

## **Analysis of Moderation Values in Buddhist Education Textbooks for Indonesian High Schools**

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### **Abstract**

This study examines how Buddhist Religious Education and Character-Building textbooks for Indonesian senior high schools under the Merdeka Curriculum represent religious moderation values. While previous research has extensively analyzed Islamic religious education textbooks, Buddhist textbooks remain unexplored, representing a significant gap in Indonesian academic literature. Using qualitative content analysis, this study analyzes Buddhist religious education textbooks for grades X, XI, XII, examining textual, visual, and multimodal elements through the Ministry of Religious Affairs' four indicators: tolerance, anti-violence, local culture acceptance, and national commitment, and employing Sadker and Zittleman's framework to identify bias. Findings reveal that textbooks systematically integrate moderation values through Buddhist teachings such as the Kalama Sutta, historical narratives of Buddhist-Hindu coexistence, cross-sectarian inspirational figures, and integration with Pancasila national ideology. Tolerance is operationalized as critical praxis combining openness with evaluative rationality rather than passive acceptance. However, three systematic biases were identified: religious invisibility through exclusion of belief systems and other religions beyond six officially recognized religions, imbalance in presenting inter-sectarian differences limited to symbolic aspects without philosophical depth, and cosmetic bias where student activities lack adequate textual scaffolding. This study makes a unique contribution by filling the gap in Buddhist religious education textbook analysis in Indonesia and demonstrating that while Buddhist textbooks show progressivity in representing moderation values, structural improvements in comprehensiveness, philosophical depth, and inclusive representation are essential for developing genuine cross-cultural religious literacy and supporting Indonesia's pluralistic educational goals.

**Keywords:** *religious moderation; Buddhist religious education; textbook; tolerance; Merdeka Curriculum; bias*

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## **A. Introduction**

Interreligious conflicts have given rise to discourse on religious moderation globally. In Myanmar, Rohingya Muslims have suffered victimization by Buddhist extremists (Subedi and Garnett 2020), while tensions in Sri Lanka (2014) between Buddhists and Muslims were triggered by concerns over Muslim population growth (Mihlar, 2019; Morrison, 2020). These incidents demonstrate that religious intolerance remains a persistent challenge affecting psychological well-being, social identity (Wu and Schimmele 2021), and discriminatory treatment in education and employment (Ali-Fauzi et al. 2021).

Indonesia exemplifies this complexity as a religiously diverse nation facing significant challenges. Documented cases include the Bali bombings (Seo 2014), Muslim-Christian conflicts in 1999-2001 triggered by political interests and mutual suspicion of religious agendas (Arifianto 2009), and sectarian tensions including hate speech against different Buddhist sects (Ngasiran 2020). Komnas HAM recorded 2,453 complaints of religious freedom violations during 2008-2018 (Feri 2020), while LIPI research found religiosity accounts for 67.60% of intolerance factors (Tim Penyusun Modul 2025). These findings confirm religious intolerance remains a serious challenge to human rights and democratic consolidation in Indonesia. Religious intolerance violence creates not only physical losses but also prolonged psychological trauma, fear, and social disintegration threatening national integration (Tim Penyusun Modul 2025). These conflicts underscore the necessity of addressing religious intolerance through religious education in schools (Parker 2014).

Religious moderation values offer a strategic solution for cultivating tolerant, peaceful interreligious environments and promoting multiculturalism (Pajarianto, Pribadi, and Sari 2022). Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs has integrated religious moderation into its 2020-2024 strategic plan as a preventive measure against radicalism (Kementarian Agama RI 2019). Education plays a strategic role in promoting interreligious peace through teaching tolerance, compassion, and respect for diversity, preventing extremism by strengthening social bonds (Ghosh et al. 2017). Religious moderation values in educational institutions are essential for shaping pro-social behavior and creating social control supporting human rights, democracy, and tolerance (Etzioni, 2006; Curry & Houser, 1997).

In this context, textbooks play a role in initiating interactions among students, teachers, and teaching tools (Widodo 2018), providing content and facilitation to achieve expected learning outcomes (Kasmaienezhadfard, Pourrajab, and Rabbani 2015), and preparing students to face real life in society (Husna and Kamar 2019). Beyond serving as instruments in teaching and learning, textbooks can also be used to instill values (Widodo 2018). Indeed, textbooks can function as channels for disseminating core values and societal

beliefs (Opoku-Amankwa, Brew-Hammond, and Kofigah 2011). Textbooks constitute a key aspect in the process of identifying what knowledge and values are considered valid in a particular society, and books become primary reference points for society's knowledge, culture, beliefs, and morality (Apple 2004). However, textbooks may contain gender, religious, cultural, or ideological bias (Gebregeorgis 2017) that negatively influences students' long-term attitudes, making them feel deserving of prejudice (Ndura 2004) and resulting in lack of respect and intolerance (Dinama 2015). Critical examination of religious representation in textbooks is therefore essential.

International studies examining religious moderation values in textbooks show varied patterns, from Russian civic education maintaining Orthodox Christianity's dominance (Blinkova and Vermeer 2019). Belgian Catholic textbooks (1886-1961) showed inclusivism toward Islam (Wiele 2003). and Kuwaiti Islamic education textbooks emphasizing unity while retaining intolerance themes (Alabdulhadi 2019). to Pakistani Islamic textbooks showing limited tolerance implementation (Ghazi et al. 2011).

In Indonesia, researchers have extensively analyzed religious moderation in Islamic religious education textbooks. Studies have examined textbooks using four indicators of religious moderation in the 2013 curriculum at senior high school level (Dirman and Tetambe 2024) and in Islamic Cultural History textbooks for Grade VI Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Rofik and Jadid 2021). Others have focused on Islamic religious education textbooks in the Merdeka curriculum at elementary (Ananda and Rahman 2022), in Pekanbaru (Yuliharti and Arisanti 2025), and at the junior high school level (Musyrifin et al. 2022). Additionally, several studies have analyzed religious moderation from Qur'an and Hadith perspectives in Qur'an-Hadith textbooks at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (Imronudin and Mubarak 2025), in Bina Aqidah and Akhlak textbooks (Fa'atin and Swastika 2022), in Al-Islam subject textbooks at junior high school level (Gunagraha 2024), and in Qur'an-Hadith textbooks for Grade XI Madrasah Aliyah (Hasanah and Rohimah 2024). Despite this diversity, all these studies remain limited to Islamic textbooks. No research has specifically examined Buddhist Religious Education textbooks in the Merdeka Curriculum, representing a significant gap in Indonesian academic literature.

This study analyzes how Buddhist Religious Education textbooks in the Merdeka Curriculum represent religious moderation. The analysis uses four Ministry of Religious Affairs indicators (tolerance, anti-violence, local culture acceptance, national commitment) and six adapted Sadker & Zittleman (2010) bias types: stereotyping, omission, imbalance, unreality, fragmentation, and invisibility. Guided by four questions: (1) how indicators are represented through texts and illustrations; (2) consistency or variation across grades; (3) internal tolerance among Buddhist sects and external tolerance among religions;

(4) presence of limitations or biases. The study provides descriptive, evaluative, and reflective insights, filling academic gaps and supporting inclusive textbook development that promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

## B. Methods

This study employed qualitative content analysis to examine religious moderation values representation in Merdeka Curriculum textbooks. Qualitative content analysis explains text meaning more deeply (Mayring 2015). Considerations in selecting research design in analytical research are adjusted based on research questions and objectives (Drisko and Maschi 2016). Analysis proceeded systematically through six steps: unitization, text sampling, recording and coding, data reduction, abductive inference, and narrative construction (Krippendorff 1985).

Research samples were purposively selected from Buddhist Religious Education textbooks for grades X-XII under the Merdeka Curriculum (2021-2022 editions, Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology). The analytical focus concentrated on specific themes relevant to religious moderation at each educational level.

Table 1  
Research Sample and Thematic Focus for Textual Analysis

Grade Level	Themes Related to Religious Moderation
Grade X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Beauty of Diversity of My Buddhist Religion</li> <li>- My Buddhist Figures Are My Inspiration</li> </ul>
Grade XI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Beauty of Diversity of Religions and Beliefs in My Indonesia</li> <li>- The Beauty of Indonesian Culture</li> <li>- My Religious Rituals</li> <li>- The Beauty of Diverse Rituals and Beliefs</li> <li>- The Art and Culture of My Religion</li> <li>- Appreciate Buddhist Art and Culture</li> </ul>
Grade XII	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Harmony in the Diversity of Buddhism</li> <li>- Buddhist Cultural Diversity</li> <li>- Becoming a Moderate Learner</li> </ul>

The units of analysis consisted of textual elements such as narratives, value statements, and learning texts, visual elements such as illustrations of Buddhist figures, religious rituals, and symbolic diversity with a total of 202 illustrations examined, and multimodal elements such as learning activities, case studies, and reflective questions. Directed coding addressed the first research question by using the Ministry of Religious Affairs' four indicators of religious moderation as a priori categories. Interpretive coding for research questions two

through four adapted Sadker & Zittleman, (2010) framework to analyze representation patterns, content progression, the balance among Buddhist schools and religions, and potential biases.

Reliability was strengthened through structured coding with clear guidelines and repeated readings of the data. Validity was strengthened through triangulation of data from three types of content elements (textual, visual, multimodal) to avoid interpretation biased toward a single source. Additionally, findings were confirmed with literature on religious moderation and multicultural education, and contextualized with Indonesian national educational policies and religious moderation policies.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. Result

#### a. Tolerance

##### 1) Tolerance in Buddhist Religious Education Textbooks for Senior High Schools

Buddhist Religious Education textbooks for Indonesian senior high schools emphasize tolerance as a core value, encompassing diversity among Buddhist schools and religions, and framing tolerance as a critical praxis combining openness with evaluative reasoning.

Tabel 2  
Representation of Inter-Religious and Inter-Sectarian Tolerance Values in  
Buddhist Religious Education Textbooks for Senior High Schools

Grade / Dimension	Inter-Religious Tolerance	Inter-Sectarian Tolerance	Key Page References
Grade X	King Aśoka's edicts; Buddhist-Hindu syncretism in Syailendra/Sanjaya dynasties; Kalurak Inscription example	Fundamental Buddhist teachings common to all schools; Role models: Cornelis Wowor, Mahasthawira Vajragiri	pp. 15, 41, 57-67
Grade XI	Six officially recognized religions; Rohis, Rohkris, Rohbud spiritual organizations; comparative ritual practices of six religions	Symbolic distinctions only (Pāli, Sanskrit); Role models: Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita, Bhikkhu Girirakhito	pp. 42, 53, 61-69
Grade XII	Religious freedom as state mandate; "Most private matter"; Conscience-based	Cross-national / sectarian figures: Bhikkhu Bodhi (Theravada), Master Cheng Yen (Mahayana),	pp. 5-6, 8, 31, 136



	belief; Non-coercion principle	Thich Nhat Hanh (Zen), Mingyur Rinpoche (Vajrayana)	
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## 2) Philosophical Foundations of Tolerance

Each grade level incorporates fundamental Buddhist teachings directly related to tolerance values. Grades X and XII reference King Aśoka's edicts emphasizing mutual respect among religions and encouraging peaceful coexistence amid diverse beliefs (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:41; Katman & Tupari, 2022:119). Tolerance values are reflected in the Kalama Sutta: "Buddhism teaches its followers to always be open-minded, yet remain critical in accepting any teaching" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:40). This demonstrates that Buddhist open-mindedness is not passive acceptance but critical tolerance characterized by non-dogmatic attitudes, encouraging individuals to employ wisdom and *ehipassiko* (come and see) through direct proof and experience.

Critical tolerance appears in grade XI texts quoting Buddha's sermon in the Digha Nikaya, featuring dialogue between Buddha and Nigroda, emphasizing Buddha's non-sectarian approach without attempting to attract followers or criticize other teachings (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:74). Grade XII includes Upāli's story, a prominent disciple of another religious figure who converted to Buddhism through non-coercive dialogue (Katman & Tupari, 2022:5-6). These teachings serve as foundations for Buddhist ethics supporting open, rational attitudes appreciating differences, strengthening tolerance as a core value.

## 3) Historical Narratives of Inter-Religious Tolerance

The historical dimension in the textbooks highlights harmony during the Nusantara kingdoms. Grade X presents Buddhist-Hindu coexistence in the Syailendra and Sanjaya Dynasties of the Ancient Medang/Mataram Kingdom, showing that religious plurality enhanced political stability, social cohesion, and syncretism in practices and art. The Kalurak Inscription states, "Manjusri, besides being equated as one manifestation of the Triratna, is also equated as one manifestation of the Trimurti" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:15), framing syncretism as cultural dialogue strengthening social integration. Tolerance is further legitimized through "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, tan hana dharma mangrwa" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:18), linking historical tolerance to national identity and contemporary pedagogy, supporting religious moderation in formal education.

## 4) Institutional and Practical Dimensions

Grade XI operationalizes tolerance through dual approaches: participation in cross-religious spiritual activities and institutionalization of devotional practices in educational environments. Representation of Islamic

(*Rohis*), Christian (*Rohkris*), and Buddhist (*Rohbud*) spiritual organizations indicates institutional recognition of religious plurality as integral to educational religious life (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:69). However, texts identify structural challenges in establishing Buddhist spiritual life in general schools, particularly regarding limited Buddhist student numbers. This shows tolerance conceptualized as active praxis preserving minority religious practices through plurality accommodation via habituation, symbolic recognition, and institutional activities.

#### 1. Ritual Agama Lain

Berikut kita akan melihat beberapa ritual agama lain.

##### a. Ritual Agama Islam

Salat berasal bahasa Arab yang berarti doa. Solat yang dimaksud di sini ialah ibadah yang tersusun dari beberapa perkataan dan perbuatan yang dimulai dengan takbir, disudahi dengan salam, dan memenuhi beberapa syarat.

Selain itu, Yudi "Barang siapa yang salatnya tidak mampu mencegah dirinya dari perbuatan keji dan mungkar, dalam pandangan Allah, dia tidak mendapat tambahan apa-apa dari salatnya itu, melainkan kebencian dan makin jauh dari-Nya."



Gambar 4.3 Orang-orang sedang ibadah salat

Sebagai warga negara, sebaiknya yang selalu mendambakan ketenangan, keseimbangan, ketenteraman, secara pribadi maupun dalam kehidupan sosial kemasyarakatan. Oleh karena itu, untuk berusaha melangkah dan berikhtiar mewujudkannya tidak harus menunggu orang lain melakukannya. Sebagai langkah awal dengan menghayati serta menjiwai ibadah yang dilakukan.

##### b. Ritual Agama Katolik

Ritual/ibadah umat Katolik dimaknai sebagai pertemuan antara Tuhan dan manusia, sebagai ungkapan ketakwaan dan saling menguatkan iman umat. Biasanya, dalam ibadah Katolik, dipakai simbol-simbol atau tanda yang khusus, karena baik untuk pengungkapan iman maupun untuk tanda kehadiran Allah, pemakaian bahasa atau ekspresi yang biasa diajarkan kurang memadai. Oleh sebab itu, perlunya penghayatan dan pendalaman menurut agamanya.



Gambar 4.4 Kebaktian umat Katolik

##### c. Ritual Agama Kristen

Umat Kristen melakukan kebaktian sebagai salah upaya untuk mengagungkan nama Tuhan. Dilakukan pada setiap hari Minggu di gereja. Hal ini dilakukan untuk meningkatkan iman kepada Tuhan dalam agama Kristen.



Gambar 4.5 Kebaktian umat Kristen

##### d. Ritual Agama Hindu

Untuk meningkatkan keyakinan kepada Hyang Widhi khususnya dalam agama Hindu di Bali, tentunya sebagai umat wajib melakukan persembahyangan agar Beliau senantiasa melindungi. Jika dijabarkan, sembahyang terdiri atas dua suku kata, yaitu Sembah dan Hyang. Sembah artinya "sujud atau sungkem" yang dilakukan dengan cara-cara tertentu dengan tujuan



Gambar 4.6 Umat Hindu melakukan ritual

untuk menyampaikan penghormatan, perasaan hati atau pikiran, dengan ucapan kata-kata maupun tanpa ucapan (pikiran atau perbuatan). Sembah artinya "yang dihormati atau dimuliakan" sebagai objek pemujaan yaitu Tuhan Yang Maha Esa, yang berhak menerima penghormatan mer kepercayaannya itu.

##### e. Ritual Agama Khonghucu

Setiap agama pasti memiliki ritual keagamaan dan kepercayaannya sendiri-sendiri yang berbeda-beda sesuai dengan tuntunan iman dan ajaran agama dari setiap agama tersebut.

Agama Khonghucu tidak hanya mengajarkan kepada penganutnya bagaimana seseorang berbakti kepada Tian (Tuhan Yang Maha Esa) atau Nabi, melainkan lebih menekankan bakti kepada kedua orang tua dan aksi nyata di dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Khonghucu juga mengajarkan tata cara melakukan ibadah kepada Nabi, orang-orang suci, leluhur, dan lain-lain.



Gambar 4.7 Umat Khonghucu melakukan ritual

Figure 1.

Visual Depiction of Ritual Practices of the Six Religions, Highlighting the Absence of Local Spiritual Traditions in the Grade XI Textbook

Religious tolerance representation employs a descriptive-informative approach to Indonesia's six most widely practiced religions, including ritual practices without normative judgments (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:61-63). This pluralistic orientation is reinforced by "all religions teach goodness and happiness" (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:4) as pedagogical effort building cross-faith understanding for social harmony. Tolerance implementation is contextualized through education about differential religious rights, such as understanding that "fasting is an obligation for Muslims, but not for other faiths," reflecting cultivation of awareness toward religious autonomy without coercion. This approach explores universal moral values like character, ethics,

and social responsibility as connecting mechanisms among religions transcending doctrinal particularities.

5) Religious Freedom as Constitutional Mandate

Grade XII presents important narratives regarding religious freedom as state constitutional mandate. Through statements that religion is “the most private matter” and religiosity depends on “conscience and self-belief” (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:136), the textbook emphasizes non-coercion principles in religious life. This aligns with fundamental values guaranteeing every citizen's right to embrace or not embrace religion according to their beliefs, strengthening students' civic dimension ensuring they understand and respect others' religious freedom rights.

6) Inter-Sectarian Tolerance Within Buddhism

Inter-sectarian tolerance is consistently represented through historical-cultural approaches emphasizing internal diversity and accommodative attitudes toward local contexts. Tolerance is conceptualized as active adaptation: “The bearers of Buddha Dharma innovate by adapting to our nation's character and culture, including existing local wisdom” (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:5).

Inspirational cross-sectarian figures are prominently featured. Grade X introduces Cornelis Wowor and Mahasthawira Vajragiri as role models embodying dedication and moral integrity in Indonesian contexts (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:57-67). Their spiritual transformation narratives demonstrate that anyone can live according to Buddhist teachings, instilling tolerance values and inclusivity appreciation. Grade XI explains Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita and Bhikkhu Girirakhito's roles in post-independence Indonesian Buddhism revival (Santoso and Waldiyono 2021). Inter-sectarian differences are presented descriptively and in a limited manner, particularly in Grade XI. The material only covers symbolic aspects such as vihara architectural forms, monastic robe colors, and practice languages: “Theravāda followers use Pāli language, while Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna followers use Sanskrit”(Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:42). In addition, student activities encouraging information searches about Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna history present pedagogical opportunities to deepen learners’ understanding of intra-Buddhist diversity. Grade XII broadens perspectives introducing cross-national figures including Bhikkhu Bodhi (Theravada), Master Cheng Yen (Mahayana), Thich Nhat Hanh (Zen), Ajahn Brahmavamso (Theravada), and Mingyur Rinpoche (Vajrayana) (Katman & Tupari 2022).



Umat *Theravada* menggunakan bahasa Pali, umat *Mahayana* dan *Tantrayana* menggunakan bahasa Sanskerta. Kemudian, umat Buddha aliran yang berkembang berikutnya mengikuti bahasa sesuai daerahnya. Demikian juga, tata cara kebaktian umum berbeda-beda dan beragam.

Perbedaan memberikan suatu keindahan tersendiri dan tidak harus diseragamkan. Akan tetapi, perbedaan perlu disikapi dengan menerima perbedaan, dengan senantiasa bersikap toleransi. Sikap toleransi dalam kondisi yang beragam sebagaimana sabda Buddha dalam *Angguttara Nikaya III, 288-289* berkaitan dengan enam dharma yang memiliki tujuan kepada pengikutnya untuk saling mengingat, mencintai, menghormati tolong-menolong, dan menghindari percekungan yang dapat menjungkir terbenutnya kerukunan dan kesatuan.

Enam dharma tersebut terdiri atas:

1. memancarkan cinta kasih (*metta*) dalam perbuatan sehari-hari,
2. menggunakan cinta kasih dalam setiap ucapan berbicara dengan etika yang baik,
3. selalu mengarahkan pikiran pada kebajikan,
4. menerima buah karma yang baik,
5. melaksanakan moral (*sila*),
6. pandangan yang sama yang bersifat membebaskan diri dari penderitaan



#### Berdiskusi

Aktivitas Siswa: Aliran dalam agama Buddha

Bentuklah kelompok diskusi. Kemudian, lakukan kegiatan berikut.

1. Carilah informasi mengenai sejarah terbentuknya aliran *Theravada*, *Mahayana*, dan *Vajrayana*!
2. Apa perbedaan ketiga aliran tersebut?
3. Presentasikan hasil studi literatur kelompok kalian di depan kelas.
4. Diskusikan dengan kelompok lain secara bersama-sama!

Cermati dan renungkan Inspirasi Dharma berikut ini. Kemudian jelaskan pesan-pesan yang terkandung di dalamnya!

Figure 2.

### Student Discussion Prompt on Differences Among Buddhist Traditions, Highlighting the Textbook's Limited and Descriptive Presentation

The textbook constructs inter-sectarian inclusivity: "Differences in tradition can actually become a strength for Buddhism because Buddhism becomes more flexible and adaptable" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:175), reflecting inclusivity principles. Besides highlighting diversity, narratives strengthen core commonalities across Buddhist schools. Grade X explains fundamental teachings common to each school (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021), grade XI addresses commonalities in ritual practices (Santoso and Waldiyono 2021), and grade XII emphasizes all schools share the ultimate goal of nibbana attainment (Katman & Tupari 2022). This commonality emphasis strengthens integrative frameworks, presenting diversity as practice variations from identical foundational teachings.

#### b. Anti-Violence

Buddhist Religious Education textbooks for senior high schools consistently represent anti-violence values through moral teachings, scriptural quotations, and educational narratives emphasizing peaceful conflict resolution. The grade X textbook articulates the principle that "teachings of goodness should be spread through good methods, not through violence, as in Buddha's teaching on universal loving-kindness" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:201). Grade XI explicitly identifies Buddhism's main characteristics as developing loving-kindness, avoiding violence, and not imposing one's will on others (Santoso and Waldiyono 2021). Grade XII strengthens anti-violence representation through Dhammapada quotations regarding stopping hatred without retaliation (Katman & Tupari, 2022) and the Karaniya Mettā Sutta teaching: "Do not deceive others or insult anyone. Do not, out of anger and hatred, wish others harm" (Katman & Tupari, 2022:133) These teachings form ethical foundations for non-violent living and character formation enabling students to face social conflicts wisely.

Historical anti-violence representations appear through narratives of Buddha mediating conflicts between tribes fighting over Rohini River water through dialogue and rational consideration (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021), reinforced by Mahaparinibbāna Sutta quotations about deliberation importance, as practiced by the Vajji tribe reaching consensus in collective meetings (Kuntari

& Kuswanto 2021). This confirms peaceful resolution and deliberative approaches as integral to Buddhist social ethics since early times, worthy of contemporary emulation.

In contemporary contexts, textbooks include Pak Viryo's story, a Buddhist teacher who became a violence victim yet consistently chose peace amid inter-religious conflicts (Kuntari & Kuswanto 2021), and Thich Nhat Hanh's biography, a global peace figure fighting for Vietnam reconciliation without violence (Katman & Tupari 2022). Thich Nhat Hanh's portrayal as both Buddhist figure and global activist refusing to take sides while choosing peaceful mediation provides concrete examples of implementing compassion (*karuna*), non-violence (*ahimsa*), and wisdom in challenging socio-political situations, demonstrating textbooks contain not only religious doctrine but inspirational figures relevant to character education and anti-violence values development.

### **c. National Commitment**

National commitment in Buddhist Religious Education textbooks shows progressivity from grades X to XII with increasing depth. Grade X integrates Buddhist values and Pancasila through reflection: "How do you, as Buddhists, interpret Buddhist religious values into the values of Pancasila as the state foundation in inter-religious life?" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:35). Unity emphasis is articulated in "Unity is also the foundation of the Indonesian nation... likewise with the ideals of Buddhism... which desire unity" (Kuntari & Kuswanto, 2021:69), reinforced by quoting Cula sila in the Brahmajala Sutta emphasizing unity and solidarity importance, where Buddha criticized divisive extreme views and affirmed maintaining inner and social harmony.

The grade XI textbook also conveys teachings from Anguttara Nikaya III, 288–289, strengthening spiritual foundations by outlining six dharmas encouraging Buddha's followers to "remember, love, respect, help each other, and avoid quarrels" (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:42). National commitment expands to cultural and social dimensions, affirming Indonesia as a Pancasila state guaranteeing religious freedom (Santoso and Waldiyono 2021). Pancasila as foundation for tolerant behavior appears in "...a form of tolerance in national and state life according to the principle of Belief in One Supreme God in Pancasila and the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:65).

Meanwhile, in grade XII, the textbook presents national commitment more contextually and reflectively, directing learning toward active participation addressing global and national issues including intolerance. Learning objectives state: "Students can demonstrate attitudes and behaviors in taking roles and positions on problems...in alignment with Buddhist religious values and Pancasila" (Katman & Tupari, 2022:119), with reflective invitations: "What attitudes and behaviors do you demonstrate to show your role and position

toward religious moderation...?" (Katman & Tupari, 2022:137-138, 163). This reflects efforts forming Buddhist students' character capable of articulating spiritual values in socio-political nationhood realms.

#### **d. Accommodation of Local Culture**

The indicator of local cultural accommodation in religious moderation is predominantly represented in the grade XI textbook as an effort to recognize and integrate local culture into religious narratives. The textbook quotes Buddha's sermon in Anguttara Nikāya I.189, stating that Buddhist teachings do not simply reject or accept traditions without considering their benefits and meanings (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:29,32), opening space to align religious teachings with local societal values. The textbook displays local cultural elements such as *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), regional languages, and traditional arts aligned with Buddhist practices. In the "Indonesian Cultural Diversity" text, it explains that Buddhist songs and ceremonies can use local languages and forms, mentioning "in studying Dhamma, it is adapted to each culture. "A significant representation of local cultural accommodation is identified in the introduction of Buddhist Wayang (shadow puppetry) as distinctive Indonesian art elevating Buddhist teaching values, with stories from Jataka and Dharma teachings through traditional Javanese performances (Santoso and Waldiyono 2021), showing integration between local artistic expression and Buddhist spiritual values.

Nevertheless, despite efforts to include local cultural elements, the "Indonesian Cultural Diversity" material generally reveals several weaknesses. Its presentation tends to be descriptive without philosophical deepening of Buddhist values underlying the culture. Comparisons between general culture and Buddhist culture are sometimes presented rigidly, for example: "Different from languages in Buddhism, namely Pali, Sanskrit, Mandarin, Javanese, and others. However, in studying Dharma, it is adapted to each culture" (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:28). This statement appears to separate Buddhist language from local culture without explaining the philosophical meaning of such adaptation. This limitation indicates the need for strengthening through thematic and contextual approaches inviting students to develop Buddhist understanding actively and meaningfully rooted in Indonesian local culture.

#### **e. Potential Bias in Textbook Representation**

Analysis based on Sadker & Zittleman (2010) framework adapted for religious contexts reveals several forms of potential bias in the representation of religious moderation values in Buddhist Religious Education textbooks. First, religious invisibility is identified through the systematic exclusion of belief systems beyond the six most widely practiced religions in Indonesia. While

textbooks acknowledge religious diversity, local beliefs such as Kejawen receive only superficial mention in grade X as a post-Majapahit legacy without substantial elaboration (Kuntari & Kuswanto 2021). Grade XI and XII textbooks provide no representational space for belief forms outside these six religions, creating epistemic exclusion that contradicts constitutional guarantees of inclusive religious and belief freedom. This invisibility effectively marginalizes the existence and contributions of local spirituality as part of Indonesia's religious landscape, reinforcing state normative frameworks that privilege widely recognized religions.

Second, imbalance and selectivity alongside religious fragmentation appear in the presentation of inter-sectarian differences within Buddhism. The textbooks adopt a predominantly descriptive approach limited to symbolic aspects such as vihara architectural forms, monastic robe colors, and languages. For instance, the statement “Theravāda followers use Pāli language, while Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna followers use Sanskrit” (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:42) presents surface-level distinctions without philosophical depth or exploration of unique doctrinal contributions each tradition offers to global Buddhist development. Similarly, the “Indonesian Cultural Diversity” material tends toward rigid presentation, exemplified by: “Different from languages in Buddhism, namely Pali, Sanskrit, Mandarin, Javanese, and others. However, in studying Dharma, it is adapted to each culture” (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:28). This approach creates artificial separation between Buddhist language and local culture without explaining the philosophical meaning of such adaptation, fragmenting what could be presented as organic cultural-religious integration.

Third, religious cosmetic bias manifests in the pedagogical paradox between student activities and textual foundation. While textbooks include student activities directing learners to explore the history and differences among Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna schools, these activities lack adequate narrative foundation in the main text. This approach creates an appearance of depth and inclusivity while actually placing the burden of substantive learning on teachers and external resources, risking superficial understanding or reinforcement of erroneous stereotypes. The textbooks present diversity symbolically through cross-sectarian inspirational figures and acknowledgment of multiple traditions, yet fail to provide the analytical tools or contextual depth necessary for students to meaningfully engage with doctrinal complexity. This cosmetic approach to diversity may inadvertently limit students' capacity for critical religious literacy while creating an illusion of comprehensive inter-sectarian education.

Table 3  
Types and Manifestations of Bias in Textbook Representation

Bias Type	Manifestation in Textbooks	Evidence & Page References
Religious Invisibility	Systematic exclusion of indigenous spiritual traditions and beliefs outside six officially recognized religions. Local beliefs marginalized; epistemic exclusion contradicts constitutional guarantees	Kejawen is mentioned only superficially in Grade X as a post-Majapahit legacy, while Grades XI and XII provide no representational space for belief systems outside the six religions: Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism (Katman & Tupari, 2022:119-136)
Imbalance /Selectivity	Surface-level distinctions presented without philosophical depth. Inter-sectarian differences limited to symbolic aspects (vihara forms, robe colors, languages)	“Theravāda followers use Pāli language, while Mahāyāna and Tantrayāna followers use Sanskrit” (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:42); No exploration of unique doctrinal contributions (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021)
Cosmetic Bias	Student activities direct exploration of Theravāda/Mahāyāna/Vajrayāna differences without adequate narrative foundation in main text. Appearance of depth while lacking substantive content	Activities present diversity symbolically through cross-sectarian figures but lack analytical tools for meaningful engagement (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:40-53); Burden shifted to teachers/external resources

#### f. Analysis of Illustrations

Tolerance values are widely represented visually in senior high school textbooks. Analysis of the visual dimension reveals representational stratification categorized into two distinctive paradigms. First, symbolic-declarative representation manifests religious plurality through visualization of six religious symbols in harmonious spatial configuration (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:1, 2, 7). This visual construction demonstrates systematic efforts to present cohesive and integrated diversity narratives. The illustrations portray figures from Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism within the same visual frame, each represented through specific symbols and worship activities reflecting its own religious tradition. Second, contextual-praxis



representation presents concrete interactional dynamics, such as interfaith philanthropic practices and religious honor rituals (Santoso & Waldiyono, 2021:30, 33, 65). This representation shows the transformation of the tolerance concept from an abstract level toward actualization in operational social practices, indicating progressivity in the pedagogical approach to religious tolerance.

Table 4  
Results of Illustration Analysis in Textbooks

Value	Page/Placement			Description
	X	XI	XII	
Tolerance among Buddhist Schools	1, 4, 37, 39, 68	30, 76	1, 2, 16, 26, 27	The illustrations in the textbook represent internal diversity within Buddhism through visual depictions of different monastic traditions and ethnic backgrounds. They include figures of monks and nuns wearing robes from various Buddhist schools.
Interreligious Tolerance and Respect for Beliefs		1, 2, 7, 10, 15, 30, 33, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 65, 72, 73	120, 121	The illustrations portray figures from six major religions commonly found in Indonesia, namely Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, within the same visual frame. Each is represented through specific symbols and worship activities that reflect its own religious tradition.
Non-violence			133	The illustration conveys the value of non-violence through the practice of deliberation ( <i>musyawarah</i> ) as a peaceful and inclusive way of making decisions within the Buddhist community.
Commitment to Nationalism		25, 79,	127, 128, 132, 134	The illustration of national commitment in the textbook is expressed through visual representations that integrate national symbols such as the Garuda emblem, the Pancasila, the Red and White flag, and other national attributes within Buddhist cultural contexts.

Accommodation of Local Culture and Arts		21, 22, 26, 27, 34, 77, 78, 83, 89, 99, 111, 120	30	The illustrations display a variety of ethnic and cultural heritages that reflect Indonesia's richness in local traditions, attire, and regional arts. Several illustrations show acculturation between Buddhist teachings and local culture through depictions of ceremonies that honor diversity in artistic and spiritual expressions. Examples include Buddhist rituals using local attire such as batik and creative art forms such as puppet performances, as well as monks wearing batik-patterned robes.
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## 2. Discussion

This study demonstrates that Buddhist Religious Education textbooks for senior high schools have systematically integrated religious moderation values across curricula. Evidence includes representations of *brahmavihara*, *ahimsa*, and *majjhima patipada* teachings, with specific attention to the "Becoming a Moderate Student" theme in grade XII. These findings align with the Ministry of Religious Affairs framework (Kementrian Agama RI 2019) and fundamental Buddhist values (Vélez de Cea, 2010; Clayton, 2018; Dorloh & Yusuf, 2016).

Religious moderation is operationalized in these textbooks as more than passive middle-ground positioning. Rather, it functions as an active praxis that integrates openness with critical rationality, a perspective conceptually distinct from simple tolerance or coexistence. Religious moderation in this context is understood as a tolerant and open perspective toward various viewpoints (Gurses, 2014; Schwedler & Schwedler, 2006) and aligns with Somer's, (2014) emphasizes democratic religious attitudes accepting pluralism and anti-violence. This conceptualization suggests that the textbooks promote a sophisticated understanding of pluralism grounded in critical engagement rather than superficial coexistence.

Tolerance is represented through multiple modalities: the Kalama Sutta's emphasis on critical inquiry, historical depictions of Buddhist-Hindu coexistence, and biographies of cross-sectarian figures such as Bhikkhu Ashin Jinarakkhita, Bhikkhu Bodhi, and Thich Nhat Hanh. The positioning of tolerance as an epistemic virtue reflects Apple, (2004) argument that textbooks function as primary reference points for society's knowledge, culture, and morality. Furthermore, the textbooks' use of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as a conceptual reference embeds Buddhist moderation within Indonesian cultural wisdom,

demonstrating intentional alignment between Buddhist principles and national ideology.

Anti-violence values are integrated through direct citations from Brahmajala Sutta and Anguttara Nikaya, combined with biographical examples of conflict mediators. The textbooks also highlight cultural accommodation through references to Buddhist *Wayang*, illustrating doctrinal adaptation to Indonesian cultural contexts. These representations resonate with Ghosh et al., (2017) argument that religious education prevents extremism by establishing frameworks for coexisting religion and culture. Linking national commitment to spiritual practice also reflects Etzioni (2006) and Curry & Houser (1997) conception of value-based citizenship, supporting Pajarianto (2022) argument that religious moderation enables multicultural living grounded in doctrinal ethics rather than abstract rhetoric.

Despite these positive representations, analysis based on Sadker & Zittleman (2010) framework reveals three systematic biases. First, religious invisibility occurs through the exclusion of belief systems outside the six major religions, as local spirituality such as *Kejawen* is mentioned only superficially. This mirrors state classification systems and risks reproducing what Gebregeorgis, (2017) and Widodo, (2018) identify as hidden curriculum effects that shape students' perceptions of "legitimate" versus "marginal" religious identities. Such representational gaps may undermine the textbooks' intended multicultural inclusivity.

Second, imbalance and selectivity appear in the treatment of inter-sectarian differences, which are described mainly through symbolic elements such as robe colors, vihara architecture, and liturgical languages. Although this gives the appearance of inclusivity, the lack of philosophical explanation reflects what Ndura, (2004) terms "bias through superficiality," where diversity is acknowledged but not substantively explored. This can result in cosmetic pluralism, an impression of inclusivity without meaningful engagement.

Third, Cosmetic bias appears in the textbooks through a surface-level portrayal of diversity that creates an illusion of depth. As noted by Sadker & Zittleman (2010), cosmetic bias arises when materials display diversity superficially without integrating perspectives meaningfully. This occurs in two forms: (1) the symbolic inclusion of cross-sectarian figures and references to multiple Buddhist traditions without providing the analytical context needed for students to understand doctrinal complexity; and (2) student tasks that ask learners to explore inter-sectarian differences despite insufficient narrative grounding in the main text. Such practices simulate inclusivity while shifting the burden of substantive learning to teachers and external sources, increasing the risk of superficial understanding or mistaken stereotypes, especially for non-Buddhist students. These findings echo Gebregeorgis, (2017) and Widodo, (2018)

who warn that unnoticed bias in textbooks can contribute to misunderstanding and intolerance.

This study contributes to religious moderation scholarship by examining non-Islamic religious education textbooks in Indonesia, an area often overlooked in existing research. By synthesizing the Ministry of Religious Affairs' moderation framework with Buddhist doctrinal values and integrating bias analysis based on Sadker & Zittleman (2010) adapted theory, the study expands global discourse on representing religious moderation in curricula (Alabdulhadi, 2019; Ghazi et al., 2011; Blinkova & Vermeer, 2019). These findings reinforce Parker (2014) argument regarding the critical role of religious education in addressing intolerance, while also highlighting the need for more comprehensive curricular approaches to ensure representational equity.

Three specific improvements warrant prioritization. First, textbooks should provide philosophical frameworks enabling students to understand distinctive theological contributions of different Buddhist traditions, moving from descriptive cataloging to interpretive depth. Second, future revisions should systematically include overlooked traditions, particularly Kejawen and syncretic practices, with substantive engagement equal to major religions, aligning with Indonesia's constitutional commitment to religious pluralism. Third, pedagogical activities should be scaffolded with adequate textual foundations explicitly connecting cultural manifestations to underlying Buddhist philosophical principles, transforming learning from surface-level exposure to genuine cross-cultural comprehension. Implementation requires both textbook revision and teacher professional development programs emphasizing religious literacy and sophisticated pluralism pedagogy.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study shows that Buddhist Religious Education textbooks embed religious moderation through Buddhist teachings, historical narratives, cross-sectarian figures, and Pancasila ideology, framing tolerance as critical engagement rather than passive acceptance. However, three biases emerge: religious invisibility through the exclusion of belief traditions outside six religions (Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism), imbalance in presenting inter-sectarian differences limited to symbolic aspects, and cosmetic bias when student activities lack adequate textual scaffolding.

Theoretically, the study demonstrates that doctrinal grounding can serve as a mechanism for multicultural education and expands textbook research by applying Sadker and Zittleman's bias framework to religious materials, revealing how structural content choices reproduce hierarchical arrangements of religion despite commitments to pluralism. The findings also show that tolerance can

function as reasoning-based critical engagement, offering alternatives to passive coexistence in interfaith education.

Practically, curriculum developers should: (1) provide conceptual frameworks to explain doctrinal diversity beyond symbolic representations; (2) include marginalized spiritual traditions with proportional depth; and (3) scaffold student activities with narrative foundations connecting cultural practices to underlying philosophical principles. These steps require teacher training focused on religious literacy. Future research should examine classroom mediation by teachers, students' understanding of religious moderation, and conduct comparative studies on other minority religion textbooks to assess systemic bias patterns in Indonesia's educational materials.

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