with this neighboring country (Aulia & Azizah, 2024). According to an interview with one immigrant, among other reasons, the first is the relatively short distance from Indonesia, making transportation costs for travel relatively affordable. Second, the language, culture, and customs are not significantly different from those in Indonesia, allowing migrant workers to adapt more easily than if they were working in Europe or Saudi Arabia. Third, Malaysia offers many job opportunities for those willing to work in any field. Moreover, obtaining employment in

Malaysia is relatively straightforward, as it does not require complex documentation or stringent requirements, allowing migrant workers without official documents to secure employment. These migrant workers do not face psychological pressure despite not having prestigious jobs, as they would in their home country.

The Indonesian Muslim community in Malaysia has quite vibrant religious activities. Religious events such as recitations, salawat, and the like are held in open fields attended by thousands of worshippers. Religious gatherings are held in mosques, halls, or immigrant residences.

Review of Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Malaysia

Syaichona Cholil Mosque is in the Pandan Indah area, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This mosque was established by several individuals, namely H. Muzammil Muhdhor, Habib Hosnol Yaqin bin Yahya, Johan Wahyudi, H. Mahmud Arifin, Mohammad Irsyad, and Mayuri Ahmad. They observed numerous children roaming around during Maghrib prayer time, many of whom could not read the Quran. For this reason, they gathered at H. Muzammil's residence on April 25, 2020, to facilitate religious outreach activities. The decision made was that they must immediately rent a place to be used as a mosque. Thus, on June 1, 2020, the mosque began to be used.

It coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which imposed restrictions on prayers in community suraus in Malaysia. Initially, around 11 adults aged around 40 were learning to read the Quran at the surau. Within just three months, those who initially could not read the Quran began to learn how to do so. After many children began learning, the adults no longer studied at the surau.

Currently, Surau Syaichona Cholil occupies three connected apartments and has 127 students, most of whom are children. The students are Indonesian citizens from other countries such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Activities at the surau include the Quran Learning Assembly (MPQ), Al-Miftah lil Ulum (Easy Learning to Read Books), the Teaching Assembly, the Rotib wal Maulid Assembly, and the Jam'iyah Sholawat Hubbul Asyqin.

A review of the implementation of moderate Islam among the congregation of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Malaysia

Moderate Islam is present in the congregation of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil mosque in Malaysia is reflected in four indicators, based on the formulation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs: commitment to nationalism, tolerance, anti-violence, and adaptability to local culture.

1. The national commitment of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque congregation.

Even though they live in a neighboring country, Indonesian immigrants still show great love for their homeland. This is reflected in their fanaticism in supporting Indonesia, for example, during sports matches against Malaysia. They also tend to use domestic products such as sarongs, batik, and Indonesian specialties and keep up with news from their homeland. Such national commitment, within the context of religious moderation, reflects individual or group loyalty to national identity without neglecting the religious values they uphold.

In the context of the diaspora, such as the Indonesian community in Malaysia, this commitment is a tangible manifestation of loyalty to the country of origin, Indonesia. However, it is carried out without dividing or disrupting the harmony of the community in the new country of residence. In other words, nationalistic and religious spirit are balanced, strengthening social integration and reflecting a moderate attitude that respects differences. Social values in Islamic teachings play an important role in strengthening national integration because they instill a sense of love for the homeland as part of faith (hubbul wathan minal iman). This shows that Islamic education contributes to building an inclusive social identity and strengthening commitment to national unity (Rizkiyah & Istiani, 2021).

2. Tolerance of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque Congregation.

Malaysia is known for its multi-ethnic and multicultural society, where diverse religions, ethnicities, and cultures can coexist harmoniously (M.Saifuddin Al-Huda, 2025). This situation also influences the lives of Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia, who tend to be more tolerant of differences, whether in terms of religion, ethnicity, or culture. Close interactions between the Indonesian diaspora and other international communities, for example, in school environments, demonstrate strong and inclusive social relationships. Even religious celebrations can take place joyfully without interference from other groups, reflecting a high spirit of mutual respect. In this context, tolerance as part of religious moderation becomes highly relevant.

Tolerance is the ability to respect the beliefs, traditions, and religious expressions of others without losing one's own identity and beliefs. The practice of tolerance by the Indonesian diaspora in Malaysia plays an important role in strengthening social cohesion amid the diversity of society. Tolerance is the first line of defense in preventing extremism and the foundation for the creation of peaceful pluralism (Bayati, 2023). Thus, tolerance is not merely a slogan, but a tangible form of pluralistic togetherness that must continue to be practiced daily, especially in multicultural communities such as Malaysia.

3. Anti-violence

The anti-violence stance of the congregation at Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque is reflected in how they teach young children who participate in Quran recitation and Islamic religious studies every afternoon until evening. The teachers are immigrants with a background as religious students, most of whom are alumni of the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Islamic Boarding School in Bangkalan. Although discipline is highly valued, there are no instances of violence, whether physical or verbal, at the surau. The teachers educate with patience and kindness—they even joke with the young students and help the children put on their prayer shawls with tenderness.

This practice demonstrates that anti-violence in religious moderation is not only about rejecting physical violence, but also about conveying religious teachings in a persuasive, peaceful, and loving manner. The non-violent approach to educating children reflects the value of Islam as a religion of mercy for all creation. In a broader context, Islam also teaches peaceful conflict resolution through the concept of sulh (peace), which is prioritized over confrontation (Islam, 2024). The tangible manifestation of interfaith harmony is reflected in the peaceful and non-violent practice of religious teachings, both in public spaces and places of worship (Prakosa, 2022). In this context, the religious activities carried out by the congregation of Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil reflect the implementation of religious moderation, prioritizing peace and rejecting violence in daily religious life.

4. Adaptive to local culture

The local culture for Indonesian immigrants in Malaysia can be divided into two types: the culture brought from their homeland and the local culture that exists in Malaysia. The culture brought from Indonesia is generally seen in celebrating major religious holidays. For example, congregations from Madura continue to carry out the tradition of *ter-ater* or delivering spicy porridge to each other during the month of Muharram and sweet porridge during the month of Safar. This tradition is practiced internally within the Madurese community without extending to other communities. Meanwhile, activities such as commemorating the Prophet Muhammad's birthday are generally carried out in the same way as in Indonesia, demonstrating a strong attachment to religious traditions.

This phenomenon reflects one of the main characteristics of religious moderation, namely the ability to accept and accommodate local culture as long as it does not conflict with the basic principles of religious teachings. This attitude is a form of contextual and flexible *da'wah*, and

strengthens harmonious social interaction amid diversity. Traditions such as ter-ater or Muharram porridge are concrete examples of the acculturation between local culture and Islamic teachings unique to Indonesia, which are maintained in diaspora communities to preserve religious and cultural identity. Islamic practices that are contextual and accommodating to local culture reinforce religious values that are not rigid or exclusive (Muhammad Riaz et al, 2023). Therefore, openness to local culture is a crucial pillar in building a peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable religious life in the homeland and in foreign lands.

Conclusion

Malaysia is the most attractive destination for Indonesian migrant workers (PMI). PMI engages in vibrant religious activities, including those at the Syaichona Moh. Cholil Mosque in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The active congregation at Surau Syaichona Moh. Cholil can be described as moderate, and four indicators of religious moderation are implemented: national commitment, tolerance, opposition to violence, and adaptability to local culture.

Declaration of conflicting interest

The researchers declare that there are no conflicts of interest in this study. The entire research process, analysis, and writing were conducted independently without pressure, influence, or interests from any party, whether individuals, institutions, or organizations. The findings and conclusions are based on academic research and objectively obtained data. Therefore, this study was conducted with integrity and according to scientific principles.

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