

Analysis of Peer Conformity in Reference to Moderate Religiosity for The Development of Christian Education of GMIM Christian Junior High School Students in Manado

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Abstract

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Throughout adolescence, a peer group is very important for teenagers. To be accepted in the group, they try to adapt to the values and rules of the group, including moderate religious behavior. This study aims to analyze peer conformity in relation to students' moderate religiosity as an essential component in the development of Christian religious education. This study was conducted on 219 students at four GMIM Christian Junior High Schools in Manado. It applied a correlational quantitative approach with a survey method. Before being distributed to the respondents, the questionnaire was tested on 30 students and tested for its validity and reliability. According to the result, the questionnaire was revised and distributed to the respondents. The value of the relationship between peer conformity and students' moderate religiosity was $\text{Sig.} = 0,001 < \alpha = 0,05$ and the value of correlation coefficient was 0,952. It indicated that there was a very strong and significant correlation between peer conformity and students' moderate religiosity. The result showed that there was an influence from the peer conformity variable on moderate religiosity variables with a significant value $p = 0,001$ which was smaller than the set alpha value $\alpha = 0,05$ ($p = 0,001 < 0,05$). Peer conformity had an influence of 54,7% on students' moderate religiosity.

Keywords: Conformity, Moderate, Religiosity Christian Education

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is often described as a transition period from childhood to adulthood in which major changes occur including physical, emotional, and social changes. According to Jalaluddin (2021), "adolescents' understanding of religious teachings and practices is strongly influenced by developmental factors". Research conducted by Rantzou & Mpellou (2021) revealed that adolescents are able to freely express their religious identity. Furthermore, the study also indicated that interest in religion, sacraments, and faith affects their religious behavior. According to Adawiyah et al (2020), the adolescent age group must receive special attention since they are vulnerable to being exposed to intolerance doctrine, radicalism and even terrorism. It is because they are relatively unstable, sensitive to external stimuli, and strongly curious in practicing religion.

Indonesia is a plural and multicultural country which is possible creating imbalances with conflict potential. Therefore, a solution is needed to minimize conflict especially in religious matters. According to Akhmadi (2019), religious moderation is a middle way in overcoming existing diversity. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019) also emphasizes the same thing that "religious moderation is a solution to create balance so that people can

live side by side and to prevent the religious believers captured in extremism, intolerance, and , religious abuse in practicing their religious teachings.

Every religious adherent should adopt a moderate attitude, emphasizing a balance between commitment to their own religious teachings and respect for the practices of other faiths. According to Widodo and Karnawati (2019), moderation does not mean putting aside religious principles or teachings for the sake of being tolerant towards adherents of other religions. Moderate religiosity is a balance of religious attitude and behavior between religious practices (exclusive) and respect for different religious practices (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Several studies highlight the concept of moderate religiosity in Indonesia. According to a report on religious freedom by the Setara Institute (2018), there were 2,400 incidents of violations of religious freedom recorded over 12 years, from 2007 to 2018. These included 398 disruptions of places of worship, comprising 199 cases involving churches, 133 cases involving mosques, 32 cases involving faith-based places of worship, 15 cases involving Buddhist temples (Viharas), 10 cases involving Confucian temples (Klentengs), 8 cases involving Hindu temples (Puras), and 1 case involving a synagogue.

The 2019 report (Setara Institute, 2019) indicated an increase in cases compared to the previous year, with 160 incidents and 202 actions in 2018 rising to 200 incidents and 237 actions in 2019. However, the 2020 report (Setara Institute, 2020) showed a decrease to 180 incidents, although actions rose to 234. In 2021, the report noted an overall decline in violations, with 171 incidents and 318 actions. While this reduction in incidents and actions suggests some progress, it does not fully indicate significant advancements in religious freedom. The data reveal that the number of incidents in 2020 and 2021 remained relatively consistent (Setara Institute, 2022).

A different perspective on religious tolerance among adolescents is offered by Safirliyah & Mauliana (2015). Their study found that students demonstrated a tolerant attitude through mutual respect and recognition of the rights of individuals from different religions. Similarly, Muslim (2021) examined interfaith tolerance among students at SMP Xaverius Kota Bumi and found strong values of tolerance, with students showing mutual respect despite religious differences. These findings illustrate the diversity in moderate religiosity across Indonesia, particularly among adolescents.

The studies above provide an overview of religious behavior in Indonesia, particularly moderate religiosity, which reflects a perspective and approach to practicing faith in a balanced and non-extreme manner, embodying the core essence of religious teachings. There are several factors influencing moderate religiosity, one of which is peer conformity.

Peer pressure can influence the extent to which students are able to maintain their moderate religiosity. High peer conformity has the potential to shift moderate religious values, making students more vulnerable to adjusting their beliefs and behavior to align with peer group standards. On the other hand, this conformity can also be positively utilized if the peer environment supports and reinforces religious values (Santrock, 2018).

Peer group conformity also has a significant impact on students' behavior. Several studies have shown that, compared to children and adults, early

adolescents are more sensitive to their peers' evaluations (Blakemore, 2018; Somerville et al., 2013).

In the modern era, the challenges for Christian religious education are becoming increasingly complex, especially for teenagers who are in environments with diverse social influences. GMIM Christian Junior High School in Manado City, as an educational institution committed to Christian education, has the responsibility to guide students in developing a religiosity that is not only strong but also moderate, enabling them to be tolerant and relevant in a pluralistic society. Therefore, it is important to understand how peer conformity influences the moderate religiosity of Christian students.

Research on the impact of peer conformity on religiosity among Christian teenagers in Indonesia remains relatively limited. Previous studies have often focused more on the general effects of peer influence on adolescent behavior or on the role of religious education in forming religious character. This research fills that gap by specifically examining the relationship between peer conformity and moderate religiosity among students at GMIM Christian Junior High School in Manado City.

This study aims to analyze peer conformity in relation to students' moderate religiosity as an essential component in the development of Christian religious education. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide insights for educators and policymakers in Christian schools to develop appropriate strategies in supporting the formation of religiosity and moderation among teenage students.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a correlational quantitative research approach with a survey method. This research examines or analyzes the direct effects of exogenous and endogenous variables. The population in this study consists of all students at GMIM Christian Junior High Schools in Manado City, totaling 1,505 students. The researcher uses a sample due to the large size of the population. The researcher employs cluster sampling technique. The clusters in this study are each school. The number of clusters selected is 25% of the existing clusters, meaning four schools are randomly selected (25% of 16 Christian Junior High Schools). All students from the four selected schools will be included as the sample in this study. The data on the number of junior high schools and the number of students in the sample are presented in the table below.

Table 1. Data on Schools and the Number of GMIM Christian Junior High School Students in Manado City as the Research Sample

No	School Name	Subdistrict	Student
1	Christian Junior High School 46 Mapanget Barat	Mapanget	130
2	Christian Junior High School 67 Immanuel Bahu	Malalayang	87
3	Christian Junior High School 4	Tikala	57
4	Getsemani Christian Junior High School	Sario	47
	Total		321

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Data Description and Study Result

In accordance with the result of data processing for the peer conformity variable, it obtained a minimum score of 68, a maximum score of 229; an average score of 155,53; a standard deviation of 56,14; and a median of 167,00. Subsequently, from the distribution, the data was categorized into five interval classes. Data presentation in category form is displayed in table 2 below.

Table 2. Category of Peer Conformity Variable

No	Score Interval	Category	Criterion
1	$X_3 > 239,74$	A	Very High
2	$183,6 < X_3 \leq 239,74$	B	High
3	$127,46 < X_3 \leq 183,6$	C	Quite High
4	$71,32 < X_3 \leq 127,46$	D	Low
5	$X_3 \leq 15,18$	E	Very Low

Table 3. Distribution of Peer Conformity Score

No	Category	Percentage
1	Very High	0%
2	High	48,5%
3	Quite High	10,1%
4	Low	42,5%
5	Very Low	1%

According to the score category above, it was found that of the 219 respondents, most of them scored between 183,6 and 239,74 which was 48,5%.

B. Testing Requirements Analysis

In data analysis using Pearson correlation-coefficient analysis, linear regression analysis, and path analysis, assumptions related to study relationship are required. The assumptions used which are required in path analysis include interval scaled data, normal distribution, fulfillment of linearity assumptions, and homogeneity.

Normality test of the data distribution and homogeneity variance test in regression were not carried out because the respondents were more than 30 students. With a large population, namely 219 respondents, it was assumed that the variations between the variables studied were homogeneous.

The linearity test in this study was only tested through a scatter diagram between the independent variable and the dependent variable. If the scatter diagram tends to form a linear (straight) line, it can be concluded that the two variables are linearly related.

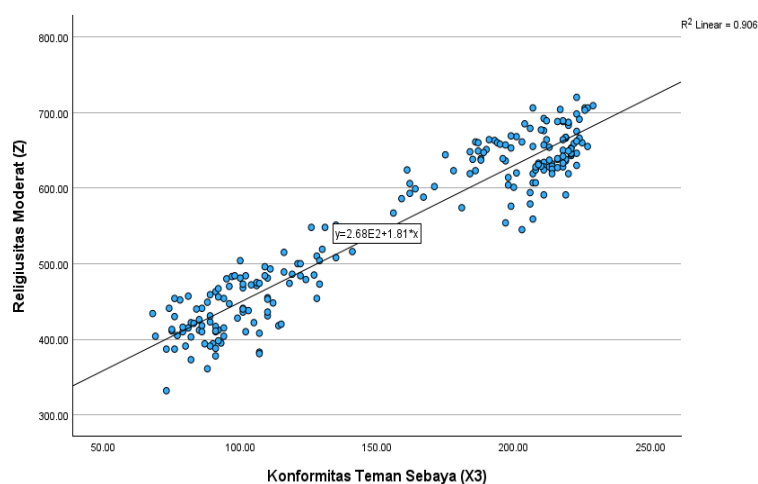


Figure 1. Scatter Diagram on the Relationship of Peer Conformity and Moderate Religiosity

The test results shows that Peer Conformity and Students' Moderate Religiosity are linear or form a straight line. Therefore, the exogenous and endogenous variables in this study are stated to be linearly related.

C. Calculating correlation coefficients

The relationship between peer conformity and students' moderate religiosity was Sig. = 0.001 < = 0.05 and the correlation coefficient value was 0.952. It implied that there was a very strong and significant correlation between Peer Conformity and Students' Moderate Religiosity.

D. Testing Influence Relationships

Table 4. Result of Testing Influence Relationship of the Peer Conformity on the Students' Moderate Religiosity

	Unstandarized B	Coefficients Std. Error	Std. Coef, Beta	t	Sig
Peer Conformity	1.038	.044	.547	23.391	<.001

The result shows positive direct influence of peer conformity (0,547 or 54,7%) on students' moderate religiosity.

According to Glock & Stark (1966), religiosity refers to a person's level of religious commitment which can be seen through activities or behavior related to the religious belief. However, according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic Indonesia (2019), moderation is an attitude that prioritizes balance in terms of beliefs, morals and character, both when treating other people as individuals and when dealing with the government institution.

Some experts formulate the indicators of religiosity, namely, (1) intellectual, involving knowledge owned by a person on the religious teachings he adheres to (Glock & Stark, 1966; Huber, 2003); (2) belief is a person's acceptance on a set of belief in religion such as supranatural power, interaction between God and humans, creation, afterlife, life meaning, and other things in religious teachings (Glock & Stark, 1966; Huber, 2003); (3) religious practices, carried out both publicly and privately. Public worship is a worship performed together like in the ritual, ceremony, and other religious activities, nevertheless private worship is a

worship performed alone (Glock & Stark, 1966; Huber, 2003); (4) religious experience, related to a person's ability to implement religious values and teachings he adheres to. Each religion provides special norms and moral arguments that shape religious perspectives of right and wrong. These dimensions include behaviors of helping, working together, giving charity, upholding justice and truth, being honest, forgiving, not stealing, etc (Glock & Stark, 1966; Saroglou, 2014); (5) religious community, connected with a person's involvement in one or more religious communities (Saroglou, 2014).

Besides religiosity, there are also moderate indicators formulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), namely: (1) nationality commitment, to identify to what extent a person's religious views, attitudes, and practices impacted his loyalty on national basic consensus, especially related to the acceptance of Pancasila as the national ideology, attitude towards ideological challenges in contrast to Pancasila, and nationalism; (2) tolerance which is defined as an attitude of giving space, not interfering with other people's rights to have belief, to express belief, and to express opinion different from a person's belief. Tolerance is always being respectful, accepting others with different beliefs, and thinking positively. (3) Anti-violence/radicalism which is an ideology intended to make changes to the social and political systems by using violence, all verbal, physical and mental violence, for the sake of religion, (4) Being accommodating to local culture is the willingness to accept religious practices that accommodate local traditions and culture. Moderate people tend to be friendly in accepting local traditions and culture in their religious behavior, as long as it is non-conflicting with the basics of religious teachings.

According to Taylor, Peplau, & Sears (2005), Conformity is a tendency to change attitudes and behaviors to conform to group demands/standards. The same definition is stated by Yunalia and Etika (2020) that conformity is a change in one's attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs as a result of actual pressure or imaginative pressure comes from the group. According to Santrock (2018), conformity occurs in early adolescence namely between 13 yo and 16 yo or 17 yo which is indicated by equalizing self with peers in terms of dressing, styling, behaving, doing activities, etc. However, each person has a self-regulation capability which is the human ability to develop internal standards used to evaluate his own behavior. Self-regulation capability influences the upcoming behaviors (Tarsidi, 2012).

Bordens and Horowitz (2012) divide conformity into two parts namely (1) informational influence, an influence caused by a person's response to information received from other people. A person changes opinions based on new information or reinterpretation; (2) normative influence is a social influence in which a person modifies behavior as a response to social rules or norms suitable to a particular group or situation.

According to Sears, Freeman and Peplau (1985), conformity is characterized by several things, namely, (1) cohesiveness aspect, which is influenced by self adjustment and attention to the group; (2) agreement aspect which is influenced by trust, opinions similarity and deviation on group opinions. Since group opinions have a strong pressure, the members must be loyal and adjust their opinions to group opinions; (3) obedience aspect, which is influenced by pressure due to reward, threat or punishment and other people's expectations.

According to Rahman (2020), conformity is influenced by several factors, namely (1) group size; (2) cohesiveness which is to what extent a person has interest in the group; (3) group unanimity. Group with unanimity will put a high pressure on the members to conform. (4) individual desire is a desire to be different from others by showing uniqueness and individuation. A person will conform if the need for individuation is low.

There are other factors that drive individuals to conform. First, the desire for acceptance and recognition from others. Conformity is often seen as a way to gain recognition from the social environment. This process is also part of the effort to achieve self-actualization, where individuals hope to receive praise and admiration from others through conformity. From a psychological perspective, praise and recognition from others have a positive impact on well-being, so some individuals may tend to adjust their behavior to receive praise. Second, fear of rejection. Concerns about being rejected or excluded from a group or social environment often push individuals to conform to existing norms. This is driven by the human need to be accepted and recognized by the groups they belong to, leading individuals to avoid behaviors that may result in rejection. Third, the desire to "feel right." In situations where individuals face dilemmas or uncertainty, the presence of a group with clear opinions or decisions can guide individuals to conform. The desire to "feel right" or have certainty in decision-making can lead individuals to agree with the group's decisions as a way to resolve uncertainty. Fourth, the perception of cognitive consequences. Many individuals believe that conformity is a natural result of being a member of a particular group or social environment. This can be seen as a consequence of social interaction and group identity. Fifth, the fear of criticism or mockery from the group can also drive conformity. Individuals tend to seek approval and support from their group, avoiding behaviors that may lead to criticism or rejection. Sixth, the influence of information from peers or groups. The acceptance of information that aligns with an individual's needs or views from peers or groups can also drive conformity. When individuals receive information that is consistent with their views or can no longer reject the information, they are likely to adjust their behavior to align with the received information (Mcghie et al., 2012).

An individual within a group or environment may choose not to conform for the following reasons. First, they may experience deindividuation, a state in which an individual feels the need to preserve their unique identity and does not want to appear the same as others around them. As a result, they are likely to reject conformity. Second, some individuals may have a strong desire to maintain their freedom and do not want to be bound by existing social rules or norms. Therefore, they may refuse to conform, believing they have the right to make their own decisions without being influenced by social pressure (Brown et al., 1986).

Peer conformity has a biblical foundation. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul warns to be cautious about associations. Reality shows that a person's behavior is influenced by the company they keep, meaning the environment around us affects how we think, feel, and even make decisions. This verse conveys the idea of avoiding deception, steering clear of harmful associations, building a strong moral character for righteous living, being aware of sin, knowing God, and being attentive to the well-being of others around us. The Old Testament emphasizes the

importance of good associations. For example, Leviticus 19:17-18 highlights holiness in interactions with others; Psalm 50:18 stresses that turning away from God leads to destruction in relationships, and such individuals may fall into wrong associations with sinners; Proverbs 13:20 suggests that a wise person seeks good company and is careful in their choices; Proverbs 17:17, 20:19, 28:7, and 29:3 emphasize that good associations lead to good outcomes, and those who wisely choose their company will not be disappointed, while those who associate with the wicked will face destruction. In the New Testament, the theme of good associations is reiterated. Romans 12:4-5, 9-10 stresses the importance of interacting with fellow believers to build and support one another, not to tear down or harm; 1 Corinthians 5:9,11 advises not to associate with the immoral; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 cautions to be careful in associations to avoid falling into wrongdoing (Telaumbanua et al., 2022).

A study conducted by Aisah (2018) regarding the influence of peer conformity on adolescent religiosity indicates that conformity has a 52% influence on adolescent religiosity. Peer group is essential for adolescence. To be accepted as part of a group, they will try to equalize Christian values with the values or norms of the group.

Another study conducted by Kurniawan and Sudrajat (2018) concerns the role of peers in shaping students' character, namely, (1) peer group plays an important role to support, to teach social skills, to be socialization agent, to be model/example of behaving; (2) peers had role in shaping religious, tolerant, disciplined, hardworking, curious, friendly, environmental caring, social caring, disobedient, and aggressive characters.

The research result above confirms that peer groups with moderate religiosity will have a good impact on students. With moderate religiosity values adopted from the group, students will also show religious and moderate behaviors. It is important for the school to maintain and even to attempt improving the religious social environment in school in accordance with Christian teachings in order to encourage conformity to the positive way.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the test and discussion above, it is concluded that peer conformity has a significant positive direct influence of 54,7% on moderate religiosity of GMIM Christian Junior High School students in Manado. Thus, the result shows that peer conformity is one of the factors contributed directly to moderate religiosity. It is a positive influence, therefore the increase of students' moderate religiosity level is the result of peer conformity.

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