Religious Metaethics: The Golden Rule for Interfaith Activists in West Java

Arfi Pandu Dinata,[1*] Encup Supriatna[2]

[1] Jakatarub Community Bandung, Indonesia.

[2] UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia.

* Corresponding Author, Email: arfipandudinata@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Religion serves as a fundamental source of ethics for its adherents, inspiring social activism. This study aims to explore the role of the golden rule as an ethical foundation in interfaith activism by analyzing how three individuals from different religious backgrounds implement it in their daily lives. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach and the phenomenology of religion method, this research examines the perspectives and religious experiences of the participants regarding the application of compassion values in their social engagements. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with a Buddhist lecturer, a Confucian Sunday school teacher, and a Christian sexual assault victim counselor. The results indicate that all three participants integrate their religious teachings as guiding principles to navigate social, political, and humanitarian challenges. Their activism manifests in various forms, including education, advocacy, and community support, demonstrating that religious values can foster inclusivity and social justice. This study concludes that the golden rule is not merely a universal ethical framework but also a driving force for tangible actions that promote equality and solidarity across different faith communities. **Contribution**: This study contributes to the understanding of interfaith activism by demonstrating how the golden rule serves as a universal ethical foundation that transcends religious boundaries, fostering inclusivity and social justice through tangible actions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Religion has a significant role in shaping society's ethical system (Pradhan & Pradhan, 2021; Wilson, 2016). As a moral guide, religion provides a framework of values that directs individual and group behavior in everyday life (McGuire, 2021; Rahman, 2018). Values such as justice, social concern, and service are often the focus of religious teachings (Syah et al., 2024). In this way, religion not only builds spirituality, a system of worship, or concentrates exclusively on teaching doctrine but also functions as a comprehensive ethical system (Daryanto & Ernawati, 2024).

Through this ethical framework, religion provides a lot of inspiration for its adherents in carrying out social interactions and forming certain relationship patterns. Religion is a source of ethical codes as well as a religious call for activism (Rahmaningsih & Rizqi, 2022). Throughout history, various religions have emerged as social and political responses to injustice, oppression and various forms of violence. Religious

leaders try to provide answers to various challenges faced by society. Along with its development, various social movements emerged that were rooted in religious teachings, such as the liberation theology movement to the mysticism movement. This call not only encourages individuals to act in personal interests but also in the interests of the wider community (Jati, 2014). At the individual level, the concept of religious activism reflects personal commitment to religious values that are actualized in real life. Activist-religious individuals are those who articulate their religious beliefs as the basis for social, political and humanitarian action (Kurniawan & Margiansyah, 2019). The social activities carried out are a form of divine devotion and concern for fellow humans. Religious activism also reflects critical, reflective and practical understanding (Arifin & Aqso, 2023).

A religious call to activism begins with a deep understanding of faith. This process is strengthened through learning religious teachings, studying sacred literature, as well as inspiration from holy figures who are role models in religious traditions. This understanding is realized in concrete activities, especially in fighting for social justice. The expressions of this action certainly vary, ranging from roles as educators, community assistants, institutional administrators, and journalists, to social justice advocates (Al Ayub Ahmed et al., 2022).

In the context of West Java, interfaith activism is an interesting phenomenon to study. West Java, as a province with high religious diversity, has various community groups that are active in religious-based social movements. Interfaith activism in this context is not only limited to efforts at tolerance and dialogue between religious communities but also involves collaboration on various social issues such as poverty, education and ecological justice (Rohimah, 2022).

One ethical principle that often guides interfaith activism is the Golden Rule. This principle is found in the teachings of various major world religions and emphasizes the importance of treating others as one would like to be treated. In Islam, this principle is reflected in the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad which states, "No person's faith is perfect until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." In Christianity, this principle is also stated in the Gospel of Matthew 7:12, *"Whatever you want others to do to you, do the same to them* (Lempoy et al., 2024).*"* Similar principles are also found in Hinduism, Buddhism and other religions. The Golden Rule principles in interfaith activism have broad implications in building social ethics that are inclusive and based on universal human values (Widiyanto, 2023). In the context of West Java, this principle is a guide for various interfaith activist groups in resolving conflict, building social solidarity, and creating space for constructive dialogue. For example, in various interfaith forums in West Java, the principles of the Golden Rule are often used as a basis for designing joint social programs, such as community-based economic empowerment, interfaith education, and environmental movements (Firmanto et al., 2023).

However, although the Golden Rule has great potential in building inclusive social ethics, its application in interfaith activism also faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is the existence of doctrinal differences which can become an obstacle in building understanding between religious groups (Sahin, 2022). Apart from that, political factors and the interests of certain groups can also influence the dynamics of interfaith activism, both in the form of resistance and political instrumentality towards religious-based social movements. Another challenge is how to integrate the principles of the Golden Rule into public policy and broader social structures. Often, the ethical principles taught in religion are only applied within certain communities and have not been thoroughly integrated into social and political policies. Therefore, a more systematic approach is needed to make the Golden Rule the basis for formulating policies that are inclusive and socially just (Adeoye, 2024).

This research aims to examine how the principles of the Golden Rule are applied in interfaith activism in West Java and the challenges faced in its implementation. By using a religious metaethics approach, this research will explore how these universal ethical principles can become the basis for religion-based social movements in building a more inclusive and harmonious society. Through this research, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found in strengthening interfaith activism based on the Golden Rule, both in local contexts and in a wider scope. Thus, this research not only contributes to academic studies regarding religious ethics, but also has practical implications in building social harmony and strengthening solidarity between religious communities in West Java and Indonesia in general. By strengthening the ethical foundation that originates from universal values, it is hoped that religion-based social movements can further develop and have a positive impact on society at large.

2.   METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods with a descriptive approach to understanding the views and experiences of individuals from three different religious identities, namely Buddhist (religious education lecturer), Confucian (Sunday school teacher), and Christian (counselor priest for victims of sexual violence). In-depth interviews were conducted with the three informants to gain a deeper understanding of the application of the Golden Rule as an ethical basis that inspired them in interfaith activism (Rahman, 2025). Activism is collective action focused on achieving common goals, including activities such as protests, petitions and campaigns (Harlow, 2011). Meanwhile, (Bayat, 2010) explains that activism includes various forms of human activity, both individual and group, formal and informal, which aim to bring change in people's lives. In this context, a religious phenomenology approach is used to explore the essence of religious experience which is translated into daily social activities (Supriyanto, 2022).This research relies on the theory of the Golden Rule which is reformulated in the context of religions, especially based on the ideas of Karen Armstrong in *Compassion: 12 Steps to a Compassionate Life* (2013). Armstrong emphasized that the Golden Rule is a legacy of the Axial Age (900–200 BC) which became the foundation for the meeting point of various religious, ethical and philosophical traditions (Armstrong, 2013). In this ethical-metaphysical framework, concepts of compassion appear as a deep call to look into the heart, recognize the wounds that have been felt, and commit to not causing similar pain to others (Saraswati, 2013).

3.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ethos of "Buddhist Enlightenment" at the Academia-Societa Crossroads

Dian Tika Sujata is a Theravada Buddhist academic who has taken an intellectual and spiritual journey that is rich in meaning. Since serving as Chair of the Undergraduate Study Program in Buddhist Religious Education at the Nalanda Buddhist College in Jakarta from 2020 to 2024, Dian has shown high dedication to developing Buddhist religious studies. Not only that, he also became the youngest lecturer among his colleagues, which then led him to be active in interfaith and humanitarian issues since 2024. His academic journey became richer when he started teaching Buddhist Education and Seminars at the Indonesian Education University (UPI) and continued his doctoral education at the General Education and Character Study Program at UPI (interview with D. T. Sujata, November 23, 2024).

In her reflection on the teachings of pabbajjà or the process of seeking wisdom in the Buddhist tradition, Dian discovered the relevance of the concepts of *sammā-ājīva* (right livelihood) and *majjhima patipada* (middle way). During his time as head of the study program, he admitted that he experienced a tendency to be trapped in an extreme work style (workaholic). His desire to achieve professional ambitions causes an imbalance in his life, both mentally, emotionally and spiritually. This experience brought him back to a deep understanding of the importance of balance in life, as taught in Buddhist doctrine (interview with D. T. Sujata, November 23, 2024).

This search for balance in life is in line with the Buddhist concept of the eight noble paths (*Ariya Atthangika Magga*), especially the aspects of *sammā-vācā* (right speech), *sammā-kammanta* (right action), and *sammā-ājīva*. This teaching underlines the importance of living life with wisdom and proper ethics, avoiding excessive attachment to temporary worldly achievements (Dewi, 2020). In the context of Buddhist psychology, awareness of attachment and the suffering that accompanies it reflects the principles of *anicca* (impermanence), *anattā* (no-self), and *dukkha* (suffering) as part of human existential reality (Amathabhani & Dissanayake, 2024).

Apart from professional challenges, Dian also experienced deep emotional dynamics in her relationships with students. He often accompanies them in the practice of *puja bhakti* (prayers) and *dhamma desana* (lectures) at the *cetiya* (small monastery). This experience built a strong emotional bond between him and the students, which later became a source of sorrow when he had to move to Bandung to continue his studies and teach at UPI. In her reflection, Dian realized that separation from something she loved was part of *dukkha*, as described in Buddhist teachings about suffering (Kornfield, 2008).

The concept of dukkha in Buddhism focuses not only on suffering itself but also on how individuals can overcome and transcend suffering through a deeper understanding of the realities of life. In transpersonal psychology theory, Dian's experience can be linked to a phase of consciousness development, where individuals who experience loss or significant changes in their lives can actually develop a deeper spiritual

dimension (Kar & Chettri, 2024). The process of letting go of attachment (*upadana*) to worldly aspects paves the way for a broader understanding of inner wisdom and tranquility (*upekkha*).

Dian also interprets her academic journey as part of Bodhisattva practice, namely devotion to the welfare of other beings. In Mahayana Buddhism, a Bodhisattva is an individual who consciously postpones the attainment of Nirvana in order to help other beings achieve enlightenment. Even though he comes from the Theravada tradition, the altruistic spirit in Bodhisattva teachings remains relevant to his academic and social experiences (Upreti, 2023). By teaching, guiding students, and being active in humanitarian and interfaith issues, Dian shows the application of Buddhist values in educational and social contexts.

From an educational theory perspective, Dian's experience reflects a holistic education concept that not only focuses on cognitive aspects but also affective and spiritual ones. The Buddhist religious education he teaches contains a transformational dimension, which leads to the development of character and moral awareness (Suzuki, 2023). In this context, Paulo Freire's idea of education as a liberating process can be used to analyze Dian's approach to educating students. Education should be a means to liberate individuals from structural shackles and oppressed consciousness so that they can understand reality and act to create change for the better (Freire, 1970).

In addition, Dian's experience in building relationships with students and overcoming dukkha can be linked to the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers. Effective education is based on empathy, unconditional positive regard, and authenticity (congruence) (Rogers, 1999). Dian shows these three elements in her role as a lecturer, where she not only transfers knowledge but also guides and accompanies students on their spiritual and academic journey.

Dian also reflects the concept of transformative leadership in the academic world, as explained by Bernard Bass. Transformative leadership emphasizes the vision, inspiration, and development of individuals within a community. Leadership in religious education is not only limited to administration and teaching but also to the formation of character and moral awareness (Bass & Riggio, 2006). As a young academic, Dian shows how her leadership is not only oriented toward academic achievement but also toward strengthening ethical and spiritual values in the world of education.

Since settling in Bandung, Dian has begun to be involved in interfaith dialogue which brings her together with various religious groups who experience discrimination and intolerance. At his first meeting, he interacted with a Jew and an Ahmadi who experienced various forms of social pressure and religious-based violence. This interaction was a turning point for Dian in understanding the complexity of freedom of religion and belief in Indonesia (Hermawan & Rahman, 2024). As an academic, he then decided to study this issue more deeply through his dissertation which focused on analyzing Buddhist education textbooks regarding their inclusiveness towards humanitarian issues in the context of interfaith dialogue.

In this context, the concepts of love and compassion in Buddhist teachings are the main basis for Dian in understanding and criticizing the narratives that develop in Buddhist education textbooks in Indonesia (Madan, 1999). According to him, this teaching not only emphasizes aspects of individual morality but also social responsibility to reduce the suffering of others. As Dian expressed in her interview, "Because love and compassion in Buddhism encourage us to care about other people's suffering. For example, I feel happy if I can help reduce other people's suffering, not because I want to look good, but because it comes naturally" (Interview with Dian, November 23, 2024).

All religions basically lead to the same reality, only in different forms and expressions (Hick, 2010). In the context of religious education, this pluralism approach requires a curriculum that not only teaches the internal beliefs of religion but also introduces students to the diversity of beliefs around them. Unfortunately, in Dian's analysis, Buddhist education textbooks in Indonesia still tend to be exclusive, with very few references to interactions with other religions (Kornfield, 2008). In fact, a more inclusive approach can help reduce intolerance and build stronger bridges for interfaith dialogue.

In addition, social meaning is formed through human interaction in society. In the context of interfaith dialogue, Dian's interactions with the Jewish and Ahmadiyah communities show how perceptions of other religions can change with direct experience. An individual's identity and understanding of the social world develops through the process of communication and symbolic exchange (Gattamorta, 2023). Therefore, the interfaith dialogue carried out by Dian not only has an impact on her understanding but also has the potential to change the wider community's perspective on religious pluralism in Indonesia.

In ideal communication, every individual must have the same opportunity to speak and express their views without domination by one party (Habermas, 2023). In reality, in Indonesia, religious discourse is often

dominated by the majority group, so minority groups such as Jews and Ahmadiyah often do not have space to voice their experiences. Dian, through her efforts in interfaith dialogue, tries to create a more equal and democratic communication space in accordance with Habermas's idea of inclusive public discourse.

In terms of educational implementation, Freire emphasized the importance of education as a tool to liberate individuals from structural injustice through critical awareness (Freire, 2020). In this context, Dian highlighted that Buddhist education textbooks in Indonesia do not fully reflect the spirit of critical pedagogy because they still do not accommodate the diversity and social realities faced by minority religious groups. A curriculum that is more inclusive and based on critical dialogue can be an effective strategy for building social awareness among students and creating a more tolerant environment.

In the study of Buddhist ethics, the concept of the four brahmaviharas is the core of teachings that emphasize the development of individual moral and spiritual qualities. *Metta* (love), *upekkha* (equanimity), *Karuna* (compassion), and *mudita* (joy for the happiness of others) are basic principles that are not only internal but also manifested in real actions (Harvey, 2013). In this context, the experiences told by Dian reflect how Buddhist teachings can be implemented in the world of education, especially in assisting students in facing academic and personal challenges.

Dian applies Brahmavihara values in her interactions with students through various forms of support, both moral and material. As an academic supervisor, he not only plays a role in providing academic direction but also becomes a companion for students who face economic, social and psychological difficulties (Johansson, 2025). In the context of Buddhist leadership ethics, this action is in line with the concept of compassion-based leadership *(compassionate leadership)* which emphasizes the importance of understanding and assisting individuals in overcoming their difficulties (Mazza et al., 2024). This approach is not just a form of generosity, but also a reflection of personal struggle in suppressing egoism and building virtue.

The support that Dian provides to her students reflects the principle of Karuna, namely compassion for those who suffer. This can be seen in his efforts to provide financial assistance to the best students, an action that not only eases the economic burden but also provides motivation for other students to excel (Walsh, 2013). In a Buddhist psychology perspective, this action strengthens the meaningfulness aspect of life in education, where individuals who receive help will feel more appreciated and supported in their academic journey (Wallace & Shapiro, 2006). In addition, the invitation to have recreation with students as a form of appreciation for academic achievements reflects the principle of mudita, where happiness is not only an individual experience but also something that is shared with others (Gethin, 1998).

Furthermore, Dian's implementation of brahmavihara in the educational approach is in harmony with holistic education theory, which emphasizes a balance between intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual aspects (Miller, 2007). This educational model not only aims to transfer knowledge but also shapes students' character so that they have empathy, emotional balance and wisdom in facing life's challenges. In the Buddhist educational tradition, this approach is also in line with the concept of 'effort-*causalya'* or wise skills in guiding others according to their conditions and needs (Keown, 2005).

Individuals have three basic psychological needs that must be met so that they can develop optimally, namely autonomy, competence*,* and social relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In this context, the support Dian provides to students plays a role in fulfilling the need for social connectedness, where students feel cared for and supported in their academic process. Thus, these actions not only impact students' emotional well-being but also increase their intrinsic motivation to learn.

Dian also emphasized that her actions were not a form of self-image but a personal struggle to overcome her ego and develop virtue. This is in line with the principle of anatta in Buddhist teachings, which emphasizes that the self or ego is an illusion that must be transformed through moral and spiritual practices (Gethin, 1998). In the Buddhist tradition, the act of helping others is not only for their benefit but also as a way to develop oneself spiritually. By helping students overcome their difficulties, Dian also experiences personal growth in her spiritual and moral aspects.

Furthermore, the causal-effort concept mentioned previously shows that the academic guidance carried out by Dian is not just a transfer of knowledge but rather a strategy tailored to students' needs. In this context, the educational approach he implemented reflects a transformative education model that emphasizes changing students' awareness to be more sensitive to human and social values (Mezirow, 1991). Transformative education not only targets academic achievement but also how students can internalize ethical values in their lives.

From the perspective of moral education, Dian's actions can be linked to the theory of moral development (Kohlberg, 1971), especially in the post-conventional morality stage, where individuals act based on universal principles of justice, compassion, and respect for the rights of others. Dian not only carries out her role as an educator within academic boundaries but also as a moral agent who guides students to understand and apply human values in their lives. In this perspective, education is not only about the accumulation of knowledge but also about the development of strong character.

"Little Master" for Children

Lucky Cahya, a Confucian man who is active in the Bandung Branch of the Indonesian Confucian Religious Council (MAKIN), is also part of the presidium of the Inter-Religious Working Network (Jakatarub) in Bandung. In the midst of his busy schedule as a doctoral candidate at the Bandung Institute of Technology (ITB) Mathematics Study Program in 2024, he continues to carry out social activities with full dedication. One of his most prominent activities was teaching Confucian children at the Kong Miao Sunday School in Bandung City. This involvement was not just an ordinary form of service but was driven by a deep concern for the moral condition of the young Confucian generation, which he considered was increasingly being eroded by developments over time. According to him, Confucian teachings pay serious attention to the development of morality and virtue, which aims to form superior human character, not only in individual life but also in the family and society. The concept Li (礼), which in the Confucian tradition refers to social norms and rituals that regulate interactions between individuals, which are an important basis for building social harmony. Besides that, *Ren* (仁), which means being humane, teaches the values of compassion and virtue which are the foundation for ethical principles in social life (interview with Lucky, November 28, 2024).

Lucky's anxiety about the increasingly complex dynamics of social change prompted him to reorganize *Dì Zǐ Guī* (弟子规), a classic book of moral teachings from the Qing Dynasty which has been a guide for moral education for Confucian children (Xianzu, 2023). He realized that although the values in the book remained relevant, the interpretation needed to be adjusted so that it could be applied in a modern context. These reforms not only included simplifying the language to make it easier to understand but also included a contextual approach that could link Confucian moral values to the challenges of everyday life. Apart from that, Lucky is also developing a more creative and child-friendly learning model to ensure that moral education is not just theory but is truly internalized in their lives from an early age.

Lucky's efforts to reform moral education can be analyzed through several perspectives of moral education theory. Emile Durkheim, for example, emphasized that moral education is a social process that aims to instill the values and norms necessary for social cohesion. Durkheim (Durkheim, 2016) argues that moral education must emphasize three main aspects, namely discipline, social cohesion, and individual moral autonomy. If it is related to the Confucian concept, *Li* is very much in line with Durkheim's idea of social discipline, where individuals must act in accordance with their roles and responsibilities in society. Meanwhile, *Ren* closely related to aspects of social attachment and concern for others, which are pillars in building a harmonious and civilized life.

Apart from that, reform *Dì Zǐ Guī* What Lucky does can also be related to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development. Kohlberg divided human moral development into three levels: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Children who study *Li* And *Ren* from an early age it will be easier to develop from the stage of obedience to external rules to a deeper and more reflective moral understanding. In other words, Lucky's reforms aimed to ensure that children not only understand morality as simply rules that must be obeyed but also as principles that they consciously internalize in their lives (Kohlberg & Row.Ajzen, 1981).

Not only that, this more contextual and creative approach to moral education is also related to John Dewey's progressive education theory. Dewey emphasized that moral education must be based on real experiences that are relevant to students' lives. In his view, children should be involved in an active learning process, not simply passively accept moral doctrine. With more creative and applicable learning methods, Confucian children are not only taught theoretical moral concepts but are also involved in activities that enable them to develop practical and reflective moral understanding. This approach makes moral education more alive, not just memorizing traditional values that are rigid and difficult to apply in everyday life (Mishra et al., 2001).

In the modern context, moral education based on Confucian teachings is increasingly relevant because the values taught can still be used as a guide in facing the challenges of life today. Draft *Li*, for example, can not only be interpreted as compliance with traditional rituals, but can also be interpreted as a form of respect for applicable social norms, such as ethics in communicating on social media, compliance with the law, and respect for cultural diversity. In the era of globalization, where social interactions are increasingly complex, *Li* becomes a guideline that helps individuals continue to behave in accordance with moral values that maintain social balance (Saifuddin, 2019).

Meanwhile, concept *Ren* is also becoming increasingly important in modern life which is often characterized by individualism and social inequality. *Ren* teaches about empathy and concern for others, which is very relevant in preventing negative behavior such as cyberbullying and social intolerance. By instilling values *Ren* from an early age, children can be formed into individuals who have high social sensitivity and are able to contribute to building a more inclusive and harmonious society (Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama, 2019).

For Lucky in the Confucian religion, children's education is the first step in building the foundations of a benevolent world. Every parent, especially in the context of moral development in children, has the responsibility to teach virtues through example, "It is very important. This is the basic foundation. Even in countries that have no religion, many remain good people (Zulkarnaen et al., 2023). What is important is to form civilized, empathetic and moral humans from an early age." Lucky had a related religious experience when the mother of one of his students died. The deceased left behind the hope that his son would one day become a doctor. In his reflection, Lucky saw that Confucian teachings encouraged children not only to see the profession as a mere material achievement but also as part of devotion and service to society. Children follow the greater golden rule which starts from respecting parents (Interview with Lucky, November 28, 2024).

Lucky's choice to become a volunteer teacher at Sunday school is a concrete step in implementing the golden rule for training true character (Xìng 性) to students. Teachers not only teach knowledge but also inspire and become role models for students to develop virtues and good life ethics. Of course, for Lucky, this is a heavy burden because he has to appear as an ideal person, "It's heavy in terms of moral responsibility. I have to maintain my integrity because my actions reflect the teachings I carry." Before teaching, Lucky also needs to prepare teaching materials carefully. Apart from self-taught Mandarin, which is the key to understanding Confucian teachings in-depth, a teacher also needs to do a mini-research to understand the context and relevance of Confucian teachings in everyday life. This is done periodically and without compensation. However, he believes this process is part of the nature of the universe, which exists in the form of a yin-yang balance; everything has two complementary (Interview with Lucky, November 28, 2024).

Imitatio Christi for Victims of Sexual Violence

Obertina Modesta Johanis is a female priest who is active as a counselor for victims of sexual violence. She is involved in the Women Crisis Center (WCC) Pasundan Durebang under the auspices of the Pasundan Christian Church Synod (GKP). Apart from that, Obertina also serves in preaching and teaching at church, provides counseling and public education, and participates in various interfaith activities. The role she carries out is not just a form of service but also a real manifestation of her deep faith. In living her Christian faith, Obertina felt God's great love and care, especially through the saving work of Jesus Christ, who atones for the sins of mankind. For her, God's love is a gift that brings moral responsibility. She felt that she was cared for by God, so she was encouraged to reciprocate by caring for others. This belief is in line with the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, which emphasizes that when someone feeds the hungry or visits those who are suffering, this action is actually done to God himself (Interview with Obertina, November 28, 2024).

In the context of assisting victims of sexual violence, Obertina adopted the concept *Imitation of Christ* or imitation of the life of Christ (Heath, n.d.). She tries to understand the suffering of the survivors by presenting love and sacrifice as exemplified by Jesus. However, she emphasizes that her efforts are not to force religious experiences on her clients but rather to be good listeners and provide space for them to rediscover their dignity and strength. Not only in the spiritual aspect, Obertina also provides psychological services, medical assistance, and even legal assistance for victims (Interview with Obertina, November 28, 2024). For her, the ideal relationship is when someone can help another person grow into a full human being, as God created humans with excellent potential from the start.

The approach applied by Obertina is in line with the concept of pastoral counseling, which emphasizes four main aspects, namely healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling. Pastoral counseling aims to help individuals who experience mental and spiritual disorders to recover and rediscover their strength (Sodi et al., 2021). Therefore, the church has a very important role in accompanying women victims of violence, not only by providing moral and spiritual support but also by providing counseling services that can help victims overcome the psychological impacts they experience. More than that, the church also plays a role in shaping society's understanding of the importance of gender equality and healthy relationships in family life so that violence, both in the household and in public spaces, can be prevented from an early age (Truong et al., 2022).

In dealing with cases of sexual violence, the church is also expected to be able to provide support to victims in the legal process they are undergoing. Accompanying during the justice process, as well as providing moral and spiritual support, is an important step to ensure that victims do not feel alone in their struggle to obtain justice (Vich & Hibbett, 2022). The approach taken by churches and figures like Obertina not only helps victims recover from trauma but also gives them the strength to face the future better (Mayer et al., 2023). In the end, the role of the church in accompanying victims of sexual violence is a reflection of Christian teachings about love and care for others, as well as emphasizing that the church has a responsibility as an agent of healing for those who suffer.

Obertina's act of love is rooted in the ethical principles of the Golden Rule, which is one of the main moral foundations in various ethical and religious traditions (Oppong, 2013). In the Christian context, this rule is manifested in the main teaching of the Gospel of Matthew 22:36-40, which emphasizes two main laws: love of God and love of others (Boba & Saingo, 2023). In particular, the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself contains a dimension of empathy and recognition of the intrinsic value of each individual, which, in the context of recovery for victims of sexual violence, becomes very relevant.

Recovery for victims of sexual violence requires an approach that is not only based on justice but also on love that is sensitive to trauma. Obertina emphasized the importance of providing emotional validation and building complete trust in the victim's testimony, which reflects the basic principles of ethics of care as developed by Carol Gilligan (Gilligan, 1982). The ethic of care places interpersonal care as a fundamental element in moral decision-making, where acts of love are not only seen as individual virtues but also as structural efforts in creating an environment that supports victims' recovery (Held & McGrew, 2003).

In an interview conducted on November 28, 2024, Obertina revealed that love should not be limited by the victim's religious background or beliefs but must be given universally and inclusively. This is in line with the concept of agape love in Christian theology, which describes love as a selfless and sacrificial act (Pellat & Schacht, 1965). Agape love requires a person to prioritize the welfare of others above personal interests, which in the context of recovery for victims of sexual violence means providing a safe space for them to express their experiences and obtain emotional support without fear or social stigma (Volf & Croasmun, 2019).

Furthermore, Obertina's approach can be studied from a trauma psychology perspective. (Hermanto et al., 2022) in his study on trauma and recovery emphasizes that recovery for victims of sexual violence requires not only medical and legal intervention but also a relationship-based approach that is able to rebuild the victim's sense of security and trust in the world. Obertina's act of love, by providing validation and full trust to the victim, plays a role in overcoming negative psychological impacts such as guilt, shame and loss of self-esteem that are often experienced by survivors of sexual violence (Van der Vliet, 2024).

Apart from that, a sociological perspective can also be used to understand the implications of Obertina's acts of love in a broader context. Social actions, including love, cannot be separated from the habitus and social structures that shape them (Bourdieu, 1990). In Obertina's case, the values of love that she lives do not only come from religious teachings but also from her social experience in interacting with victims of sexual violence. In other words, acts of love are not only personal moral expressions but also responses to structural conditions that demand solidarity and support for victims (Noddings, 2005).

In the context of liberation theology, Obertina's actions can be seen as the embodiment of a praxis of love oriented towards social justice. True love is not only affective, but also has a transformative dimension in challenging structures of injustice that oppress vulnerable individuals (Aguilar, 2011). Therefore, Obertina's actions in accompanying victims of sexual violence can be understood as part of a liberation effort, where love acts as a force that encourages social change and respect for human dignity (Cone & Giske, 2013).

Of course, Obertina revealed that at some moments, she felt tired of doing service in God's field, "Sometimes I get tired, especially considering the long history of the church, *which is full of challenges. But I have learned to celebrate the small things, like when friends who believe in their beliefs are recognized by the government and get ID cards."* Occasionally, I also wonder about God's justice for victims of sexual violence. However, Obertina believes that healthy faith is faith that grows even when shaken and then becomes strong again. Faith must dialogue with a reality that is full of mystery, even with the problem of human suffering. As an activist in women's issues, Obertina believes that the distribution of power is a concrete step to support each other and empower others. He often provides opportunities for other people to appear and speak on forums without the people he recommends knowing (Interview with Obertina, 28 November 2024).

4. CONCLUSION

The golden rule as a universal value in various religious traditions has strong relevance in building social awareness and overcoming injustice through concrete action. The findings of this research show that values such as love, equality and humanity can be transformed into concrete actions in everyday life. Three interfaith activist speakers, who come from different religious backgrounds, illustrate how religious teachings can be translated into various forms of activities, including education, mentoring, and advocacy. By actualizing these values, religion not only functions as a spiritual guide for individuals but also as a liberating force that encourages inclusivity and respect for diversity in social life. This approach emphasizes that authentic religious practices are able to strengthen relationships between individuals, fight for social justice, and strengthen unity in diversity. Through the appreciation and application of these noble values, religion can become an instrument that enriches human life while providing real benefits for overall social progress.

REFERENCES

Adeoye, M. A. (2024). The Shared Foundations of Faith in Christianity and Islam: The Role of Monotheism in Life and Afterlife Across Abrahamic Religions. *At-Turost: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 65–79.

Aguilar, M. (2011). Religion, Politics and Liberation: A Dialogue between Gustavo Gutiérrez, the 14th Dalai Lama and Gianni Vattimo. *Political Theology*, *12*(1), 144–166.

Al Ayub Ahmed, A., Komariah, A., Chupradit, S., Rohimah, B., Anita Nuswantara, D., Nuphanudin, N., Mahmudiono, T., Suksatan, W., & Ilham, D. (2022). Investigating the relationship between religious lifestyle and social health among Muslim teachers. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *78*(4), 7335.

Amathabhani, B., & Dissanayake, N. (2024). Existential Buddhism: embracing life's uncertainties and finding meaning within. *South Florida Journal of Development*, *5*(10), 4540– 4540.

Arifin, Z., & Aqso, M. (2023). Aktivisme moderasi beragama dalam menangkal radikalisme di sekolah menengah atas Kota Medan: Studi etnografi SMA Swasta Sultan Iskandar Muda. *Tawazun: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, *16*(3), 471–486.

Armstrong, K. (2013). *Compassion: 12 langkah menuju hidup berbelas kasih*. Gramedia Pustaka Utama.

Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press.

Bayat, A. (2010). *Life as politics: How ordinary people change the Middle East*. Amsterdam University Press.

Boba, E. R., & Saingo, Y. A. (2023). Kesepahaman Nilai Pancasila Dengan Nilai Kristiani Berdasarkan Injil Matius 22: 39-40. *BULLET: Jurnal Multidisiplin Ilmu*, *2*(6), 1219–1227.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Stanford University Press.

Cone, P. H., & Giske, T. (2013). Teaching spiritual care–a grounded theory study among undergraduate nursing educators. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, *22*(13–14), 1951–1960.

Daryanto, D., & Ernawati, F. (2024). Integrasi moral dan etika dalam pendidikan agama Islam. *DINAMIKA: Jurnal Kajian Pendidikan Dan Keislaman*, *9*(1), 15–31.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social

development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, *55*(1), 68–78.

Dewi, F. (2020). *Studi komparatif konsep ajaran kelahiran kembali (Reinkarnasi) dalam agama Hindu dan agama Budha*. UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

Durkheim, E. (2016). The elementary forms of religious life. In *Social theory re-wired* (pp. 52–67). Routledge.

Firmanto, A. D., Pudjiarti, E. S., Raharso, A. T., & Tinambunan, E. R. (2023). *Faith-inspired interrelational citizenship. A key driver for cultivating peace in the Indonesian socio-political landscapes*.

Freire, P. (1970). *Education for awareness a talk witt Paulo Freire*.

Freire, P. (2020). Pedagogy of the oppressed. In *Toward a sociology of education* (pp. 374–386). Routledge.

Gattamorta, L. (2023). Beyond Relationism? Different Relational Perspectives and George Herbert Mead. In *Methodology of Relational Sociology: Approaches and Analyses* (pp. 275–293). Springer.

Gethin, R. (1998). *The Foundations of Buddhism*. Oxford University Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.

Habermas, J. (2023). *A new structural transformation of the public sphere and deliberative politics*. John Wiley & Sons.

Harlow, S. (2011). Collective action on the web: A cross-cultural study of social networking sites and online and offline activism in the United States and Latin America. *Information, Communication & Society*, *14*(2), 208–228.

Harvey, P. (2013). *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*. Cambridge University Press.

Heath, J. (n.d.). Imitatio Christi and Violence to the Self: Winnicott's True/False Self and Possible Health Risks of (Mis) Reading Paul. *Journal of Disability & Religion*, *27*(2), 247–283.

Held, D., & McGrew, A. (2003). *The great globalization debate: An introduction* (Vol. 4). Polity Press, Cambridge.

Hermanto, B. A., Lawrence, K. P., Rizqiansyah, M. A., Ramadhan, R., & Kurniawan, P. (2022). Eksistensi Penganut Animisme, Dinamisme, dan Totemisme di Era Modern. *Moderasi: Jurnal Kajian Islam Kontemporer*, *1*(01).

Hermawan, U., & Rahman, M. T. (2024). D Dialog Agama Perspektif U. *Integritas Terbuka: Peace and Interfaith Studies*, *3*(1), 31–42.

Hick, J. (2010). Religious pluralism. In *Routledge companion to philosophy of religion* (pp. 238–247). Routledge.

Jati, W. R. (2014). Agama dan politik: Teologi pembebasan sebagai arena profetisasi agama. *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan*, *22*(1), 133–156.

Johansson, R. (2025). *The dynamic psychology of early Buddhism*. Taylor & Francis.

Kar, S. K., & Chettri, A. (2024). Anna-daan in Buddhism: Deciphering the nexus. In *Anna-daan, Food Charity in India* (pp. 99–118). Routledge India.

Keown, D. (2005). *Buddhist Ethics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

Kohlberg, L. (1971). *Stages of moral development as a basis for moral education*. Center for Moral Education, Harvard University Cambridge.

Kohlberg, L., & Row.Ajzen, I. (1981). The Philosophy of Moral Development: Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211.

Kornfield, J. (2008). *The Dhammapada: teachings of the Buddha*. Shambhala Publications.

Kurniawan, F. E., & Margiansyah, D. (2019). Aktivisme gerakan keagamaan dalam konteks kebudayaan: Antara penegakan syariat dan anomali. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, *14*(1), 41–58.

Lempoy, J. J., Wakas, J. E., & Manullang, J. (2024). Mengkomunikasikan Matius 7: 12 Sebagai Model Edukasi Moderasi Beragama di Kelurahan Matani Tiga, Kota Tomohon. *Jurnal Ilmiah Wahana Pendidikan*, *10*(13), 958–968.

Madan, G. R. (1999). Buddhism and Some of Its Basic Principles. *Buddhism: Its Various Manifestations*, *1*, 137.

Mayer, C. H., Niekerk, R., & Fouché, P. J. (2023). Servant leadership during a struggle for political freedom: A psychobiography of Albertina Sisulu. In *The Palgrave handbook of servant leadership* (pp. 199–225). Springer International Publishing.

Mazza, D., Mahatthanadull, S., & Kittisobhano, P. P. (2024). A Buddhist-Muslim Partnership Model for Strengthening Solidarity in the Local Community: A Case-Study of Tha-It Subdistrict, Pakkred, Nonthaburi, Thailand. *The Journal of International Buddhist Studies College (JIBSC)*, *10*(1–2), 147–162.

McGuire, M. B. (2021). Toward a Sociology of Spirituality:: Individual Religion in Social/Historical Context 1. In *The Centrality of Religion in Social Life* (pp. 215–232). Routledge.

Mezirow, J. (1991). *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J. P. (2007). *The Holistic Curriculum*. University of Toronto Press.

Mishra, P., Worthington, V., Girod, M., Packard, B., & Thomas, C. (2001). Learning science: A Deweyan perspective. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *38*(3), 317–336.

Noddings, N. (2005). What does it mean to educate the whole child? *Educational Leadership*, *63*(1), 8.

Oppong, S. H. (2013). Religion and identity. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, *3*(6), 10–16.

Pellat, B. L. C., & Schacht, J. (1965). *Encyclopedia Of Islam*.

Pradhan, R. C., & Pradhan, R. C. (2021). Religion, Ethics, and Society. *The Early Philosophy of Daya Krishna*, 67–87.

Rahman, M. T. (2018). *Pengantar filsafat sosial*. Lekkas.

Rahman, M. T. (2025). *Metodologi Penelitian Agama*. Prodi S2 Studi Agama-Agama UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung.

Rahmaningsih, A. A., & Rizqi, R. (2022). Agama dan moral dalam pembentukan substansi dan struktur hukum. *As-Siyasi: Journal of Constitutional Law*, *2*(2), 153–172.

Rogers, C. R. (1999). The High School Counselor and the "Fully Functioning Person." *Perceiving, Behaving, Becoming: Lessons Learned*, 68.

Rohimah, N. (2022). *Peran tokoh agama dalam membangun kesejahteraan sosial pada saat pandemi COVID-19*.

Sahin, A. (2022). Islam, social work and common good in the Muslim minority context of Europe: Rethinking Shariʿa as relational ethics. In *Exploring Islamic Social Work: Between Community and the Common Good* (pp. 179–200). Springer International Publishing.

Saifuddin, L. H. (2019). *Moderasi Beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.

Saraswati, D. (2013). Pluralisme agama menurut Karen Armstrong. *Jurnal Filsafat*, *23*(3), 186–198.

Sodi, T., Bopape, D., & Makgahlela, M. (2021). Botho as an essential ingredient of African psychology: An insider perspective. *South African Journal of Psychology*, *51*(3), 441–452.

Supriyanto, S. (2022). Principles of compassion in the world religions for coexistence among religions in the perspective of Karen Armstrong. *Mawaizh: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Pengembangan Sosial Kemanusiaan*, *13*(2), 105–126.

Suzuki. (2023). *Essays in zen buddhism*.

Syah, F., Tanjung, I. H., Lubis, M. I., & Siregar, R. W. (2024). Dinamika peran agama dalam pembentukan etika sosial dalam masyarakat kontemporer di Kota Tebing Tinggi. *At-Tadzkir: Jurnal Penelitian Dan Ilmu Komunikasi*, *1*(1), 1–10.

Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama. (2019). *Tanya Jawab Moderasi Beragama*. Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kemenag RI.

Truong, M., Sharif, M., Olsen, A., Pasalich, D., Calabria, B., & Priest, N. (2022). Attitudes and beliefs about

family and domestic violence in faith-based communities: an exploratory qualitative study. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *57*(4), 880–897.

Upreti, G. (2023). Buddhism, Gaia, and System Theory on Environmentalism. In *Ecosociocentrism: The Earth First Paradigm for Sustainable Living* (pp. 253–286). Springer.

Van der Vliet, V. (2024). Growing up in traditional society. In *The bantu-speaking peoples of Southern Africa* (pp. 211–245). Routledge.

Vich, V., & Hibbett, A. (2022). The political art of memory in Latin America. In *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Latin American Literary and Cultural Forms* (pp. 105–113).

Volf, M., & Croasmun, M. (2019). *For the Life of the World (Theology for the Life of the World): Theology That Makes a Difference*. Brazos Press.

Wallace, B. A., & Shapiro, S. L. (2006). Mental balance and well-being: Building bridges between Buddhism and Western psychology. *American Psychologist*, *61*(7), 690–701.

Walsh, Z. (2013). *The science of Sukha: A scientific theory on the Buddhist concept of happiness and human development*. Master's thesis). Retrieved from https://www. academia. edu/5573123 ….

Widiyanto, A. (2023). Interfaith Dialogue in the Post-Truth Age: Challenges, Strategies, and Prospects. *Religious Inquiries*, *12*(2), 105–124.

Wilson, B. R. (2016). *Religion in secular society: fifty years on*. Oxford University Press.

Xianzu, T. (2023). The Peony Pavilion, Scene 7,"The Boudoir Schoolroom"(Excerpt. In *How to Read Chinese Drama in Chinese: A Language Companion* (pp. 111–137). Columbia University Press.

Zulkarnaen, Z., Adenan, A., Marhaban, M., & Muammar, A. (2023). Building Religious Moderation through Theophany Concept with Philosophy and Religion Approaches. *Millati: Journal of Islamic Studies and Humanities*, *8*(1). https://doi.org/10.18326/mlt.v8i1.8012