Religious Moderation and Community Cohesion: Exploring Social Memory, Identity, and Solidarity in the Phu Khao Thong Muslim Community, Ayutthaya

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Abstract

research explores the interplay of social memory, identity, and social solidarity in the Muslim community in Thailand. The research uses an exploratory sequential mixed-method design. First, a total of 150 participants were involved in the quantitative approach which obtained through an online survey and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses. The second stage involved interviews with fithteen Muslim community leaders to investigate how individual and collective practices contribute to preserving the community's identity, tolerance and social memory. The findings reveal that social solidarity, reflected in mosque gatherings, cultural events, mutual support systems, and collective economic initiatives, is crucial in preserving tolerance, social memory and reinforcing communal identity. Solitary religious practices, like prayer and reflection, enhanced individual connections to the community's history, while participation in communal activities strengthened shared identity. The Muslim community leaders identified the mosque as a religious centre and a hub for transmitting historical knowledge and fostering religious moderation and social cohesion. This result extending the understanding of how social memory and identity are maintained in Thai Muslim communities, particularly minority groups like Phu Khao Thong. Particularly in light of modernisation and evolving socio-economic conditions globally.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most prominent issues in the understanding of multiculturalism is the majority-minority problem in religious life. Stjernfelt (2012) even mentioned that the issue of multiculturalism is actually about minority groups demanding equality and equal rights in the face of the dominant majority group, and therefore, it is considered a threat to the existence of the majority. For minority communities, sometimes the majority religion is viewed as a threat, and the numerical imbalance is viewed as a potential conflict (Chua et al., 2024; Waal & Duyvendak, 2022). When highlighting the spread of ethnicities, races, groups, cultures, and religions around the world, it appears that minorities are always in a weak position, discriminated against, treated unfairly, scapegoated, and even dominated by more dominant or majority groups. This concerns justice, equitable public service, providing equal opportunities to people without differentiating based on the composition or number of the population, and addressing the objective conditions of residents with different cultural backgrounds that are not balanced in number. This commitment reflects the awareness that religious tolerance has a fundamental role in creating social harmony and preventing belief-based conflicts (Heuser & Wolf, 2024; Verkuyten et al., 2023). It is important to understand that tolerance is not just an attitude of accepting other religions but rather a deeper transformation of the perspective and attitude of religious people. Tolerance refers to accepting differences with a moderate attitude, which allows for open, inclusive, and respectful religiosity (Andriansyah, 2024; Parker, 2020).

Some majority groups often act and treat minority groups as subordinate, discriminated against, and sometimes inhumanely,

which occurs in several developed and developing countries, such as the United States, where the majority are Christian and English-speaking, receiving priority and ease in various aspects. Meanwhile, Catholics, as a minority but not English-speaking (Italian, French, etc.), are treated unfairly and discriminated against (Kunst et al., 2024). This also happens to Muslims in several countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand. Islam is a religion that knows no boundaries or nationalistic divisions. Even in a country where the majority of the population does not adhere to Islam. The majority of Thailand's population consists of the Siamese, Chinese, and a small portion of Malays. The number of Muslims in Thailand is indeed no more than 10% of the total 65 million population, yet Islam is the second-largest religion after Buddhism. Muslims are the largest religious minority in Thailand and are primarily concentrated in the southernmost provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Satun. The minority groups living in Thailand consist of various ethnic groups such as Thai Yai, Karen, and Wah. However, the fact that they have Muslim own identities is not a reason for different treatment or deprivation of rights (Kretschmer et al., 2024; Muhsin et al., 2024).

In some regions, minorities emphasise aspects such as social memory, identity, and solidarity to strengthen religious tolerance (Neo, 2021; Shelby, 2002). In this regard, they have full freedom to practice their beliefs and spread Islamic teachings, as well as participate in religious and social affairs. They also have the same political rights to participate fully, without any discrimination. The same opportunities are realised to demonstrate the identity that, in fact, a significant number of Thai Muslims have achieved remarkable accomplishments in all areas of life. The government has made every effort to improve the conditions of the community in southern Thailand in all aspects so that they can enjoy a good standard of living, just like the Muslim community in other regions of Thailand.

Although Islam is a minority religion in Thailand, some Muslim families have even managed to raise funds and establish mosques as places of worship. In addition, they have an active and influential organisation in Thailand, the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), to strengthen their solidarity (Scupin, 1998; Vasinayanuwatana et al., 2021).

Religious moderation in relation to social memory and identity plays a crucial role in fostering a positive social climate, where the exchange of ideas and reciprocal relationships among individuals can thrive (Zhang et al., 2024). It encourages inclusivity, mutual respect, and open-mindedness, which are essential in diverse societies. Universities, as centers of knowledge and social interaction, serve as key platforms for instilling values of tolerance and harmony (Yusuf et al., 2019). They provide an environment where individuals from different backgrounds can engage in meaningful dialogue, contributing to the development of an inclusive and understanding society. This awareness highlights the need for a systematic approach to strengthening social communication and interaction, particularly in Muslim communities where Islamic values strongly influence daily life. By integrating religious moderation into social and religious practices, these communities affirm their identity as inclusive and progressive. Furthermore, the practice of religious moderation extends beyond the Muslim community, playing a significant role in promoting cross-cultural dialogue and fostering understanding among people of different faiths and traditions. In a multicultural society like Thailand, these efforts contribute to social cohesion, peace, and cooperation, ensuring that religious and cultural.

Several factors influence the strengthening of a tolerant social climate, and the findings of this study align with previous research emphasizing the role of government policies in fostering inclusivity and tolerance. Research by Taylor & Elphick (2023) highlights that

effective anti-discrimination policies, along with the active involvement of diverse groups in decision-making within higher education, are crucial for creating a social culture that values diversity. Similarly, Fielder & Ezzy (2023) found that policies accommodating various perspectives and ensuring equal representation for different groups help minimize conflicts and foster a more supportive and inclusive social and religious environment. These findings reinforce the idea that structural policies play a fundamental role in shaping a society where tolerance and mutual respect thrive. The policies that promote inclusivity and participation, institutions and governments can create a stable foundation for social cohesion. Therefore, this study supports previous literature by underscoring the necessity of well-structured policies in cultivating a tolerant social climate, particularly in multicultural and religiously diverse settings.

In addition to structural policies, cultural factors that promote freedom of thought and respect for diversity have also been widely discussed in previous research. Previous studies emphasized the significance of values that uphold religious rites, personal freedoms, and openness to differing perspectives in fostering social progress and solidarity, not only within a single community but also across religious groups (Qadir & Islam, 2023; Rusmin et al., 2024; Russell & Promisel, 2022). The study highlighted how social identity, collective memory, and solidarity when combined with critical dialogue and mutual respect serve as key elements in cultivating a tolerant environment. Moreover, research by Bowling (2022) and Fonseca & Jovchelovitch (2024) found that harmonious relationships based on religious moderation and friendly cross-group interactions contribute significantly to reinforcing a tolerant social climate. When individuals from different backgrounds engage in positive social exchanges, they develop a deeper understanding of one another, reducing prejudices and promoting inclusivity. This study underscores the essential role

of both structural and cultural factors in shaping and strengthening a tolerant social climate, particularly in higher education, where diverse perspectives and interactions play a crucial role in fostering long-term social cohesion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Memory

Social memory is a shared recollection of meaningful experiences that create significance within social groups (Okuyama, 2018). Social memory, also known as collective memory, is used to gain insights into the exchange of ideas and historical values between individuals and groups. Social memory is a concept employed by historians and others to explore the relationship between social identity and historical memory. This process involves the reconstruction of historical events and conditions influenced by the present, highlighting the flexible nature and symbolic significance of shared memory within a community. Meanwhile, Dibaba (2021) found that collective memory is a shared memory within a group of society built from a past experience organised based on memory. Thus, a memory becomes the foundation of behavioural life and is operated in both explicit and implicit ways at various levels of experience. Thus, collective memory is a combination of societal memories in which past facts live in the present, conveyed through storytelling, images, or photographs, to be interpreted and to interpret shared life. This will create collectivity, a structure of social memory, and the ideology of a society (Urbaniak, 2015).

These people's commitment reflects the personal experiences that religious tolerance has a fundamental role in creating social harmony and preventing belief-based conflicts. It is important to understand that tolerance is not just an attitude of accepting other religions but rather a deeper transformation of the perspective and

attitude of religious people. Tolerance here refers to accepting differences with a moderate attitude, which allows for open, inclusive, and respectful religiosity, rejecting violence, and national commitment and local cultural accommodation (Mukhibat et al., 2024). In this context, religious moderation becomes an important foundation for stronger social and Muslim community development, where differences in belief are not seen as threats but as potentials that enrich life together (Latifa et al., 2022). Thus, creating true tolerance in Thailand is not only about reducing conflict but also building a foundation for a just, peaceful, and solid society.

H1: Social Memory has a positive and significant effect on religious moderation

Social Identity

Social Identity Theory considers how group membership is incorporated into our self-concept and how this affects our views of other community members as well as members of rival groups. This theory proposed the valuable distinction between personal and collective responses to social disadvantage and presented them as incompatible (Yusuf et al. 2020). This incompatibility stems from their conceptualisation as emerging from different mindsets and having very different consequences for the individuals and groups involved. From a social identity perspective, individual responses warrant an individual mobility mindset in which hierarchical relations in society are perceived to be legitimate and stable but permeable. With an individual mobility mindset, people try to improve their individual position, because they believe that is the only way in which their social standing can be improved (Fielder & Ezzy, 2023; Verkuyten et al., 2023). Collective responses, by contrast, require a social change mindset in which hierarchical group relations in society are seen as unstable, illegitimate, and not permeable. Therefore, members of disadvantaged groups with a social change mindset attempt to

improve the status of their group through collective action and solidarity.

Furthermore, regarding the relationship between the level of tolerance and the social and mind climate among Muslims in Thailand, it indicates that the level of tolerance has a significant positive correlation with the formation of an inclusive and harmonious social climate not only among Muslims but also across the ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in Thailand. This study emphasises that strengthening a tolerant social climate in Thailand is closely related to the implementation of religious moderation values. As a Muslim who adopted a social communication and interaction based on moderate Islamic principles, Muslims in Thailand have great potential to become a model in tolerant social interaction, which is in line with the Islam principle to form a generation with integrity, tolerance, and the ability to live in harmony amidst differences (Hasan & Juhanis, 2024). The foundation of moderate Islamic values, such as inclusive attitudes, openness to differences, and commitment to social justice, makes Muslims a supportive environment for fostering tolerant attitudes among people.

H2: Social Identity has a positive and significant effect on religious moderation

Solidarity

Religion plays a crucial role in fostering social solidarity by reinforcing kinship and familial bonds, promoting peace, implementing social control, improving human well-being, and ensuring security both in this life and the hereafter (Verkuytrn et al., 2023). In Islam, solidarity is referred to as *tadhamun* or *takaful*, emphasizing the importance of mutual aid and support within the community. A strong sense of solidarity strengthens the social fabric, making communities more resilient and empowered (Faisal et al., 2022). Sociologist Emile Durkheim regarded religion as a key factor in

shaping social identity and integration. Solidarity, in this sense, represents unity, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Every religion encourages its followers to act in harmony with one another, fostering collective responsibility and ethical behavior. Religious teachings guide individuals to uphold moral values, strengthening social cohesion. Moreover, religion and humanity are deeply interconnected. It provides individuals with a sense of purpose, belonging, and spiritual fulfillment. When society distances itself from religion, it risks experiencing a moral and spiritual void, leading to a decline in ethical standards and social harmony (Latifa et al., 2022). Therefore, religious values remain essential in sustaining unity, cooperation, and collective well-being within society.

Islam was given by God to humans as a moral and ethical guide for life, to be just or balanced, both individually and as a family (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024). The background of the emergence of religion is due to issues of power that are higher than power itself. Religion is a specific belief adhered to by the majority of society and serves as a guide for living. Religion is related to different beliefs and practices, and this is a real social issue present in any society today. If religion is placed in its rightful place, then it can provide a great blessing in the social development of society. By helping society maintain and enhance the social unity of humanity. Religion also plays a role in instilling values and social norms, as well as reinforcing values. (Yusuf et al., 2020). Belief in this relationship adheres to universal teachings that emphasise core human values, respect, and mutual assistance. Working together in peace, but religion is not only found in those values; it also has a role that must be maintained and developed by the community itself. The role of religion in community life is education, educational, social peace, unity and oneness of change, and creativity and innovative excellence. Religion is a continuous activity in a person's life. Religion as a social movement continues to be a

guiding force in world culture (Faisal et al., 2022). The role of religion is control, namely the heart, mind, willpower, and speech, as well as control. Religion serves as a guiding principle for society to stay on the right path (Hasan & Juhannis 2024). Religion is also a way for us to organise ourselves in the best possible manner and to structure social interactions to create a good, safe, peaceful, and prosperous society.

H3: Solidarity has a positive and significant effect on religious moderation

Figure 1

Research Framework
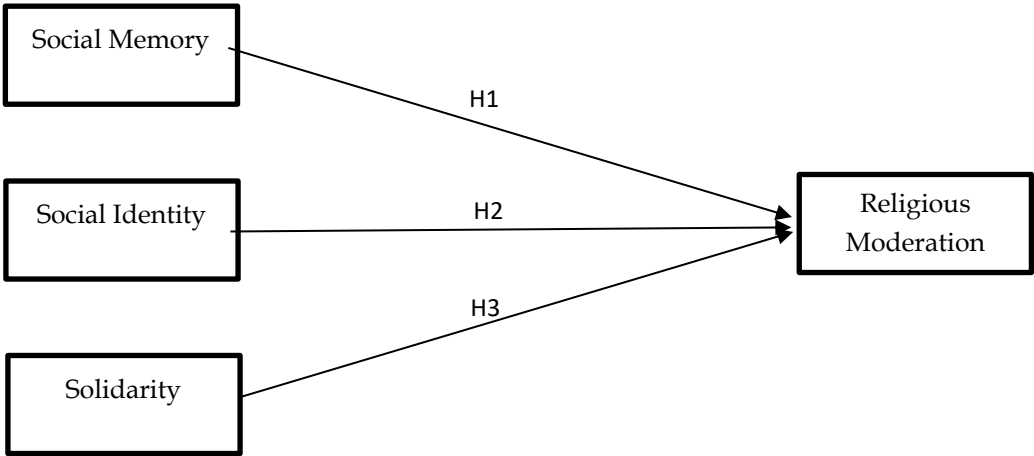
Source: Author's analysis.

METHOD

Data Collection

This study used a sequential explanatory mixed-methods strategy to determine the religious moderation among Muslim in the south Thailand. It has been found to be beneficial in providing confirmation of findings, more comprehensive data, increased validity, and enhanced understanding of studied phenomena inquiry (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). This study applying two important

stages. First, the quantitative data collected through a survey questionnaire and a total of 150 participants had filled out the questionnaire, then follow-up with semi-structured interviews to provide an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the interplay of social memory, identity, and social solidarity within the Phu Khao Thong Muslim community in Ayutthaya. An in-depth interview to validate the quantitative data was conducted to gather the opinions or insights of people from similar backgrounds or experiences to discuss a specific topic of interest from April 1, to May 30, 2024. The strength of the in-depth interview relied on allowing the participants to agree or disagree with each other so that it provides an insight into how a group thinks about an issue, about the range of opinion and ideas, and the inconsistencies and variation exist in a particular community in terms of their experiences and practices by exploring aspects of the religious moderation (e.g., social memory, identity and solidarity.

These semi-structured interviews aimed to deepen the quantitative results and explore Muslim perceptions regarding the implementation of peace education and its impact on the tolerance climate in their religious and social environment. Quantitative data were analysed using structural techniques such as equation modelling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS), which allows testing of complex relationships between latent variables in the research model. Meanwhile, qualitative data are analysed using thematic analysis techniques to identify key themes that emerge from the interviews so that quantitative results can be complemented with in-depth insights into Muslim experiences in living the values of tolerance and peace in life. The target population for the survey for the qualitative approach is 15 permanent residents of the Phu Khao Thong community aged 18 years and older. This group is chosen to ensure that participants have sufficient experience living in the community and participating in its

cultural and religious practices. Furthermore, 15 Muslim local residents were invited for the semi-structured interviews. The participants selected as a purposive sample were such as both religious leaders (imams, teachers of mosque-based summer schools) and secular leaders (community council members). These participants will be chosen based on their roles in preserving and promoting the community's history, identity, and solidarity.

Data Analysis

First, this research is designed using a quantitative approach, employing structural equation modelling (SEM). SEM was chosen for its ability to address complex decision-making problems that require simultaneous consideration of multiple factors or criteria. The SEM result allows for the integration of expert judgements and empirical data into a structured hierarchy, providing clear information (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, before the questionnaire was employed to collect the data, two experts from the education and sociology disciplines were employed to validate it.

RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Table 1 and 2 show that the value of mean differences is stated in standard deviations. Therefore, the result of this step is one-half of the standard deviation. This diverse occupational distribution indicates that a wide range of participant backgrounds is represented, providing a more holistic understanding of religious moderation in Thailand.

Table 1

Respondent Demographics

Demographic Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	85	56.7
Female	65	43.3
Age		
25 – 45 years old	65	43.3
46 - 50 years old	47	31.3
Over 50 years old	38	25.4
Education		
Bachelor	89	59.3
Master and above	61	40.7

Source: Primary data.

Table 2

Correlation Matrix for Measurement Scales

Constructs	Mean	SD	SM	SI	SL	RM
SM	4.52	1.52	**0.842**			
SI	5.62	1.31	0.232**	**0.783**		
SL	5.65	1.37	0.280**	0.266**	**0.794**	
RM	5.74	1.54	0.298**	0.252**	0.355**	**0.765**

Note: SM: Social memory, SI: Social identity, SL: Solidarity, RM: Religious moderation. Significant at *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$
Source: Primary data.

Measurement Model Results

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results showed that the data fit well with the model (Hair Jr et al., 2019). As shown in Table 3, all items of the variables loaded significantly, and therefore, no items were deleted. The values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) are significantly above the threshold value, indicating that inter-item reliability exists among the items of each variable in this study.

Table 3

Measurement Results

Constructs	MLE estimates factor loading/ measurement error		Squared multiple correlation (SMC)	Composite reliability (CR)	Average of variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's α
Social				0.785	0.542	0.867
SM1	0.752	0.441	0.539			
SM2	0.736	0.484	0.516			
SM3	0.715	0.528	0.472			
SM4	0.728	0.537	0.463			
Social Identity				0.814	0.551	0.845
SI1	0.843	0.315	0.685			
SI2	0.779	0.387	0.631			
SI3	0.786	0.374	0.644			
Solidarity				0.845	0.658	0.778
SL1	0.775	0.373	0.615			
SL2	0.851	0.275	0.723			
SL3	0.836	0.325	0.673			
SL4	0.875	0.224	0.774			
Religious Moderation				0.785	0.662	0.827
RM1	0.763	0.418	0.582			
RM2	0.788	0.379	0.621			
RM3	0.839	0.296	0.704			
RM4	0.877	0.231	0.769			
RM5	0.798	0.363	0.637			

Note: Model fit: χ^2/df = 3.654, GFI = 0.941, NFI = 0.945, CFI = 0.927, IFI = 0.935, and RMSEA= 0.057.
Source: Primary data.

### Structural Model Results

The fit of data to the proposed model was adequate (Hair et al., 2019): χ^2/df = 3.824, GFI = 0.945, NFI = 0.940, CFI = 0.941, IFI = 0.941, and RMSEA = 0.046. This study empirically validates that collaboration and support towards social memory among Muslims have a significant influence on religious moderation (γ_{11} = 0.241,

p<0.001), supporting H1, as well as social identity having a positive and significant effect on religious moderation, supporting H2 (γ_{12} = 0.325, *p*<0.001). This implies that the frequent religious activity and interaction among Muslims possibly influence their attitude and behaviour. Specifically, the spiritual aspects are more likely to affect the Muslims' view of the differences in belief, culture, and region. This study also confirms that solidarity as Muslims and people has a significant influence on religious moderation (γ_{13} = 0.295, *p*<0.01)."These results confirm that cooperation and mutual support in social communication and interaction play a key role in creating an atmosphere that supports tolerance and harmony.

Figure 2

Structural Model Results
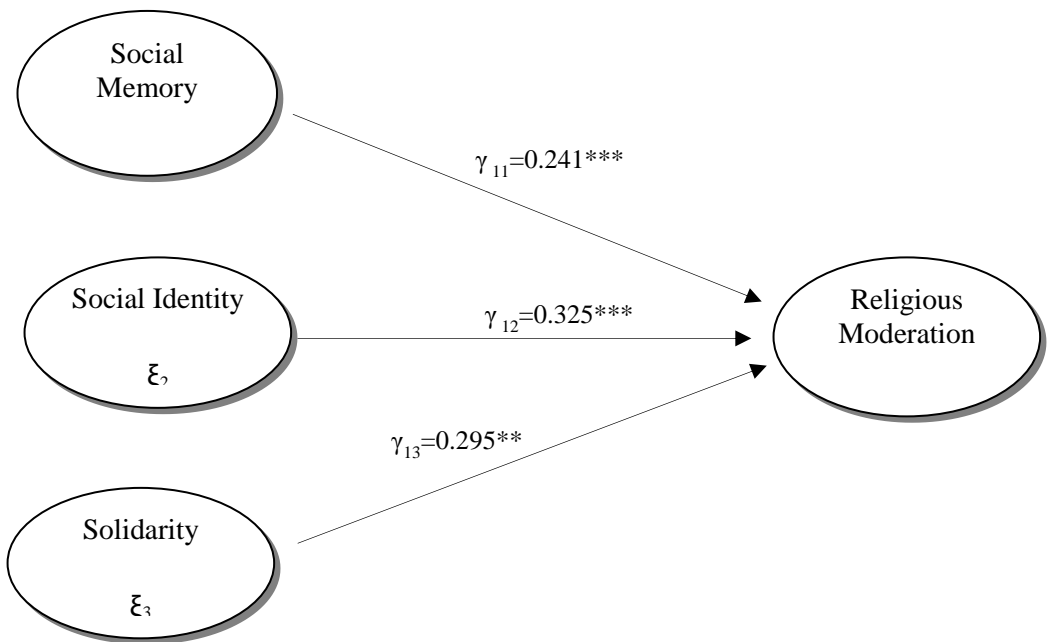
Source: Primary data.

Qualitative Approach

The role of structural and cultural factors has a significant contribution in building a climate of tolerance in the communication and interaction among Muslims and other communities. Structural factors, such as inclusivity, as well as participatory social activity and interaction, have been shown to be key elements in creating an atmosphere that supports tolerance. Inclusive policies not only provide space for most Muslims to participate equally but also help shape positive perceptions and attitudes towards diversity. Previous studies have also shown that religious institution policies have a major influence in shaping tolerant attitudes among Muslims. On the other hand, cultural factors that include social values and diversity also play an important role in religious moderation. Local culture that supports diversity is able to strengthen a tolerant social climate by creating an environment where differences are accepted and respected. With a combination of good policies and an inclusive social culture, a personal identity can be an ideal place to foster an attitude of tolerance among Muslims, which in turn will contribute to the formation of a more harmonious and respectful society. This study confirms that the implementation of peace, social life, and environment in Thailand is able to create a tolerant habit and climate by strengthening structural and cultural mechanisms. The combination of collaboration, communication, conflict resolution, and religious rites based on the values of peace and tolerance has a positive impact on the formation of a harmonious life within and across the community.

Social identity influences the Muslim religious moderation as a successful implementation of religious policies and rites in environments that refer to Islamic law that support diversity and inclusion, as reflected in the positive assessments of Muslims towards a tolerant cultural environment. In the South Thailand region, it was categorised as a high risk of the level of tolerance. Although the

economic and social issue indicates a relatively tolerant climate, there is an opportunity to improve the implementation of inclusiveness and moderation values in order to achieve a higher level of tolerance and peace. This indicates that there are challenges in implementing tolerance policies in the religion and social environment in this region. The low level of tolerance may be caused by various factors, such as limited resources or cultural differences that affect the dynamics of social interactions among people. Overall, these findings confirm that the level of tolerance in South Thailand is influenced by the geographical location and cultural context of each region.

Some parts in Thailand and Southeast Asia regions, such as Thailand, are more successful in building a tolerant religious climate than those in the other regions, indicating the need for different approaches and strategies in strengthening the values of tolerance and inclusion in different regions. These policies, which are designed to ensure diversity in economic and social interactions, have received wide appreciation from the Islamic community. In addition, religious activities and social programs that are held regularly also contribute to strengthening tolerant attitudes among Muslims. These programs serve as important instruments in raising religious moderation of the importance of respecting differences in the Muslim environment. However, despite a number of achievements that deserve appreciation, there are still several areas that require further attention and improvement. One of the main challenges faced is the practical implementation of tolerance values in everyday life in Thailand. The involvement of various parties in decision-making also strengthens the sense of belonging and active participation of all groups, which ultimately contributes to the creation of a more tolerant and supportive environment.

There are several roles of religion in shaping social solidarity attitudes in society. Among others: (1) Source of values and social

norms Religion provides guidelines on behaviour that is considered right or wrong. Religious teachings such as honesty, justice, compassion, and mutual respect become the foundation of values and norms adopted by society. These values then shape worship activities together, religious celebrations, and charity; religion builds solidarity among individuals in society, ethics, and morality that influence social interactions. (2) Building Social Solidarity Religion often teaches the importance of brotherhood and togetherness. Through worship activities together, religious celebrations, and charity, religion builds solidarity among individuals in society. This solidarity helps create strong social connections, which ultimately build social cohesion. (3) Formation of social identity for many people, religion is one important element in self-identity. Religious identity provides individuals with a sense of belonging to a larger community. In addition (4), religious social control is a social position in society, which can influence personal daily social interactions. (4) Religious social control functions as a mechanism of social control through its teachings that encourage positive behaviour and prevent negative behaviour. Moral sanctions that stem from religious beliefs, such as guilt or fear of spiritual punishment, are often more effective in controlling individual behaviour compared to formal sanctions. (5) Spreading tolerance and religious harmony that teaches the importance of respecting differences and prioritising peace can play a role in building a more tolerant and peaceful society.

The values of pluralism and respect for others' beliefs can help prevent social conflicts caused by differences in views or beliefs. (6) Mobilising social and religious philanthropy activities often teaches the importance of helping others, especially those who are less fortunate. Teachings about charity, almsgiving, for example, become a motivator for the community to contribute to social activities that are beneficial for the public interest. This strengthens social relationships

and improves the overall well-being of the community. (7) Creation, cultural, and social factors have also been shown to be crucial, especially values that support freedom of thought and respect for diversity. social stability by instilling values of discipline, simplicity, and responsibility, religion helps create social stability. In addition, cultural and social factors have been shown to be crucial, especially values that support freedom of thought and respect for diversity. These values serve as the foundation for inclusive social communication and interaction towards religious activities, where different ideas can be accepted and debated openly without prejudice or discrimination. Social factors, such as religious education that encourages critical dialogue, and interpersonal factors, such as relationships between Muslims and others that are based on mutual respect, also contribute significantly. Thus, both in terms of structural and cultural policies, strengthening a tolerant social climate does not only rely on formal approaches but also on the daily culture and interpersonal relationships created within community and across groups.

DISCUSSION

The result of this study confirmed prioe studies which found that religious moderation is a crucial concept in multicultural societies, aiming to promote tolerance, harmony, and coexistence among different religious groups in some regions including Indonesia (Pajarianto et al., 2023; Setinawati et al., 2025). In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, religious moderation has been a central theme in governance and public policy, reflecting the country's commitment to pluralism (Junaidi, 2021; Subchi et al., 2022). Similarly, other nations with diverse religious landscapes, such as Malaysia, India, and the United States, have adopted various approaches to balance religious freedom with social cohesion

(Chotimah et al., 2024; Hanafi et al., 2024). For instance, Indonesia's approach to religious moderation is deeply rooted in its national philosophy, *Pancasila*, which upholds belief in one God while respecting religious diversity. The government, through institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, promotes *moderasi beragama*, emphasizing four key pillars: national commitment, tolerance, anti-radicalism, and accommodating local traditions within religious practices. As Indonesia's neighboring country, Malaysia has a similar religious composition but adopts a slightly different approach. Islam is the official religion, but the country also guarantees religious freedom. However, tensions sometimes arise due to the legal distinction between Muslims and non-Muslims, particularly in matters of religious conversion and Islamic law. The government promotes moderation through initiatives such as *Wasatiyyah* (Islamic moderation) and *Maqasid Syariah* (objectives of Islamic law).

The relationship between the level of tolerance and social climate in Thailand; in this context, the theory of peace education becomes relevant. Religious moderation among Muslims focuses on teaching the values of peace, justice, and respect for cultural and religious differences. This concept supports the idea that social orientation towards tolerance and tranquillity can help create an open and inclusive economic and social atmosphere, allowing for interfaith and cultural dialogue within the community and across religions (Bowling, 2022). This study strengthens the findings of several previous studies. For example, research conducted by Fonseca and Jovchelovitch (2024) shows that personal social memory and identity to the values of peace are able to create a younger generation that is more tolerant, critical, and involved in efforts to resolve conflicts in society. Muslims with their principles of Islamic moderation can be seen as an example of this approach, where social identity becomes a means to instill an attitude of peace and respect for differences among

people (Bahri, 2012; Muhajarah & Soebahar, 2024). India, home to multiple religions, including Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism, follows a secular framework to ensure religious freedom. However, religious polarization has increased in recent years, with political and social challenges affecting interfaith relations. Despite this, religious moderation is promoted through constitutional protections, interfaith organizations, and grassroots initiatives aimed at fostering dialogue and understanding among religious communities.

Another study conducted by Knoetze (2022) revealed that religious moderation orientated towards peace and inclusivity is very important to create social stability amidst cultural and religious diversity. The values of Islamic moderation applied in the social environment strengthen inclusivity and openness to diverse views, making this Muslim community an effective agent of social change in the context of life. The importance of tolerance in overcoming intolerance and extremism. Education based on moderate values in Thailand is in line with this approach, where the curriculum and teaching methodology applied play an important role in shaping Muslim behaviour that values peace, openness, and justice. It also promotes these values, which have great potential to foster a generation that is not only able to live in diversity but also actively promotes harmony and social cohesion in society. The United States is known for its strong emphasis on religious freedom, enshrined in the First Amendment of the Constitution. Religious moderation is practiced through laws that protect individuals from discrimination based on their beliefs. Interfaith groups and community organizations play a key role in promoting tolerance and preventing religious extremism (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Rogers, 2004). However, challenges such as religious discrimination and political polarization continue to test the country's commitment to moderation.

This study underlines the important role of religious community and solidarity as social identity that not only produces quality communication and tolerance but also functions as agents of social change. By integrating the values of Islamic moderation and peace education into the curriculum and social culture, this approach contributes to the formation of a more tolerant and peaceful society. This is relevant to the global goal of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially in the aspects of peace, justice, and strong community, where religion is considered a major pillar in creating peace and social stability. Thus, the application of Islamic moderation values in South Thailand not only supports the formation of a tolerant social climate but also strengthens the relevance of Muslims in global efforts to achieve sustainable peace. The peaceful communication and interaction effective means of fostering tolerance, the Muslim community plays a significant role in forming individuals who are ready to contribute to the development of a peaceful and inclusive society. Furthermore, in the description of the level of tolerance and climate in social interaction, although policies have been in place and tolerance religious and social programs have been running, there is a gap between theory and practice that needs to be addressed. Several respondents highlighted that tolerance reflected in daily interactions, both among Muslims and between Muslims and others. Therefore, more intensive efforts are needed to ensure that the values of tolerance are not only taught but also applied consistently in various aspects of daily life.

The results of this study are in line with previous studies that emphasise the importance of inclusive policies in building a tolerant social climate. For example, a study conducted by Heuser & Wolf (2024) showed that policies that support diversity and anti-discrimination in the social community significantly increase the level of tolerance among people. Such policies create a safe space for all

groups to express themselves and participate in daily life without fear of discrimination. In addition, educational and social programs designed to increase understanding of tolerance are also considered important factors in encouraging harmonious interactions between individuals with different backgrounds, cultures, and religions (Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Massiah et al., 2024). This study reaffirms that structural approaches, such as inclusive policies to maintain religious rites globally, play a major role in shaping a culture of tolerance in religious institutions.

CONCLUSION

Religious moderation in Southern Thailand has important policy implications for governance, security, education, and economic development. Given the region's history of ethnic and religious tensions, well-crafted policies can promote social integration, reduce conflict, and foster long-term peace. This study proves that the peace of education and religion approach in the Muslim community plays a significant role in strengthening a tolerant social climate. Peace campaigns, through the development of values of tolerance, respect, and harmony between religions, have been proven to be able to create an inclusive and harmonious social atmosphere. Effective collaboration between people across the religion and culture, support for diversity, and structured conflict resolution are the main factors that influence the success of creating a tolerant climate not only in Thailand but also globally. This study also reveals that structural factors, such as inclusive communication and interaction, and cultural factors that include values of togetherness and respect for diversity, play an important role in building a tolerant social life (e.g., communication and interaction). The results of this study strengthen the theory of peace education and social life, where people that focus on peace and tolerance can be a tool to shape a young generation that

is ready to adapt to diversity at the global level. However, this study also found a gap between theory and practice. Although tolerance policies in education and social context have been implemented, their application in daily interactions and activities still needs to be strengthened. This study also identified that a culture and organisation approach that emphasises peace values has a positive impact on a harmonious social atmosphere and respect for religious law and norms.

Religious moderation in Southern Thailand has significant implications for social harmony, national security, and regional stability. The region, particularly the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, has a distinct historical and religious identity, with a majority Malay-Muslim population in a predominantly Buddhist country. The Thai government's efforts toward religious moderation aim to reduce sectarian tensions, foster peaceful coexistence, and prevent radicalization. Religious moderation plays a key role in preserving cultural diversity and fostering mutual understanding between the Buddhist and Muslim communities. Interfaith dialogue initiatives and educational reforms promoting tolerance help bridge the gap between different religious groups. When successfully implemented, religious moderation fosters peaceful interactions, reduces stereotypes, and strengthens social cohesion. The ongoing conflict in Southern Thailand, fueled by ethnic and religious tensions, makes religious moderation a crucial factor in peacebuilding. A balanced approach can help reduce violence by addressing grievances related to discrimination, cultural autonomy, and economic marginalization. Policies that integrate Muslim perspectives into governance and development programs can prevent extremism and encourage non-violent political engagement. Conversely, the absence of genuine religious moderation may contribute to continued insurgency and radicalization. Religious moderation in Southern

Thailand has broader implications for ASEAN and global security. A peaceful resolution to religious tensions strengthens Thailand's position as a regional leader in interfaith harmony. Additionally, successful moderation efforts can serve as a model for other conflict-prone areas with religious diversity, contributing to global peace efforts. In conclusion, religious moderation in Southern Thailand is essential for long-term stability, fostering trust between communities and reducing conflict risks.

The Thai government must ensure inclusive policies that respect the cultural and religious identity of Malay-Muslims in the South. This includes greater autonomy in local governance, increased representation of Muslims in administrative and political institutions, and the protection of religious rights. Strengthening legal frameworks that guarantee religious freedom and prevent discrimination is crucial to fostering trust between the government and local communities. Religious moderation should be integrated into security policies to combat extremism without alienating local communities. A shift from military-based counterinsurgency to community-driven peacebuilding efforts can help reduce violence. Training security forces on cultural and religious sensitivity, coupled with intelligence-sharing with local religious leaders, can enhance cooperation and de-escalate tensions. Educational policies should emphasize religious tolerance and multiculturalism. Curriculum reforms that include Islamic and local cultural studies can foster mutual respect. Promoting interfaith dialogue through schools, universities, and community programs can help bridge religious divides. Additionally, increased funding for Islamic schools (*pondoks*) and integration with the national education system can create better opportunities for Muslim youth. Economic disparities contribute to instability in Southern Thailand. Policies that promote job creation, infrastructure development, and equal access to resources can help address underlying grievances.

Encouraging investment and entrepreneurship within Muslim communities can empower local populations and reduce economic marginalization.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Some limitations in this study. Firstly, this study was conducted to examine Thai-Muslim communities. A longitudinal study could help researchers observe Islamic communities' interactions under dynamic conditions in order to elaborate the content and impact of Muslim interaction based on Islamic and social context perspectives. Secondly, it only considered the personal factors on information exchange. Thirdly, this study looked at the relationships between Muslims and three dimensions of religious principles from a social perspective among Muslim communities. However, the in-depth qualitative interviews will provide valuable insights specific to the Phu Khao Thong community. Future convenience sampling may introduce some bias, as the sample may not fully represent all demographic groups within the community. Language barriers or cultural sensitivities may impact how specific topics are discussed, especially in qualitative interviews. To mitigate this, culturally appropriate language will be used, and efforts will be made to create a comfortable interview environment under the assistance of a local interpreter.

Author Contributions

Conceptualization: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Data curation: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Formal analysis: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Funding acquisition: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Investigation: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Methodology: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Project administration: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Resources: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Software: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Supervision: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Validation: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Visualization: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Writing – original draft: Y.L., C.R., & L.B.; Writing – review & editing: Y.L., C.R., & L.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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APPENDIX

Research Instruments for Semi-Structured Interviews

Theme 1: Social Memory and Its Preservation

1. How do you think the history of the Gold Mountain community has shaped its current identity?
2. What events, stories, or traditions do you believe are most important to the community's collective memory?
3. How is social memory passed down to younger generations in the community? Are there any formal programs or informal practices?
4. Have you observed any changes in how people perceive or remember the community's history over the years?

Theme 2: Identity Formation and Maintenance

1. How would you describe the relationship between religion (Islam) and community identity here in Phu Khao Thong?
2. What role does the mosque play in shaping and maintaining the social identity of this community?
3. In what ways do secular leadership (Community Council) and religious leadership (Imams) collaborate to strengthen the community's identity?

Theme 3: Solitary Cultivation and Its Role in Social Memory and Identity

1. In what ways do solitary religious practices (e.g., prayer, meditation) contribute to an individual's connection with the community's social memory?
2. Do you think that solitary cultivation practices play a role in reinforcing an individual's identity as a member of the Gold Mountain community? If so, how?

3. What impact do personal religious practices have on collective identity when members come together for communal activities?
4. Do you observe a difference between individuals who engage in solitary cultivation and those who primarily participate in communal activities in terms of their understanding of the community's history and traditions?

Theme 4: Religious Moderation

1. How does social memory, identity and solidarity within the Phu Khao Thong community contribute to acceptance of the principle's religion and compliance as citizen?
2. What role does the mosque play in fostering solidarity that reinforces the community's collective memory, identity and solidarity and religious moderate (e.g., tolerance)?
3. Do you believe that a strong sense of social memory, identity and solidarity helps protect the community's identity in times of external challenges or social changes (e.g., anti violance)?
4. How do community events or collaborative projects (e.g., disaster relief efforts, cultural festivals) influence the sense of shared identity and collective memory among community members and accetance cultural-based differences?
5. In your experience, what are the key social solidarity practices that have the most significant impact on strengthening the community's sense of identity and historical continuity to implementing religious text contextually?