

*Editorial Note*

## **Religion in Practice: Ecology, Education, Pluralism, and Vulnerability in Contemporary Contexts**

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**Abstract:** This issue presents interdisciplinary research that explores the intersection of religion with contemporary global and local challenges, including ecological sustainability, pluralism, and social vulnerability. The articles in this issue introduce significant contributions to religious studies by examining how religious practices can respond to environmental and social crises. Key contributions include the role of indigenous wisdom and ecological spirituality in environmental conservation, as well as the impact of religious pluralism in educational contexts that foster interfaith understanding and tolerance. Additionally, this issue discusses the importance of a pastoral approach emphasising relational accompaniment in pluralistic societies and the need to develop policies that are sensitive to social trauma. Through these approaches, this issue affirms that religious studies must be viewed as a source of ethical reflection and social transformation in addressing the complexities of the contemporary world. The primary focus of this issue is on integrating theological perspectives, ethics, and social action as a step towards building inclusive and just societies.

**Keywords:** Ecological spirituality, pluralism, religious education, social trauma, interfaith dialogue, public policy, religious studies, diversity, Global South.

**Abstrak:** Edisi ini menyajikan kajian interdisipliner yang membahas keterkaitan agama dengan tantangan global dan lokal kontemporer, termasuk keberlanjutan ekologis, pluralisme, dan kerentanannya terhadap trauma sosial. Artikel-artikel dalam edisi ini memperkenalkan kontribusi penting dalam studi agama dengan mengeksplorasi bagaimana praktik keagamaan dapat menjadi respons terhadap krisis lingkungan dan sosial. Beberapa kontribusi utama mencakup peran kearifan lokal dan spiritualitas ekologis dalam pelestarian lingkungan, serta dampak pluralisme keagamaan dalam pendidikan yang mendukung pemahaman antaragama dan pengembangan toleransi. Selain itu, edisi ini juga membahas pentingnya pendekatan pastoral yang menekankan pendampingan relasional dalam konteks masyarakat yang semakin plural, serta kebutuhan untuk merumuskan kebijakan yang peka terhadap trauma sosial. Melalui pendekatan-pendekatan ini, edisi ini menegaskan bahwa studi agama harus dilihat sebagai sumber refleksi etis dan perubahan sosial yang relevan dalam menghadapi kompleksitas dunia kontemporer. Fokus utama edisi ini adalah mengintegrasikan perspektif teologi, etika, dan aksi sosial sebagai langkah menuju pembangunan masyarakat yang inklusif dan berkeadilan.

**Kata Kunci:** Spiritualitas ekologis, pluralisme, pendidikan agama, trauma sosial, dialog antar agama, kebijakan publik, studi agama, keberagaman, Global South.

## 1. Introduction

We are pleased to present Volume 8, Issue 3 (December 2024) of *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama dan Lintas Budaya*, an edition that continues our commitment to publishing critical, interdisciplinary, and contextually grounded scholarship in religious studies. This issue brings together a diverse collection of seven research articles, authored by 28 scholars from seven countries: Indonesia, Germany, Japan, Nigeria, Uganda, Italy, and Australia. Thematically, the contributions span urgent and interrelated concerns such as ecological sustainability rooted in indigenous wisdom, inclusive models of religious education, pluralism and interfaith relations in diverse cultural settings, and the intersection of religion with social vulnerability and trauma. These articles affirm the journal's mission to centre lived religious experiences, especially within the Global South, as vital sources of ethical reflection, cultural resilience, and social transformation.

The first article, authored by Florence Yulisinta, Juliana Murniati, and Monika Eigenstetter (2024), offers a compelling contribution to the discourse on spiritual ecology by highlighting how indigenous wisdom in Indonesia shapes sustainable environmental practices. Grounded in a qualitative phenomenological approach, the study explores how cultural values, spiritual reflection, religious responsibility, and gratitude toward nature motivate ecological behaviour. Framed within the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) model, their findings reveal how spiritual experiences serve as intrinsic drivers of conservation efforts such as forest protection, biodiversity preservation, and environmental education. By bridging traditional cosmologies with environmental policy through a transdisciplinary lens, this article affirms the relevance of religious studies in addressing global ecological crises with culturally embedded and ethically grounded solutions.

In the second article, Robi Panggarra, Christopher James Luthy, and Praity Brenda Tombuku (2024) delve into the lived religious experiences of the Dayak Tunjung Christian community in Lamin Teliha, East Kalimantan. Despite their formal affiliation with the Evangelical Christian Church (GKII), many community members continue to practise traditional beliefs in reincarnation (*Suli*) and ritual healing (*Belian*), revealing a complex process of identity negotiation between institutional Christianity and indigenous cosmologies. The study illustrates how these practices function not as residual folklore but as enduring and meaningful frameworks for understanding life, death, and healing. Through a grounded theory approach, the authors demonstrate that religious conversion in this context is not a rupture but a layered, hybrid process marked by syncretism and vernacular adaptation. This article offers an important lens into how peripheral communities sustain spiritual resilience and ethical pluralism by navigating between ancestral traditions and global religious structures—affirming faith's dynamic, adaptive nature in multicultural societies.

Two articles in this issue illuminate the crucial role of educational institutions in cultivating interfaith understanding and sustaining religious harmony in plural societies. Fransiska Widyawati and her colleagues present a robust empirical study involving 961 respondents from 47 universities in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), a region known for its interreligious coexistence. Their findings affirm that positive interfaith interactions—anchored in local culture, interpersonal proximity, and educator responsibility—form the foundation of the *NTT Interfaith Pluralism Model*. This model underscores that tolerance is nurtured not only through formal interreligious programs but also through everyday encounters embedded in community life (Widyawati, Lon, Midun, & Ungkang, 2024). Complementing this perspective, Vinsensius Bawa Toron and co-authors explore religious assessment practices in Catholic junior secondary education across Indonesia. Their research highlights the emergence of a hybrid evaluation model that combines doctrinal knowledge with ethical reflection and social engagement. Teachers are shown to navigate the tension between religious integrity and pluralistic values, shaping an inclusive pedagogy that promotes moral development and intercultural sensitivity (Toron, Dancar, Marzuki, & Muhson, 2024). Together, these studies demonstrate how educational spaces—both secular and faith-based—can serve as meaningful arenas for dialogue, tolerance, and transformative learning in culturally diverse societies.

The fifth article in this issue, titled "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Classrooms: Reflective and Participatory Pedagogy in a Multifaith School Context", explores how reflective and participatory

pedagogy can contribute to religious moderation within multifaith classrooms in Indonesia. Authored by Din Oloan Sihotang et al. (2024), the study examines how educators in multicultural educational settings are fostering a sense of moderation by encouraging dialogue, mutual respect, and ethical reflection. Their findings underscore the importance of engaging students in reflective practices and participatory activities that promote tolerance and understanding while navigating the complexities of Indonesia's diverse religious landscape. This contribution highlights the vital role that educational institutions play in shaping religious moderation and developing inclusive pedagogies that help build peaceful and respectful relationships in pluralistic societies (Sihotang et al., 2024).

The final two contributions in this issue bring attention to the complex intersection of faith, identity, and human vulnerability in pluralistic and fragile social contexts. Kizito Chinedu Nweke introduces the *Christomatrix Mission*, a pastoral-theological model developed from the lived experiences of African Christians in Germany, who often navigate tensions between maintaining confessional identity and adapting to secular, religiously diverse environments. Rather than promoting confrontation or proselytisation, this model reframes Christian witness as relational accompaniment—emphasising presence, empathy, and interfaith respect while preserving theological integrity (Nweke, 2024). In a markedly different but equally urgent context, Onipede Wusu and colleagues investigate the prevalence and determinants of childhood sexual abuse in Nigeria, highlighting how ethnicity, family structure, and religious affiliation intersect to shape patterns of disclosure and vulnerability. With data drawn from over 2,700 women, their study calls for culturally and religiously sensitive interventions that address both systemic inequalities and communal silence (Wusu et al., 2024). Though emerging from different contexts, both studies call for faith responses that move beyond abstraction—grounding religious commitment in concrete acts of care, ethical responsibility, and relational healing within complex social realities.

Together, the articles featured in this issue reaffirm the enduring relevance of religious studies in engaging with the complexities of contemporary life. From ecological ethics grounded in indigenous spirituality, to interfaith education and the negotiation of hybrid identities, to pastoral responses to vulnerability and trauma, each contribution illustrates how religion—when studied in context—can serve as both a critical lens and a constructive force. Rather than isolating religious thought from lived realities, the scholarship presented here integrates theological, sociological, and pedagogical perspectives to illuminate how faith is practised, contested, and transformed in diverse cultural settings. We invite scholars, educators, religious leaders, and practitioners to continue this vital dialogue by contributing to future issues of *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama dan Lintas Budaya*, as we collectively work toward building more inclusive, ethical, and dialogical understandings of religion in the Global South and beyond.

## 2. Reflections from the Editor

### *Ecological Spirituality and Local Wisdom*

In recent decades, ecological spirituality has become an integral part of contemporary religious discourse, responding to the global environmental crisis. This concept emphasises the interconnectedness between human spiritual life and the natural world, fostering awareness of the urgent need for ecological conversion, restoration, and the sustainability of the Earth as our shared home (Cloete, 2023; Parlov, 2019). This idea arises from various religious traditions, such as Christian ecotheology, which reinterprets the creation narrative as a call to responsibility for God's creation, as well as spiritual practices in indigenous communities that regard their relationship with nature as inseparable from their religious life (Allison, 2019; Biana & Rivas, 2022). Amid the failure of technocratic approaches to solving the environmental crisis, value-based approaches and the integration of local wisdom are now considered key strategies for designing contextual and sustainable environmental policies (Groenfeldt & Schmidt, 2013; McNamara et al., 2024). This approach is increasingly relevant in the context of the Global South, particularly in Indonesia, which is rich in spiritual ecology traditions.

It not only offers an ecological ethic rooted in culture but also bridges local knowledge with global policy frameworks that are more inclusive.

The article by Florence Yulisinta, Juliana Murniati, and Monika Eigenstetter (2024) makes an important contribution to the discourse on ecological spirituality through a phenomenological approach that deeply explores individuals' spiritual experiences in environmental conservation activities. Referring to the Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual (BPSS) framework, this research shows that ecological motivations for conservation practitioners are not only derived from rational awareness or formal policies but are also deeply rooted in spiritual values such as gratitude for nature, religious responsibility, existential reflection, and intergenerational care. Four informants from the non-profit sector, indigenous communities, families, and educational institutions provide concrete examples of how spirituality serves as an internal driver in real-world practices such as forest protection, biodiversity conservation, and environmental education. This study stands out because of its transdisciplinary approach, combining spirituality, environmental anthropology, and public policy within a contextual empirical framework. Thus, this article not only enriches the academic field on the relationship between religion and ecology but also opens the way for developing policy models based on local ethics and lived spiritual experiences.

The BPSS model offered by Yulisinta et al. presents a promising conceptual opportunity for developing more ethical, participatory, and contextual environmental policies. By integrating the spiritual dimension into the biological, psychological, and social realms, this model paves the way for an approach that bridges the gap between scientific rationality and the religious experiences of communities. Their findings show that internalising spiritual values and local wisdom creates a strong intrinsic moral framework that can drive ecological action without reliance on external coercion, facilitating community-based conservation initiatives. However, the study also carefully identifies several tensions that must be addressed to implement this model effectively. One critical challenge is the tendency to romanticise indigenous knowledge as a timeless solution, which risks obscuring the contextual and dynamic nature of local knowledge systems (Yulisinta et al., 2024, p. 197). Furthermore, the instrumental use of spirituality—such as using it solely to justify environmental agendas—has the potential to reduce its sacred value and theological meaning to mere policy tools (Yulisinta et al., 2024, p. 197). Another challenge lies in how to translate these local values into formal policies, which are often controlled by secular technocratic models that are distant from the community context. Epistemological barriers, power imbalances, and institutional mismatches often hinder the seamless integration of local spirituality and environmental governance systems, both nationally and globally (Yulisinta et al., 2024, p. 197). Therefore, while the BPSS model makes a significant contribution to the renewal of value-based ecopolitics, its implementation requires reflexivity, cultural sensitivity, and inclusive mechanisms to ensure that spiritual knowledge is not merely commodified but remains recognised as a legitimate and meaningful knowledge system in building ecological sustainability.

From Yulisinta's writing, we must reconsider: to what extent can local spirituality be recognised as a legitimate epistemological source in the global discourse on environmental ethics? Amid the dominance of scientific-rational paradigms and policy frameworks that often remain technocratic and homogenised, approaches such as the BPSS challenge us to open space for alternative forms of knowledge rooted in spiritual experiences, cosmic relationships, and the collective memory of communities. However, this effort requires structural transformation, particularly in educational systems and public policy formulation, so that spirituality is not merely treated as "illustrative material," but is truly integrated as a foundational principle in sustainability curricula, governance design, and the political imagination of future environmental policies, without cross-sector willingness to create an equitable dialogue between modern knowledge and traditional values, ecological spirituality risks being reduced to a symbol without substance.

Building a sustainability paradigm based on spirituality and local culture does not only offer an alternative to the dominant technocratic approach, but also provides a stronger moral and emotional foundation for ecological behaviour change. Yulisinta et al.'s study shows that integrating spiritual values and local wisdom can inspire contextual conservation action and challenge the epistemological

assumptions in public policy and environmental education. In this context, religious reflection and transdisciplinary approaches become increasingly crucial for responding to the complexities of the global ecological crisis in a fair and relevant manner. Therefore, researchers, educators, and policymakers are invited to embrace a more inclusive and intercultural approach—one that not only appreciates local spirituality as a cultural heritage but also as a genuine source of knowledge and social transformation in building a sustainable future.

### *Hybrid Identity and Pluralism in Education and Communities*

In a global era of high mobility and cultural complexity, religious identity is no longer singular and static. Instead, it increasingly demonstrates a hybrid character—blended, layered, and continuously negotiated between traditions, local values, and global structures. The concept of hybridity becomes key in understanding the dynamics of religiosity in plural societies, particularly in peripheral areas and educational contexts. As Kim-Cragg and Doi (2012) have shown, the educational space holds potential as a hybrid dialogue platform between traditions, enabling the design of curricula that do not emphasise religious homogeneity but rather openness to pluralism. In such contexts, religious education is not merely an instrument for doctrinal socialisation but also a medium for developing critical reflection, social ethics, and intercultural skills (Payne, 2016; Saada, 2022).

This trend is particularly relevant when looking at local realities rife with pluralism, such as those in the Dayak Tunjung indigenous communities and the universities in East Nusa Tenggara. Local communities and formal educational institutions become strategic spaces where religious identity is negotiated between different religions and formal religions and traditional spiritual practices. In many cases, as demonstrated by Halafoff et al. (2020) and Chintaram (2021), young people in multicultural communities develop fluid and reflective religious identities, building a synthesis drawn from life experiences, cultural values, and religious teachings. This aligns with efforts in plural education that accommodate diversity and facilitate transformative understanding, allowing individuals to live in a productive tension between personal belief and encounters with "the other." Therefore, the theme of hybrid identity and pluralism is academically significant and strategically important for promoting social cohesion and tolerance in contemporary societies.

The article by Robi Panggarra, Christopher James Luthy, and Praity Brenda Tombuku (2024) offers an in-depth ethnographic study on the Dayak Tunjung Christian community in Lamin Telihan, East Kalimantan. While formally affiliated with the Evangelical Christian Church of Indonesia (GKII), many community members maintain traditional practices such as beliefs in reincarnation (*Suli*) and ritual healing (*Belian*). This research shows that such practices are not remnants of pre-Christian beliefs but active expressions of vernacular religion, revealing a layered and syncretic process where religious identity is dynamically negotiated. Using a grounded theory approach, the authors highlight how local cosmologies shape religious practices, blending indigenous spiritual frameworks with institutional Christianity. This article challenges simplistic views of religious conversion and illustrates how hybrid religious identities are resilient, adaptive, and culturally relevant, even amidst the pressures of modernisation and orthodoxy.

In the realm of religious education, the article by Din Oloan Sihotang, Ermina Waruwu, Johannes Sohirimon Lumbanbatu, Nerita Setiyaningtiyas, and John Bosco Odongo (2024) focuses on promoting religious moderation within Indonesian classrooms, an essential aspect of pluralistic societies facing rising religious intolerance. Their study, involving 100 students from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds at SMA Negeri 1 Barus Jahe, North Sumatra, explores integrating two pedagogical frameworks—the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process—as tools for fostering religious moderation. The study reveals a significant improvement in students' cognitive understanding and behavioural awareness of religious moderation values, demonstrating the potential of participatory and reflective pedagogies in transforming students' attitudes and behaviours towards religious tolerance. By combining these frameworks, the study shows how educators can move beyond traditional teaching methods, creating more inclusive, transformative learning environments that go beyond doctrinal teaching to focus on real-world applications of religious moderation.

However, while the article offers an innovative and empirically validated approach to religious moderation, it also raises several critical questions. One major challenge lies in the scalability and long-term sustainability of such models in diverse educational contexts. The study conducted in North Sumatra is highly specific, and while it demonstrates positive results, the question remains: can these pedagogical approaches be effectively implemented in other regions with different cultural and religious dynamics? Moreover, how can they be adapted for larger, more diverse classrooms where students' pre-existing beliefs may be more entrenched, or where interfaith interactions are less frequent? These reflections suggest that while the model is promising, its adaptability to other settings requires further exploration and a deeper understanding of local contexts and challenges.

Another critical point is the tension between the goal of promoting religious moderation and the potential resistance from communities or individuals who may perceive these interventions as a threat to their religious identity or practices. Although the model's emphasis on empathy and reflective learning is commendable, introducing such transformative pedagogies must also consider the socio-political realities of religious pluralism in Indonesia, where various groups have historically experienced tension or conflict. In this context, the role of educators as moral exemplars becomes crucial—not only in teaching religious moderation but also in navigating the complexities of religious identity in a pluralistic society.

Two articles in this issue—by Fransiska Widyawati et al. (2024) and Vinsensius Bawa Toron et al. (2024)—complement this discussion by examining the strategic role of educational institutions in fostering interfaith dialogue and understanding. Widyawati et al. (2024) present a quantitative study involving 961 respondents from 47 universities in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), proposing an "NTT Interfaith Pluralism Model" that emphasizes the importance of everyday interpersonal interactions, local cultural values, and the ethical responsibility of educators. The model underscores that religious harmony is built not only through formal dialogue but also through informal social encounters and the role of educators as moral exemplars. Meanwhile, Toron et al. (2024) explore how Catholic religious education in secondary schools in Indonesia is evolving from purely cognitive assessments to a hybrid model integrating written tests, projects, discussions, and reflection. This hybrid approach measures knowledge and cultivates character development, tolerance, and intercultural sensitivity. Together, these studies confirm that both higher education and secondary institutions can serve as transformative spaces for interfaith dialogue, social ethics, and the development of well-rounded citizens who can navigate religious diversity in thoughtful, inclusive ways.

These three articles highlight the importance of recognising religious identity as a dynamic, contextual, and negotiated construct—one that is shaped by social interactions, historical experiences, and the fluid interplay of local and global cultural forces. As such, religious identity is no longer a fixed or closed entity, but a process of continuous negotiation and redefinition. The practice of spiritual identity among the Dayak Tunjung Christians, who continue to honour ancestral beliefs in reincarnation and ritual healing alongside their formal Christian affiliation, exemplifies this creative and resilient hybridity. Similarly, the pluralism model in NTT's educational institutions demonstrates that interfaith dialogue can thrive in formal settings and everyday, lived interactions.

Both these practices reflect what is often referred to in contemporary literature as creative syncretism—the dynamic and creative process by which communities integrate multiple cultural and religious sources to respond to modern challenges without abandoning their spiritual roots (Berk & Galvan, 2009; Stewart, 2014). However, critical reflection is necessary: can these local forms of religiosity be elevated into a global model for peace education and interfaith dialogue without losing their contextual meaning? Are these practices flexible enough to transform into intercultural educational frameworks that maintain their integrity? And how can we ensure that local spirituality is not misunderstood as inferior but rather valued as a legitimate and ethical epistemological resource?

These questions are crucial to avoid homogenising religious studies and intercultural education. Educational institutions and local communities must be seen as laboratories for ethical pluralism—a space where religious diversity is taught and lived reflectively and contextually. If managed with sensitivity and inclusivity, these spaces can become strong foundations for building more just, peaceful,

and respectful societies. As Chintaram (2021) and Tuna (2024) suggest that strengthening local capacities to manage diversity is not only locally relevant but can also contribute to the global imagination of living together amidst differences.

### *Faith Witness, Social Trauma, and Relational Ethics*

In a world increasingly confronted with humanitarian crises, identity conflicts, and social trauma, the role of religion cannot be overlooked as a source of moral, spiritual, and social strength. This section highlights the intersections among faith witness, social trauma, and relational ethics—three intertwined dimensions that demand a more reflective, empathetic, and contextual theological response. Amid increasingly plural and vulnerable societies, witnessing faith can no longer rely solely upon doctrinal proclamations; it demands praxis grounded in relational accompaniment and sensitivity towards social wounds. Various studies indicate religion's crucial role in assisting individuals and communities to find meaning in suffering and rebuild resilience post-trauma through community support, collective rituals, and spiritual narratives that reframe painful experiences (Cho, 2023; Harris, Erbes, Winkowski, Engdahl, & Nguyen, 2014). Conversely, the role of religion within trauma contexts remains ambivalent: while it holds healing potential, religion can also exacerbate trauma if employed exclusively or as a form of justification (Ellis et al., 2022; Turhan, 2023). In the context of social pluralism, religion further acts strategically as a catalyst for social integration, interfaith dialogue, and civic solidarity (Chidongo, 2023; Jelen, 2007). Hence, this discussion underscores the necessity of a spiritual approach that transcends dogmatic boundaries to embody ethical and dialogical engagement, thereby initiating discourse on the responsibilities of faith communities to embody hope.

In his study, Nweke (2024), introduces the Christomatrix Mission as a pastoral-theological model that redefines Christian missionary approaches by shifting emphasis from conversion to relational accompaniment. This model emerges from the recognition that Christian witness within plural and secular societies can no longer rely upon doctrinal confrontation, but rather through a presence characterised by mutual respect and empathy across faith boundaries. Nweke identifies the tensions experienced by African Christian communities in Germany, who frequently modify their religious expressions—avoiding exclusivist language and concealing religious symbols—to evade social rejection and stigmatisation. In this context, Christomatrix Mission provides a pastoral alternative that prioritises relational presence, advocating for faith-sharing through empathetic proximity rather than coercive conversion. Such an approach is particularly relevant within the context of African diaspora communities in Europe, often facing identity marginalisation and social exclusion shaped by secularism and pluralism. By offering a mission framework centred on inclusive presence, this model significantly contributes to pastoral theology by responding constructively to the challenges of pluralism and secularism in global societies. The Christomatrix Mission thus presents an important contribution in addressing the need for open and respectful dialogue spaces among diverse religious groups, while simultaneously maintaining doctrinal integrity within broader, contextual settings.

In the study by Wusu et al. (2024), a quantitative investigation into child sexual abuse in Nigeria reveals significant findings regarding how ethnicity, family structure, and religious affiliation contribute to children's social vulnerability to sexual violence. The research indicates that factors such as polygamous households and care by single parents or grandparents significantly increase the likelihood of children becoming victims of sexual violence, with notable variations in prevalence across ethnic and religious groups. Specifically, religion, both within Muslim and Christian contexts, plays an important role in the patterns of disclosure and understanding of sexual violence. The study highlights how religious and cultural norms can influence responses to violence, in terms of both acceptance and denial of such incidents. The ethical call emerging from this research is the need for religious communities and public policies to become more sensitive to social trauma by creating policies that provide holistic child protection. This includes integrating religious perspectives that are sensitive to trauma and empowering communities to deconstruct norms that exacerbate social vulnerability.

The potential synergy between Nweke's pastoral approach in the Christomatrix Model and Wusu et al.'s structural-sociological sensitivity provides a comprehensive framework for addressing social

trauma in pluralistic and vulnerable societies. Nweke's emphasis on relational accompaniment in Christian missions introduces a model where interfaith engagement becomes central to the Christian witness, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding rather than doctrinal confrontation. This relational approach, grounded in pastoral theology, responds to the tension African Christians face in navigating their faith identity within pluralistic and secular contexts, particularly in diaspora communities such as those in Germany. By shifting the focus of Christian mission from conversion to presence, Nweke's model promotes an inclusive, empathy-driven methodology for building bridges between diverse religious identities.

On the other hand, Wusu et al.'s research into the structural and cultural factors influencing childhood sexual abuse in Nigeria highlights the crucial role of family structures, religious norms, and ethnic identity in perpetuating vulnerability. The integration of these insights with Nweke's relational approach offers a multidimensional response to trauma, where religious communities not only provide spiritual healing but also actively address the social determinants of vulnerability. The intersection of these two perspectives calls for an approach that combines theological care with social action. Religious communities, equipped with both theological insights and cultural sensitivity, can advocate for policies that support trauma survivors while actively challenging the underlying structures of inequality. This synergy holds global implications, suggesting that models like the Christomatrix Model can be employed across different contexts to promote interfaith dialogue, safeguard cultural integrity, and support policies that protect vulnerable individuals from trauma. By merging theological reflection with a structural understanding of social issues, this dual approach offers a more holistic and inclusive path toward healing and justice, contributing to more resilient and compassionate societies worldwide.

Critically, it is important to question whether religious communities are adequately prepared to become safe and responsive spaces for trauma, considering the complexity of social problems and inequalities present in society. While religion often serves as a source of spiritual healing, a significant challenge remains in ensuring that churches, mosques, and other places of worship provide support that is not only spiritual but also involves concrete social action and sensitivity to trauma conditions. Therefore, it is essential to consider relational ethics models and empathy-based service as more contextual alternatives in faith testimonies. This approach demands that religious communities integrate theological understanding with broader social responsibility, ensuring that faith testimonies are expressed in rituals or doctrines and tangible actions that support social justice and healing for the marginalized and traumatized. In this way, theology, ethics, and social action can synergize to create inclusive and responsive spaces for society's broader needs.

### 3. Conclusion

This issue of *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-agama dan Lintas Budaya* provides a vital exploration of the intersections between religion, education, and social issues in diverse global contexts. The articles highlight the importance of integrating indigenous wisdom into ecological sustainability efforts, the fluid and negotiable nature of religious identity in multicultural societies, and the role of education in promoting religious moderation and interfaith dialogue. Contributions on the Dayak Tunjung Christian community and Indonesian religious education demonstrate how hybrid identities are formed through the blending of traditions, while studies on religious trauma call for a more holistic approach that combines theology with social action. These studies affirm the relevance of religious studies in addressing contemporary global challenges, urging further reflection on how religious communities and educational institutions can contribute to building inclusive, ethical, and compassionate societies. The insights presented in this volume invite continued dialogue and collaboration to foster greater understanding and respect for diverse religious and cultural traditions in a rapidly changing world.



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