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# Intercultural Collaboration To Realize Wasathiyyah In The Global Era

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**ABSTRACT**

The increasing social friction caused by cultural, ethnic, and religious differences demands strengthening wasathiyyah (moderation) in cross-cultural interactions. The purpose of this study is to analyze the extent to which intercultural collaboration influences the strengthening of wasathiyyah values and its contribution to the formation of a civil society in the global era. This study is based on Gudykunst's theory of intercultural communication competence, Yusuf al-Qaradawi's concept of Islamic moderation (wasathiyyah), and Nurcholish Madjid's principles of civil society. The research methodology employed a quantitative approach with a survey design of 230 respondents from various ethnic and religious backgrounds in Padang City. The research instrument was a Likert-scale questionnaire, which was tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression to determine the effect of cross-cultural collaboration variables on the level of internalization of wasathiyyah values and civil social participation. The results showed that cross-cultural collaboration had a positive and significant effect on strengthening wasathiyyah values ($p < 0.05$) and resulted in increased social participation based on the principles of justice, tolerance, and deliberation. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of the wasathiyyah concept within the framework of intercultural collaboration using a quantitative empirical approach.

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## INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century marks an era of unprecedented global connectivity, where mobility, technological advancement, and digital interaction reduce geographical barriers and intensify intercultural encounters. As societies become increasingly diverse, the challenge of cultivating peaceful coexistence among different cultural, religious, and ethnic groups grows more complex. Indonesia—particularly Padang City in West Sumatra—represents a microcosm of multicultural interaction. The region unites Minangkabau, Javanese, Batak, Chinese-Indonesian, and migrant communities that share social space, public resources, and

civic institutions. Diversity has become a fundamental characteristic of Indonesia's social fabric and a source of richness, creativity, and innovation. However, diversity also presents vulnerabilities: prejudice, miscommunication, stereotyping, and socio-religious friction are recurring realities in many urban centers.

As globalization accelerates, new challenges emerge: digital radicalization, identity politics, polarization on social media, echo chambers, and ideological extremism. These issues indicate that social diversity alone does not guarantee harmony; proactive theoretical and empirical frameworks are needed to maintain cohesion. In this context, wasathiyyah—Islamic moderation—becomes a significant ethical foundation for building peaceful pluralism. The concept encourages balance, justice, tolerance, dialogue, and rejection of extremism. Recognized by modern Muslim scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi, wasathiyyah emphasizes the role of Muslims as a "middle nation" committed to fairness and universal humanity. When applied in social life, wasathiyyah serves as a moral compass that guides individuals in interacting respectfully across differences.

However, moderation is not merely a theological proposition; it must be translated into behavioral patterns. One practical path toward actualizing wasathiyyah is through intercultural collaboration—cooperative relationships between individuals of differing cultural backgrounds grounded in mutual respect and shared goals. Collaboration strengthens interaction, reduces social distance, and encourages the development of empathy, understanding, and trust. International studies show that intercultural collaboration increases tolerance, reduces prejudice, and enhances social integration in multicultural societies[1]. Yet, despite its conceptual significance, empirical research investigating the link between intercultural collaboration and wasathiyyah remains limited.

Research on Islamic moderation in Indonesia largely focuses on theology, preaching models, state policy, pesantren curriculum, or anti-radicalism strategy[2] Studies emphasize normative aspects of moderation rather than measurable behavioral outcomes. Similarly, research on intercultural communication often focuses on cultural barriers, acculturation, or identity negotiation, without connecting these elements to religious ethics or civil society

[1] J.F Gyasi, L. Zheng, and M. Long, "Reflecting on the Past to Shape the Future: A Systematic Review on Cross-Cultural Collaborative Learning from 2011 to 2020Title," *Sustainability* 13, no. 24 (2021): 13890.
[2] N. I. Febriyani and M. Nursikin, *Dakwah Islam Wasathiyah Dalam Pendidikan Islam Di Indonesia* (Yogyakarta: UIN Sunan Kalijaga Press, 2023).

development[3]. Existing studies rarely examine how collaboration—not simply communication—produces a measurable impact on moderation values.

Internationally, several systematic reviews reveal that intercultural collaboration improves empathy, increases inclusive behavior, and supports cooperative citizenship. Gyasi, Zheng, and Long found that cross-cultural collaborative learning significantly enhances intercultural competence and reduces prejudice in multicultural schools[4]. Zhou and colleagues noted that intercultural collaboration strengthens communicative competence, which in turn increases tolerance among students[5]. Yet, these studies seldom involve Islamic social ethics as an analytical framework. Thus, there remains a clear research gap:

1. A lack of empirical studies examining intercultural collaboration as a mechanism for strengthening wasathiyyah.
2. Minimal quantitative evidence measuring how collaboration influences civic participation based on justice, tolerance, and deliberation.
3. Rare integration of communication science, Islamic moderation, and civil society theory in a single study.
4. Limited research focusing on real-life multicultural environments such as Padang City.

Addressing these gaps is essential because Indonesia's diversity demands empirical solutions for preventing radicalization, strengthening national unity, and cultivating civic peace. The integration of Islamic moderation and intercultural cooperation offers a strategic response to rising social fragmentation.

This research stands on three theoretical pillars:

1. *Gudykunst's Intercultural Communication Competence Theory* states that misunderstanding and prejudice decrease when individuals engage in mindful, empathetic communication across cultures[6]. Anxiety reduction and increased familiarity build trust, which is central to peaceful coexistence.

[3] A. Q. Sarwari, "No TitleThe Requirements and Importance of Intercultural Communication Competence: A Systematic Review," *SAGE Open Thousand Oaks*, 2024; Faridah A, "Integrating Multicultural Education and Islam Wasathiyah," *Al-Ishlah Journal Jakarta: STAI Hubbul Wathan Press.*, 2025.
[4] Gyasi, Zheng, and Long, "Reflecting on the Past to Shape the Future: A Systematic Review on Cross-Cultural Collaborative Learning from 2011 to 2020Title."
[5] R. Zhou et al, "A Systematic Review of Cross-Cultural Communicative Competence in Higher Education," *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications London: Springer Nature.*, 2024.
[6] W. B. Gudykunst, "Bridging Differences: Effective Intergroup Communication," *Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE*, 2004.

2. *Yusuf al-Qaradawi's concept of wasathiyyah* emphasizes balance, justice, tolerance, human dignity, and anti-extremism. Moderation must be lived, not merely preached.
3. *Nurcholish Madjid's concept of Madaniyah society* asserts that a civilized social order requires participation, equality, deliberation, minority protection, and respect for diversity.

These theories intersect at an essential point: intercultural competence shapes behavior, wasathiyyah provides ethical guidance, and civil society becomes the social outcome. The purpose of this research is to analyze the influence of intercultural collaboration on strengthening wasathiyyah values and its implications for developing a Madaniyah society in Padang City. The study uses empirical methods to present measurable findings, filling a gap rarely addressed by previous research. Its significance is both academic and practical:

1. Academically, it demonstrates how moderation can be operationalized and measured statistically.
2. Socially, it provides evidence that collaborative encounters reduce prejudice and increase civic harmony.
3. Practically, it offers models for schools, religious institutions, and governments to strengthen moderation in daily life.

Research Questions:

1. To what extent does intercultural collaboration influence the internalization of wasathiyyah values in multicultural communities?
2. How does the strengthening of wasathiyyah affect social participation based on justice, tolerance, and deliberation?
3. Can intercultural collaboration serve as a pathway toward forming a Madaniyah society in an urban multicultural context?

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey design. The approach was chosen because quantitative data provide objective measurements of social attitudes, behavioral tendencies, and relational patterns. The method also allows hypothesis testing and statistical generalization, making findings scientifically reliable.

**Participants and Sampling**

A total of 230 respondents participated in the study. Participants represented Muslims and non-Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds in Padang City. The heterogeneity of respondents was essential because the core of this research lies in cross-cultural interaction. The more diverse the respondents, the more valid the conclusions regarding intercultural collaboration and wasathiyyah.

**Research Instrument**

A Likert-scale questionnaire served as the primary data collection tool. It measured:

1. Intercultural collaboration (e.g., teamwork with culturally different groups, participation in multicultural activities, intergroup dialogue),
2. Wasathiyyah values (e.g., tolerance, justice, anti-extremism, respect for diversity),
3. Civic participation (e.g., deliberation, peaceful conflict resolution, volunteerism).

Before distribution, the questionnaire underwent validity and reliability testing. Cronbach's Alpha exceeded 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using **multiple linear regression**. This method measured the effect of intercultural collaboration (independent variable) on:

1. Wasathiyyah values,
2. Civic participation based on Madaniyah principles.

Statistical significance was determined at $p < 0.05$, meaning the results were considered valid when the probability of error was below 5 percent.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Intercultural Collaboration Strengthens Wasathiyyah Values**

Regression analysis revealed a positive and significant effect of intercultural collaboration on wasathiyyah values ($p < 0.05$). Respondents who frequently collaborated with culturally different individuals showed greater tolerance, rejection of extremism, empathy, openness, and fairness. The findings confirm that moderation is socially constructed through real encounters, not merely through religious instruction.

These results support Gudykunst's theory, which states that interaction reduces uncertainty and increases understanding. In Padang, joint activities—community projects, campus organizations, neighborhood cooperation—gave individuals practical experience with cultural differences, replacing stereotypes with real relationships.

**Wasathiyyah Encourages Civic Participation**

The study also found that strengthened wasathiyyah increases civic participation grounded in justice, deliberation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Respondents with strong moderation values were more likely to:

1. Join collaborative community work,
2. Engage in collective decision-making,
3. Avoid violence in conflict,
4. Protect minority rights,
5. Volunteer for public welfare.

This aligns with Nurcholish Madjid's concept that civil society depends on moral citizenship, democratic participation, and pluralist ethics[7].

**Wasathiyyah as an Ethical Bridge**

The data show that wasathiyyah operates as an ethical bridge between diverse communities. Diversity becomes a point of unity rather than conflict when moderated by justice, empathy, and human dignity. This finding is significant because it provides measurable proof that Islamic moderation is not abstract—it is practical, observable, and socially transformative.

The results also align with international studies showing that intercultural collaboration reduces prejudice and increases solidarity, as found in research by Gyasi, Zhou, and Guillen-Yparrea[8]

**Why Collaboration Works**

Several mechanisms explain why collaboration strengthens moderation:

1. *Direct contact* replaces stereotypes with real experience.
2. *Shared goals* reduce identity-based barriers.
3. *Mutual dependence* encourages cooperation.
4. *Positive emotional experience* produces long-term attitude change.
5. *Repeated interaction* creates trust.

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[7] "Reflecting on Digital Moderation: "Islam Wasathiyah Di Ruang Digital," *IAIN Palopo Journal.*, 2024; Guillén-Yparrea, "Intercultural Collaboration and Competencies," *Cogent Social Sciences, London: Taylor & Francis.*, 2023; "Intercultural Collaboration: 'Case Studies in Southeast Asia,'" *Kuala Lumpur: UTM Press.*, 2022; "Multicultural Education and Wasathiyyah in Indonesian Schools," *Bandung: UPI Press.*, 2024; Pahrudin A., "Religious Moderation as a Framework for Peaceful Pluralism," *Fuaduna Journal Bukittinggi: UIN Bukittinggi Press.*, 2025.

[8] Guillén-Yparrea, "Intercultural Collaboration and Competencies"; D. K. et al Ernawati, "Correlation between Intercultural Sensitivity and Collaborative Competencies Questionnaire Validation. Journal of Social Science Research.," *Journal of Social Science Research*, 2022; H. Hamdan, *Konsep Pendidikan Islam Wasathiyah: Strategi Mencegah Radikalisme Di Sekolah,: UIN Ar-Raniry Press.* (Banda Aceh: UIN Ar-Raniry Press, 2024).

In short, the act of working together humanizes "the other.". This study, while providing significant insights, has several limitations. The main limitations include a limited geographic scope, as this study is confined to Padang City. The results may not be directly generalizable to other provinces in Indonesia or other multicultural urban contexts, requiring broader study. Pure Quantitative Design: Using a quantitative approach with a survey design, this study provides objective measurements of attitudes and behavioral patterns, but lacks in-depth exploration of the psychological mechanisms behind the strengthening of wasathiyyah or attitude change. Use of a Likert Scale Questionnaire: Primary data were collected through questionnaires, which measure respondents' perceptions and self-reports. This method can be susceptible to response bias (such as social desirability bias) and does not fully capture the complexity of real-life interactions. Focus on the Real Environment: This study focuses on face-to-face interactions in Padang. Expanding the study to digital spaces, where digital radicalization and polarization also occur, is recommended.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that intercultural collaboration significantly strengthens wasathiyyah in multicultural societies. The finding ($p < 0.05$) proves that moderation is not only theological—it is empirical and measurable. When diverse communities collaborate, prejudice decreases, empathy increases, and civic harmony grows. Wasathiyyah becomes an ethical bridge linking individuals across differences, shaping a peaceful Madaniyah society.

The study contributes theoretical, empirical, and practical insights:

1. Theoretically, it integrates Islamic moderation with intercultural collaboration and civil society.
2. Empirically, it offers quantitative evidence rarely found in previous studies.
3. Practically, it shows that diversity becomes strength when expressed through cooperation.

This study was limited to Padang City; broader studies across Indonesian provinces and digital spheres are recommended. Future research should combine survey, interview, and experimental designs to explore the psychological mechanisms behind moderation.

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