

SOCIALIZING THE VALUE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION AS A FOUNDATION FOR STUDENT CHARACTER BUILDING AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 2 TUBAN

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Received 12-10-2026 | Received 28-12- 2026 | Accepted 13-01-2026

Abstract

This Community Service Program aims to strengthen students' understanding of religious moderation, foster tolerance and inclusivity, and reinforce national commitment through character education at State Senior High School 2 Tuban. The program was motivated by the increasing signs of intolerance among students and the urgent need to promote pluralism and harmony in educational settings. The activity employed an educative-participatory approach, combining seminars, interactive discussions, reflective sessions, and interfaith simulations involving students from diverse religious backgrounds. Data were collected through participatory observation, reflective questionnaires, and documentation. The results indicate a significant improvement in students' conceptual understanding of religious moderation, from perceiving it merely as tolerance to recognizing it as a framework of justice, balance, social responsibility, and anti-extremism. Students also demonstrated greater openness, empathy, and respect toward religious differences in their daily interactions. Furthermore, the program strengthened students' national commitment by instilling the awareness that loving the homeland and maintaining social harmony are integral expressions of religious practice. Overall, this Community Service Program activity demonstrated that experience-based, participatory learning effectively internalizes the values of religious moderation. It is recommended that similar programs be sustained and integrated into school curricula to cultivate tolerant, inclusive, and nationally minded students.

Keywords: The values of religious moderation, character education, tolerance, nationality.

Abstrak

Kegiatan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat ini bertujuan untuk memperkuat pemahaman siswa tentang konsep moderasi beragama, menumbuhkan sikap toleransi dan inklusivitas, serta memperkokoh komitmen kebangsaan melalui pendidikan karakter di SMA Negeri 2 Tuban. Kegiatan dilatarbelakangi oleh meningkatnya gejala intoleransi dan perlunya penguatan nilai kebinekaan di lingkungan sekolah. Metode pelaksanaan menggunakan pendekatan edukatif-partisipatif melalui seminar, diskusi interaktif, refleksi bersama, dan simulasi lintas agama dengan melibatkan peserta didik dari berbagai latar belakang agama. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, kuesioner reflektif, dan dokumentasi kegiatan. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan

adanya peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman peserta terhadap konsep moderasi beragama dari sekadar toleransi menuju kesadaran nilai keadilan, keseimbangan, dan tanggung jawab sosial. Siswa juga menunjukkan perubahan sikap menjadi lebih terbuka, empatik, dan menghargai perbedaan dalam interaksi sosial. Selain itu, kegiatan ini memperkuat semangat kebangsaan siswa melalui pemahaman bahwa mencintai tanah air dan menjaga kerukunan merupakan bagian dari pengamalan ajaran agama. Kegiatan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat ini membuktikan bahwa pembelajaran berbasis pengalaman dan partisipasi aktif efektif dalam menginternalisasikan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama. Program serupa direkomendasikan untuk dikembangkan secara berkelanjutan guna membentuk karakter pelajar yang toleran, inklusif, dan berjiwa kebangsaan.

Kata Kunci: Nilai moderasi beragama, pendidikan karakter, toleransi, kebangsaan.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a high level of religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. This condition is both a national treasure and a potential source of social conflict if not managed properly (Mubarok, 2022). In recent years, the rise of religious radicalism and intolerance has become a serious threat to education (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Schools, as social environments for the character formation of the younger generation, often become spaces where the values of diversity are tested (Mukhibat et al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening religious moderation through education is an urgent need to foster tolerance and prevent extreme behavior among students.

Conceptually, religious moderation is understood as a religious attitude that balances belief in one's own religion with respect for others' beliefs (Kemenag RI, 2019). This principle encompasses the values of *tawassuth* (middle way), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance). Various studies have emphasized the importance of moderate education in preventing radicalism and in developing a generation with a moderate character (Anzaikhan, 2022; Mukhibat et al., 2024; Mubarok & Ghony, 2024). However, most studies still focus on conceptual aspects and public policy, while the application of these values in secondary schools is rarely examined in a practical, participatory manner.

This paper is based on the assumption that schools function not only as spaces for transferring knowledge but also as strategic arenas for internalizing national values, tolerance, and social responsibility. Religious moderation, implemented through an educational and participatory approach, is believed to shape students'

character by fostering inclusivity, appreciating differences, and rejecting violence (Warsah & Istan, 2025). Thus, character education grounded in religious moderation plays a crucial role in strengthening students' ideological resilience amid the globalization of values.

In the current literature, four main themes are frequently debated regarding the implementation of religious moderation in educational institutions. Several studies confirm that religious moderation can be an effective strategy for preventing radicalism among adolescents. Values such as tolerance, non-violence, and love of country have been proven to suppress extreme attitudes in schools (Mulyana, 2023).

Aderibigbe et al. (2023) emphasize that character education should foster respect for diversity. However, most character education practices still focus on personal morality and fail to integrate aspects of religious moderation. Research by Saepudin et al. (2023) and Subaidi (2020) shows that moderate learning needs to be systematically integrated from elementary school to shape moderate character more effectively.

Teachers are key actors in instilling moderation in students. However, research shows that there remains a gap between teachers' understanding and its practical application in schools (Muhaemin et al., 2023). Therefore, reflective-participatory training and community service activities are promising alternatives. In the digital age, students are easily exposed to intolerant content and religious bias. Research by (Putra et al., 2024) shows that religious moderation education can strengthen tolerant character in schools on the border, but it requires support from a healthy digital ecosystem.

From the various literature above, it is clear that religious moderation has been extensively studied at the conceptual and public policy levels. However, there remains a knowledge gap regarding its direct application in secondary schools, particularly through a participatory, context-specific community service approach. Therefore, this Community Service activity is crucial to demonstrate that the socialization of religious moderation values can be a concrete instrument in strengthening student character and building a culture of tolerance in schools.

The objectives of this activity are: (1) to strengthen students' understanding of the concept of religious moderation, (2) to foster attitudes of tolerance and inclusivity, and (3) to strengthen national commitment through character education based on religious moderation. Therefore, this paper seeks to provide an empirical contribution to strengthening religious moderation in secondary education through a Community Service approach. Through this activity, a concrete picture will emerge of the

effectiveness of socializing the values of religious moderation in shaping students who are tolerant, just, and oriented towards social harmony. To achieve this goal, the following section will explain in detail the implementation method, including participants, procedures, instruments, data collection techniques, and the analysis process for the results.

METHODS

This Community Service activity employed an educational-participatory approach (Participatory Action Research), with a design based on socialization, interactive seminars, focused discussions, and simulations of interfaith social interactions. This approach was chosen to ensure active student involvement while enabling the internalization of values through direct learning experiences (experiential learning).

The participants were students of State Senior High School 2 Tuban from diverse religious backgrounds. This Community Service activity involved students from State Senior High School 2 Tuban from various religious backgrounds, including Islam, Christianity, and Catholicism. In addition to the students, the activity was attended by the Religious Education teacher, the vice principal for student affairs, and representatives from the Tuban Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office, serving as supporting partners. The diversity of participants was a crucial factor in creating a space for constructive interfaith dialogue and interaction.

The Doctoral Candidate Team carried out the activity from the Multicultural Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Unisma, Class of 2024: Umi Kulsum, Imam Syafi'i, Muhammad Imam Syafi'i, Muhammad Yasin, and Drs. Samingan. The community service program was held on January 6, 2026, in the auditorium of State Senior High School 2 Tuban. The activity was implemented in four main stages:

1. Planning and Coordination

The implementation team, together with the school, developed an activity plan, determined the theme, materials, and resource persons, and prepared supporting materials, including teaching materials, presentation media, and reflection sheets.

2. Activity Implementation

The main activity was conducted through a national seminar and interactive outreach program themed "Internalization of the Values of Religious Moderation as a Foundation for Character Building for Students at State Senior High School 2 Tuban." In this session, the resource persons

communicatively delivered the material, followed by group discussions and simulations of interfaith interactions. The simulation sessions involved students from different religions collaborating in school-life scenarios that required empathy, respect, and cooperation.

3. Reflection and Evaluation

Participants were asked to write down their impressions and lessons learned from the activity. Reflections were conducted openly to identify changes in understanding and attitudes toward the value of religious moderation.

4. Follow-up

The supervising teacher, along with the community service implementation team, prepared a sustainability plan to integrate religious moderation values into student club activities and Religious Education lessons at school.

With a systematic activity design involving various educational stakeholders, the results of this community service implementation are expected to provide an empirical picture of the effectiveness of socializing religious moderation values in strengthening students' character, tolerance, and national awareness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A Community Service activity themed "Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation as a Foundation for Character Building for Students at State Senior High School 2 Tuban" was held on January 6, 2026, involving students from various faiths. The activity proceeded in a conducive and interactive manner, demonstrating the enthusiasm of the participants in participating in seminars, discussions, and simulations of interfaith social interactions. Overall, the results of the community service activity demonstrated the achievement of three main objectives, as described below.

1. Strengthening Students' Understanding of the Concept of Religious Moderation

Observations and reflections showed a significant increase in students' conceptual understanding of the meaning of religious moderation. Prior to the activity, most participants understood moderation narrowly as a passive form of interfaith tolerance simply "respecting differences." However, after participating in the seminars, discussions, and simulations of social interactions, this understanding developed into a more comprehensive and reflective one. Students began to realize

that religious moderation is not only an attitude of respect for differences, but also a framework of thinking and behavior that demands a balance (*tawazun*) between personal beliefs and social responsibility.



Figure 1

In an educational context, these results indicate that students have moved from a level of knowing to a level of understanding, from simply knowing the term "moderation" to understanding its substantive values. This understanding encompasses four main pillars: justice (*i'tidal*), balance (*tawazun*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and anti-extremism as forms of implementing moderation in religious and national life.

This change in understanding was evident in the participants' written reflections. Some students wrote that before the activity, they viewed other religions "quite from a distance." However, after the simulation and discussion, they understood the importance of fostering dialogue and mutual respect in social interactions. This cognitive transformation demonstrates the success of the participatory educational approach in facilitating learning by experience, that is, learning through direct experience, rather than simply listening to lectures.

These findings align with research by Khasanah et al. (2023), which emphasized that religious moderation education should focus on developing moral and social awareness, rather than simply the transfer of normative knowledge. Thus, participatory moderation learning such as this community service activity is more effective because it allows for the internalization of values through social interaction, personal reflection, and direct experience.

Furthermore, this activity also strengthens participants' religious literacy, namely the ability to understand religious teachings rationally, empathetically, and

openly, and to engage with diverse interpretations. Moderate religious literacy is an important foundation for developing the character of Pancasila students who are faithful, have noble morals, and are tolerant.

From a theoretical perspective, these results support the idea of transformative learning proposed by Paul & Mezirow (1997), where effective learning occurs when individuals experience cognitive dissonance, a shift in perspective due to new experiences that challenge old assumptions. In the context of this activity, direct interaction between students of different faiths sparked in-depth reflection on the meaning of balanced and inclusive religiosity.



Figure 2.

Therefore, this community service activity not only enhanced students' conceptual understanding of religious moderation but also transformed their perspectives on religious practices in their social environment. This new understanding is an important foundation for the formation of moderate, just, and responsible citizens who uphold the values of diversity.

2. Fostering Tolerance and Inclusivity

The results of the Community Service activities indicate that interfaith socialization and simulation activities have a significant impact on developing tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students. During the implementation process, participants demonstrated behavioral changes, moving from passivity in interfaith interactions to greater openness, communication, and collaboration.

The participatory social simulation activities facilitated students from different religious backgrounds Muslims, Christians, and Catholics to collaborate in solving social issues faced at school. For example, in one simulation, student groups were asked to find solutions to potential conflicts among student organizations arising

from differences in religious practices. During the discussion, students not only expressed their personal opinions but also learned to listen to and understand others' perspectives. This fostered a collective awareness that tolerance is not merely an attitude toward differences, but also the ability to build mutual understanding and respect.

Observations showed that interactions between participants occurred naturally and without social barriers. Students from different religions sat side by side, exchanged views, and demonstrated empathy in addressing issues of diversity. This phenomenon demonstrates the formation of an inclusive social environment, where differences are no longer social barriers but become a means of learning human values.

Theoretically, this change aligns with Allport's intergroup contact theory, which states that direct contact between individuals from different groups can reduce prejudice, increase empathy, and strengthen social relationships when conducted under conditions of equality and mutual respect (Bagci et al., 2022). This community service activity successfully achieved this goal: participants engaged in a safe, equal, and trusting dialogue, fostering harmonious interfaith interaction.

This finding is further supported by Anwar (2016), research, which confirms that experiential education and open dialogue are more effective in fostering tolerance than purely cognitive learning. Activities such as seminars, group reflections, and social interaction simulations provide students with opportunities to practice the value of tolerance in real-life situations, rather than simply understanding it theoretically.

From the reflections collected, many participants acknowledged that these activities opened new horizons. Several students wrote that previously they felt "unnecessary to interact with friends of different religions for fear of offending." However, after the simulation, they realized that differences actually enriched their perspectives. This demonstrates an affective transformation, namely changes in attitudes and emotions, not just knowledge.

Pedagogically, this experience supports the idea of humanistic education, which places empathy, respect, and emotional warmth at the core of the learning process (Rogers, 1983). Moderation education, designed around social interaction, enables students to build positive emotional connections with peers of different faiths, fostering an awareness that diversity is a natural part of national life.

Thus, this community service activity successfully fosters a tolerant and inclusive attitude through a dialogical, reflective, and collaborative learning process.

Tolerance is no longer understood as a passive concept, but rather as an active social practice manifested in behaviors of mutual respect, assistance, and cooperation across religious boundaries. This inclusive attitude serves as an important foundation for developing students' character, embracing moderation and democracy, and being oriented toward social harmony.

3. Strengthening National Commitment through Character Education

The third aspect of this Community Service activity is strengthening students' national commitment through internalizing the values of religious moderation. Based on participants' observations and reflections, there was an increase in students' awareness that loving their country, maintaining harmony, and respecting differences are integral to practicing moderate religious teachings.

Before the activity, some students understood national commitment as merely a sense of pride in national symbols such as the flag and the national anthem. However, after participating in a series of seminars, discussions, and reflections on values, their understanding evolved into a more substantial awareness that national commitment means a moral and social responsibility to maintain harmony in diversity.

Participant reflections showed that they began to link religious values with the spirit of nationalism. For example, several students wrote that "being moderately religious means maintaining peace and respecting fellow citizens." This view demonstrates a paradigm shift from exclusive religiosity to national religiosity, a religious perspective that places love of country and unity as part of the expression of faith.

Theoretically, these results align with the concept of religious nationalism proposed by (Aktürk, 2022), which holds that religious and national identities can coexist when religious values are internalized as a source of public morality rather than a tool of social segregation. In the Indonesian context, this aligns with the spirit of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, where the balance between religious observance and national loyalty is a key pillar in maintaining the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia.

From a character education perspective, this activity internalizes national values through reflective learning. Teachers and facilitators encourage students to examine the meaning of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity) and how this principle aligns with the teachings of their respective religions (Philia & Susanti, 2025). Through this approach, participants understand that maintaining harmony is not only the responsibility of the state but also a manifestation of faith and morality.

These findings are supported by research by Hayati et al. (2020), which demonstrated that character education grounded in religious and social values can strengthen nationalism, deepen multicultural awareness, and foster social awareness among students. This type of education not only shapes academically intelligent individuals but also individuals with moderate character and a social responsibility to the nation's sustainability.

Furthermore, this activity also encourages collaboration between schools and religious institutions (in this case, the Tuban Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs Office) to develop sustainable programs that strengthen students' national identity. This type of collaboration is important because it integrates the dimensions of policy, education, and social practice. With this synergy, schools can function not only as formal educational institutions but also as centers for learning national values and moderate religiosity.

From reflections and brief interviews, it appears that students are beginning to understand that "being religious properly" also means "being a nation properly." This awareness is an indicator of the activity's success in internalizing national values through a moderate, contextually appropriate religious approach. This also proves that character education rooted in the value of religious moderation can unite the values of faith and nationalism into a unified moral whole.



Figure 3.

Thus, these community service activities contribute to the character development of Pancasila students who are devout, have noble morals, and possess a strong national spirit. This commitment to nationality, rooted in spiritual and social awareness, serves as a crucial bulwark against the influence of radicalism, intolerance, and disintegration in the educational environment.

CONCLUSION

This Community Service activity successfully strengthened students' understanding of religious moderation, fostered attitudes of tolerance and inclusivity, and deepened their commitment to nationalism through an educational, participatory approach. Students understood moderation not only as interfaith tolerance, but also as a balance between religious observance and social responsibility. The interfaith interactions that occurred during the activity fostered empathy, fairness, and an inclusive national spirit. This activity demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential learning in shaping the character of moderate students. Therefore, similar programs need to be developed sustainably by integrating religious moderation values into the curriculum, school activities, and teacher training, so that education can serve as a foundation for creating a tolerant, civilized, and patriotic generation.

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