Religious Moderation in Indonesian Classrooms: Reflective and Participatory Pedagogy in a Multifaith School Context

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Abstract: This study examines the effectiveness of integrating the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process as a pedagogical framework to promote religious moderation in a multifaith Indonesian secondary school. Given the rising concern over religious intolerance and youth vulnerability to radical ideologies in pluralistic societies, the study addresses the urgent need for reflective and participatory learning approaches that can transform attitudes and behaviours. Employing a mixed-methods design, the research involved 100 students of different religious and ethnic backgrounds at SMA Negeri 1 Barus Jahe, North Sumatra. Data were collected through pre-tests, post-tests, questionnaires, classroom observations, and student reflections. Thematic and statistical analyses revealed significant improvements in students' understanding, awareness, and enactment of religious moderation values, with average cognitive scores increasing from 55 to 81.5 and behavioural awareness from 48.75 to 78.25. These findings suggest that integrating the Iceberg Analysis and U-Process facilitates cognitive development and deep emotional and ethical internalisation of interfaith values. The study contributes to religious education by proposing a culturally contextualised and empirically validated model that bridges conceptual understanding and real-world practice. Its originality lies in synthesising two transformative learning approaches into a unified pedagogical strategy tailored for pluralistic and multicultural settings, with practical implications for curriculum design, teacher training, and interfaith peacebuilding.

Keywords: Civic education; interfaith learning; participatory pedagogy; religious moderation; transformative learning.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas integrasi *Iceberg Analysis* dan *U-Process* sebagai kerangka pedagogis dalam menumbuhkan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama di sekolah menengah yang multikepercayaan di Indonesia. Mengingat meningkatnya intoleransi beragama dan kerentanan remaja terhadap ideologi radikal di masyarakat majemuk, penelitian ini menjawab kebutuhan akan pendekatan pembelajaran reflektif dan partisipatif yang mampu mentransformasi sikap dan perilaku. Dengan menggunakan metode campuran (mixed methods), penelitian ini melibatkan 100 siswa dari latar belakang agama dan etnis yang berbeda di SMA Negeri 1 Barus Jahe, Sumatera Utara. Data dikumpulkan melalui pre-test, post-test, kuesioner, observasi kelas, dan refleksi siswa. Analisis tematik dan statistik menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan dalam pemahaman, kesadaran, dan pengamalan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama, dengan skor kognitif rata-rata meningkat dari 55 menjadi 81,5 dan skor kesadaran perilaku dari 48,75 menjadi 78,25. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi *Iceberg Analysis* dan *U-Process* tidak hanya mendorong perkembangan kognitif, tetapi juga internalisasi emosional dan etis terhadap nilai-nilai lintas iman. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada pendidikan agama dengan menawarkan model pembelajaran yang kontekstual, teruji secara empiris, dan mampu menjembatani pemahaman konseptual dengan praktik nyata.

Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada sintesis dua pendekatan pembelajaran transformatif dalam satu strategi pedagogis terpadu yang dirancang khusus untuk konteks pluralistik dan multikultural, dengan implikasi praktis bagi pengembangan kurikulum, pelatihan guru, dan pembangunan perdamaian lintas agama.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan kewarganegaraan; pembelajaran lintas agama; pedagogi partisipatoris; moderasi beragama; pembelajaran transformatif.

1.   Introduction

Concerns over the rise of religious extremism and intolerance have become increasingly prominent in multicultural societies around the world. As global communities grow more religiously and culturally diverse, the challenge of maintaining social cohesion has intensified, particularly in contexts where ideological tensions intersect with identity politics and global insecurity. In various regions of the Asian Commonwealth—such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia—efforts to promote tolerance are frequently undermined by rising interfaith tensions and politicised religion, revealing deep-seated structural and historical challenges (Christian Green & Toft, 2018). Similar patterns are observed in Northern Nigeria, where religious radicalism is compounded by socio-economic disparities and weak governance, resulting in violent insurgency and fractured interreligious relations (Onakuse & Jatula, 2021). In Western democracies, the multicultural ideal itself is under scrutiny. The UK and the US have witnessed increasing debates about whether the promotion of cultural pluralism inadvertently creates space for the growth of religious fundamentalism, thereby weakening national identity and shared civic values (Parvin, 2020; Selwood, 2013).

Concurrently, the intensification of Islamophobia and discrimination against Muslims—particularly in Australia and Europe—exposes the fragile equilibrium of coexistence in religiously plural contexts, where Muslim minorities often become scapegoats in national security and integration discourses (Dauda, 2021; Sahrasad, Nurdin, Dar, & Baihaky, 2024). These dynamics threaten intergroup trust and hinder the formation of inclusive, peaceful societies. Empirical evidence further suggests that prejudice and intolerance continue to shape public attitudes towards religious out-groups, despite formal legal protections and public education campaigns (Stewart, Edgell, & Delehanty, 2018; Verkuyten, Yogeeswaran, & Adelman, 2020). Therefore, understanding and addressing this phenomenon is both a scholarly and policy imperative, especially in light of its far-reaching implications for democratic resilience, social harmony, and global peace.

Indonesia, a nation grounded in the ideal of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), continues to face significant challenges related to religious intolerance. Despite constitutional protections, cases of discrimination, violence, and marginalisation—particularly against non-Muslim minorities and groups like the Ahmadiyya—remain prevalent (Burhani, 2014; Fenton, 2016). Radical groups and conservative religious movements have gained influence, often exploiting socio-political tensions to spread intolerance (Facal, 2020; Hamayotsu, 2014). Youth are especially vulnerable to radicalisation due to existential anxiety and limited political efficacy (M. Iqbal, O'Brien, & Bliuc, 2024). Meanwhile, misinformation in the media exacerbates religious divisions (Kurniawan, Astuti, Utomo, & Trimasukmana, 2019). Although educational and community-based initiatives promoting tolerance have emerged, their reach is limited without broader institutional support (Parker, 2014; Supratikno, Hudiono, & Maria, 2022). This highlights the urgent need for effective and reflective educational strategies to foster religious moderation and uphold Indonesia's pluralist ideals.

In Indonesia's increasingly diverse society, the educational sector plays a vital role in addressing the growing need for religious moderation as a foundation for social cohesion. While religious moderation fosters respect not only for one's own faith but also for others', its absence has been linked to rising social distrust and intolerance in many communities (Pamungkas et al., 2020; Tungkagi, 2023). Although many students are open to religious diversity, many still hold rigid views regarding religious pluralism and state ideology, such as Pancasila (Siahaan, Agustina, Jonandes, & Fitriono, 2022). These conflicting

attitudes among the youth indicate a risk of deepening polarisation, which, if not addressed through effective and inclusive educational approaches, could undermine efforts to build a more harmonious and tolerant society.

The relationship between education and religious tolerance has been widely explored, with various studies highlighting the critical role that education plays in shaping students' attitudes toward religious diversity. However, the existing literature reveals several key gaps that need to be addressed, particularly in how different educational approaches impact the development of religious tolerance. This review identifies three significant areas in previous research: dialogical and cooperative religious education models, whole-school approaches to tolerance education, and religious literacy programmes in urban-transition areas.

Research on dialogical and cooperative religious education models, particularly in Europe, suggests that these approaches are effective in fostering mutual respect while maintaining individual religious identities. Schweitzer (2007) advocates for educational frameworks that emphasise dialogue, allowing students to engage with religious diversity in a way that promotes understanding and empathy. However, these models often fail to address the deeper societal scepticism towards institutional religions, a challenge also noted in China, where Wang and Froese (2020) observed that higher levels of education correlate with increased empathy towards individual religious beliefs, yet suspicion towards institutionalised religions remains widespread. This indicates a limitation in the existing literature, as it does not fully consider how societal attitudes toward religious institutions can influence the effectiveness of educational programmes.

In Indonesia, scholars like Raihani (2011) and Parker (2018) have proposed a whole-school approach to promoting tolerance through curriculum reform, school leadership, and community collaboration. While these approaches are considered essential for creating an environment conducive to tolerance, they are often hindered by the fragmentation between subjects such as Religious Education and Citizenship Education. The lack of coordination between these subjects results in inconsistent messaging and hampers the development of a coherent educational strategy for fostering religious tolerance. This gap suggests that while the whole-school approach is a promising model, its fragmented application across different educational subjects limits its potential for creating lasting change.

Another area of research focuses on religious literacy programmes, particularly in transitional urban areas such as Batu City in Indonesia. Kartono et al. (2025) demonstrate that such programmes can increase interfaith understanding among high school students. However, their effectiveness often depends on careful strategic planning and institutional support. While these programmes offer promise, they tend to lack the comprehensive frameworks necessary for ensuring sustained impact. Broer et al. (2018) argue that tolerance alone is insufficient, urging that deeper virtues like empathy and hospitality should be promoted through active engagement with religious diversity. This highlights a further gap in the research, as existing studies rarely integrate such active forms of engagement with more passive educational approaches like religious literacy.

These studies collectively underline the importance of integrating cognitive, emotional, and practical dimensions in the teaching of religious tolerance. Despite the valuable insights they offer, most studies have treated the educational strategies discussed in isolation. There is a lack of research that synthesises these diverse approaches into a cohesive, integrated framework that can effectively foster religious moderation. Furthermore, the fragmented application of the whole-school approach and the limited impact of religious literacy programmes suggest that more active, participatory methods of learning are necessary to address the complexities of religious diversity in educational contexts.

This research aims to fill the gaps identified in previous studies by developing and evaluating an integrated pedagogical model that combines the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process to foster religious moderation among students. While earlier studies have demonstrated the individual effectiveness of these approaches, they have rarely been applied together within a cohesive framework. By integrating cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and practical application, this study seeks to provide a more holistic approach to promoting religious moderation. Specifically, it examines how the simultaneous application of both methods can deepen students' understanding by addressing their

surface-level behaviours and the underlying values and assumptions that shape their religious attitudes. Through participatory learning experiences, this research aims to enhance students' cognitive, affective, and behavioural tolerance, offering a more comprehensive and transformative educational strategy for promoting religious moderation in diverse and pluralistic school settings, particularly in the Indonesian context.

Building on the gaps identified in previous research, this study hypothesises that an integrated pedagogical model combining the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process will significantly enhance students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviours towards religious moderation. Specifically, it is expected that the simultaneous application of these methods will not only improve students' surface-level knowledge of religious tolerance but also foster deeper, introspective insights into the underlying values and assumptions that shape their attitudes. The Iceberg Analysis, by helping students critically reflect on their subconscious beliefs, and the U-Process, through its cycle of observation, reflection, and real-world application, will create a synergistic environment for transformative learning. This dual approach is hypothesised to deepen students' emotional and cognitive engagement with religious diversity, encouraging the internalisation of moderation values, thus leading to a more profound and lasting shift in both their personal attitudes and practical behaviours. Furthermore, this study proposes that the application of both methods in tandem will contribute to a more holistic and effective educational framework for fostering religious moderation, particularly in diverse and pluralistic contexts like Indonesia.

The theoretical foundation for this hypothesis is supported by various learning theories. According to Dewey (1933), reflective thinking is an essential part of the learning process, as it encourages students to critically examine their own beliefs and assumptions. Dewey's theory of reflective practice is aligned with the Iceberg Analysis, which focuses on uncovering deeper layers of unconscious biases and assumptions (Brookfield, 1995). In addition, the U-Process, developed by Scharmer (2009), is grounded in transformative learning theory, which asserts that real change occurs when learners engage in a reflective process that enables them to shift their perspectives and align their internal values with external actions. This approach integrates elements of experiential learning, as described by Kolb (2015), which emphasises the importance of hands-on, real-world engagement in the learning process. These theories collectively support the idea that integrating reflective, participatory, and experiential learning methods can significantly enhance students' understanding and application of religious moderation.

2. Methods

This research was conducted at *SMA Negeri 1 Barus Jahe* (State High School No. 1 Barus Jahe) in Karo Regency, North Sumatra, Indonesia—an institution chosen due to its strong commitment to interreligious cooperation and its diverse socio-religious environment, which provides an ideal context for religious moderation education. The unit of analysis comprised 100 upper-secondary students from forms X, XI, and XII. The cohort included 50 Catholic, 30 Protestant, and 20 Muslim students from varied ethnic backgrounds—Toba Batak, Karo Batak, Nias, and Javanese. Their parents' occupations ranged from civil servants and farmers to entrepreneurs, reflecting a socio-economically heterogeneous community. This diversity offered a fertile ground for examining how students internalise religious moderation through structured educational interventions.

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to analyse the phenomenon comprehensively. The qualitative component enabled the researchers to explore students' subjective understanding, awareness, and internalisation of religious moderation through workshops, reflections, and discussions (Berg & Lune, 2004). In contrast, the quantitative component allowed for measuring changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours via structured tests and statistical analysis. This dual approach aligns with recommendations in educational research to combine numerical data with rich contextual insight for studying complex values-based education. Integrating these methods ensures both breadth and depth in capturing the transformation of students' perspectives before and after the intervention.

Primary data were collected directly from the student participants through written responses, verbal reflections, participation in projects, and teacher observations. Data sources included: (1) pre-tests and post-tests measuring cognitive understanding of religious moderation; (2) questionnaires assessing affective components such as tolerance and empathy; (3) observation checklists used by teachers and facilitators during classroom activities and group projects; and (4) narrative reflections and visual artefacts (e.g., posters) produced by students as part of their learning. These varied sources enabled methodological triangulation, enhancing the credibility and richness of the findings (Flick, 2009).

The data for this study were gathered using a combination of instruments that aligned with the participatory and reflective nature of the research design. Firstly, workshops and discussions were conducted as interactive sessions grounded in the Iceberg Analysis, which helped uncover students' underlying assumptions and biases, and the U-Process, a transformative learning model designed to foster deep reflection and actionable insight (Scharmer, 2009). These sessions provided the foundation for students to engage with the concepts of religious moderation critically. Secondly, tests and questionnaires were used to assess students' cognitive understanding of religious moderation, their awareness of religious diversity, and their attitudes towards extremism. These instruments underwent pilot testing and peer validation to ensure clarity, reliability, and contextual relevance. Thirdly, observational techniques and documentation were employed to track student engagement and behavioural change. Teachers applied structured behaviour-based rubrics to record student performance during projects, while qualitative data such as student reflections, campaign posters, and interfaith dialogue scripts were systematically collected for analysis. These participatory strategies not only reflect the principles of transformative education (Taylor, 2009) but also encourage experiential learning, allowing students to internalise values through active involvement in real-world contexts (Kolb, 2015).

Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis using a multi-stage coding process. Initially, raw data were segmented and assigned codes independently by multiple researchers, who then discussed and refined these into overarching themes to ensure inter-coder reliability (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes highlighted patterns in student responses regarding tolerance, empathy, and interfaith awareness. Simultaneously, quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to measure changes in pre-test and post-test scores, with metrics including means, standard deviations, and percentage shifts. These figures were presented in tabular and visual formats to depict the progression in students' understanding and behavioural responses. Triangulation and cross-validation were conducted to ensure the trustworthiness of findings by comparing qualitative insights with quantitative trends. This combined strategy supported a more robust interpretation of how reflective and participatory learning influences students' engagement with religious moderation.

3. Results

Increased Understanding of Religious Moderation

In this study, data were obtained through the implementation of religious moderation awareness campaigns and interactive discussion sessions involving students (Rahayu & Lesmana, 2020). Measurements were conducted using pre-tests and post-tests to assess students' understanding of religious moderation, particularly regarding diversity and the impacts of radicalism. Initial data (pre-test) indicated that the average student understanding score was 55, signifying a low level of awareness. After the intervention programme—comprising intensive campaigns and discussions—the post-test scores increased significantly, with the average score rising to 81.5. These data reflects a marked improvement in both the comprehension and internalisation of religious moderation values among the students.

To facilitate comprehension, the data are presented in Table 1 below. This table provides a direct comparison between pre-test and post-test scores for two key aspects: attitudes towards diversity and awareness of the negative impacts of radicalism and extremism. The visualisation not only allows

readers to observe the numerical differences clearly but also highlights the improvements following the intervention.

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Religious Moderation Awareness

No.	Aspect Measured	Pre-test	Post-test
1	Attitude towards diversity	60	88
2	Awareness of the negative impact of radicalism and extremism	50	75
	Average	55	81.5

Simply put, the data shows that before the programme, students had a low level of understanding of religious moderation, with an average score of 55. After participating in the campaign and discussion sessions, the average score rose significantly to 81.5. In other words, students experienced a substantial improvement in their understanding of the importance of religious moderation and diversity, as demonstrated by the increase in scores for attitudes towards diversity (from 60 to 88) and awareness of the negative impacts of radicalism (from 50 to 75).

From the collected data, several key patterns can be identified: Students' attitudes towards diversity improved markedly, with scores rising from 60 in the pre-test to 88 in the post-test, indicating greater acceptance and appreciation of cultural and religious differences. The score for this aspect increased from 50 to 75, suggesting that students are now more aware of the consequences and dangers associated with radicalism and extremism. The overall increase in the average score from 55 to 81.5 demonstrates that the intervention methods—namely, participatory activities such as discussions and awareness campaigns—were effective in enhancing students' understanding. The data indicate that the improvement in understanding is reflected not only in cognitive gains (i.e. higher scores) but also in the practical application of moderation values in daily life, suggesting successful internalisation of the concept.

The significant increase in students' understanding scores—from an average of 55 to 81.5—can be interpreted as a clear indication of the effectiveness of reflective and participatory learning methods in enhancing students' comprehension of religious moderation. This transformation shows that students were not just passively absorbing information about tolerance and radicalism but were actively engaging with the material on a deeper, more personal level, as seen in previous studies on active learning methods that encourage reflection and personal interpretation (Doman & Webb, 2017; White et al., 2015). The improvement in their attitudes towards diversity and awareness of radicalism suggests a shift in perspective, likely influenced by the integration of dialogic learning and values-based reflection, key components of the Iceberg Analysis and U-Process frameworks. These results underscore the importance of moving beyond traditional didactic methods and adopting strategies that involve students in critically examining both their external attitudes and internal assumptions, as supported by the growing body of literature advocating for student-centred, active learning approaches (Gasmi & Al Nadabi, 2023; Khan & Iqbal, 2021). Ultimately, this interpretation reinforces the idea that a meaningful and lasting understanding of religious moderation is best cultivated through experiential and introspective educational approaches, as these methods have been shown to engage students holistically and foster deeper, long-term understanding (Hammond, 2014; McGuire, 2019).

Increased Awareness of Religious Moderation

Data were collected through a series of pre-test and post-test assessments administered during a comprehensive programme of awareness campaigns and interactive discussion sessions. These sessions were designed to target key aspects of religious moderation awareness among students, specifically focusing on: tolerant behaviour, participation in activities that support religious moderation, anti-violence attitudes, and respect for local traditions. Initially, the pre-test scores revealed that students had an average score of 48.75, indicating a relatively low level of awareness and understanding in these areas. After the intervention, the post-test scores showed a remarkable

improvement, with the average rising to 78.25. This substantial increase suggests that the programme had a significant positive impact on the student's attitudes and behaviours.

To clearly illustrate these findings, the data are presented in the following table. The table provides a side-by-side comparison of pre-test and post-test scores for each measured aspect, enabling a visual representation of the changes observed:

Table 2. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of the Application of Religious Moderation Values

No.	Aspect Measured	Pre-test	Post-test
1	Tolerant behaviour	60	78
2	Participation in activities that support religious moderation	40	75
3	Anti-violence attitude	45	78
4	Respect for local traditions	50	82
	Average	48.75	78.25

This table not only provides numerical evidence but also serves as a visual aid that underscores the effectiveness of the intervention programme by highlighting the significant improvements in all measured aspects. In simpler terms, the findings indicate that before the programme, students exhibited limited awareness of religious moderation, with an average score of 48.75. Following the intervention, which included targeted awareness campaigns and interactive discussions, the average score increased dramatically to 78.25. More specifically, the students' tolerant behaviour improved, as reflected by the increase from a score of 60 to 78; their participation in activities supporting religious moderation rose significantly from 40 to 75; their anti-violence attitudes improved from 45 to 78; and their respect for local traditions increased from 50 to 82.

A closer examination of the data reveals several noteworthy patterns: The improvement intolerant behaviour—reflected by an increase from 60 to 78—suggests that students became more accepting and open-minded towards diverse cultural and religious perspectives. The substantial jump in the participation score, from 40 to 75, indicates that students are now more actively engaged in activities that promote religious moderation. This suggests not only an attitudinal shift but also a behavioural change. The increase from 45 to 78 in the anti-violence attitude score demonstrates that students have developed a clearer understanding of the importance of non-violent responses and are more inclined to reject violent approaches. With scores rising from 50 to 82, there is clear evidence that students have enhanced their appreciation for local cultural practices and traditions, which are an integral part of fostering social harmony. Overall, these patterns collectively suggest that the intervention programme effectively transformed both the cognitive and behavioural dimensions of students' awareness regarding religious moderation. The clear, consistent upward trends across all aspects provide a strong interim conclusion that participatory, reflective educational strategies can significantly improve awareness.

The data support the conclusion that the awareness campaigns and interactive discussion sessions played a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding of religious moderation. The marked improvements in all measured aspects indicate that the intervention effectively addressed the deficiencies identified during the pre-test phase. The significant increase in scores can be attributed to the use of reflective methods, which allowed students to explore and internalise the underlying values and assumptions related to religious moderation. In particular, the implementation of the *Iceberg Analysis* (*a method for uncovering underlying values and assumptions*) helped reveal hidden biases, while the *U-Process* (*a transformative learning process through reflection*) provided students with a framework to critically engage with and rethink their attitudes (Adiana, 2011).

These results not only reinforce the effectiveness of participatory education strategies but also add to the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating that such methods can lead to substantial behavioural and attitudinal change. The findings align with previous research (Adiana, 2011; Berret & Munzner, 2022) which have shown that educational approaches incorporating active participation and reflective learning are particularly successful in promoting awareness of diversity. Moreover, the

successful increase in scores across multiple dimensions of awareness implies that similar strategies might be effectively applied in other educational settings to foster broader social harmony (Mangawing, Sulianto, Sari, Arni, & Jafri, 2023).

Application of Moderation Values in Daily Life

This section presents findings derived from direct observations of students' real-world behaviours during project-based activities specifically designed to internalise religious moderation values. Unlike the previous sub-section, which relied on self-reported perceptions through questionnaires and reflection sheets, the data presented here were gathered through systematic observation checklists, teacher assessments, and documentation of student participation. These direct observations provide stronger evidence of how students actively performed moderation values in practice, not merely understood them conceptually.

The observed activities included school-wide moderation campaigns, interfaith dialogue simulations, collaborative poster-making, cross-cultural exploration projects, and role-playing conflict-resolution scenarios. These initiatives were intentionally structured to allow students to experience and apply the values of religious tolerance, empathy, cooperation, and respect for diversity in tangible, contextually relevant ways.

Table 3. Observable Student Participation in Moderation Projects

No	Activity Type	Number of Students Involved	Description of Role
1	Moderation Campaign (School-wide)	26	Designing and presenting posters
2	Interfaith Dialogue Simulation	18	Role-playing respectful dialogue
3	Group Reflection and Poster Design	24	Creating posters with moderation slogans
4	Cross-cultural Collaboration Project	20	Exploring local traditions and sharing them
5	Student Facilitators	10	Leading small group discussions

Table 3 outlines students' observable engagement across diverse project types. The highest level of participation occurred during the school-wide Moderation Campaign, engaging 26 students in creating and presenting posters promoting religious tolerance and inclusivity. The group reflection and poster design activity was followed closely by 24 participants. Other students took on meaningful roles in interfaith dialogue simulations, cross-cultural projects, and facilitation duties. These numbers indicate that students were not passive recipients of information but active agents in enacting values of moderation through creative and collaborative formats.

Table 4. Behaviour-Based Observation Scoring (Rubric by Teachers/Observers)

Behavior Indicator	Score Range	Average Score	Notes
Shows tolerance in group discussions	1–4	3.6	Most students listened actively, low conflict
Participates constructively in campaign	1–4	3.5	Majority contributed ideas and visual designs
Demonstrates empathy during role-play	1–4	3.7	Students responded well to emotional scenarios

Respects diverse traditions in discussions	1–4	3.8	Noted references to various cultures and beliefs

Note: Scoring Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Always

Table 4 presents the results of behaviour-based observations conducted by teachers and programme observers using a structured rubric with four key indicators. The highest average score, 3.8, was recorded for the indicator "respects diverse traditions in discussions," indicating that students frequently referred to various cultural and religious backgrounds during their interactions. The indicator "demonstrates empathy during role-play" received an average score of 3.7, showing that students responded sensitively to emotional scenarios and expressed understanding toward different perspectives. "Shows tolerance in group discussions" earned an average score of 3.6, reflecting active listening and minimal conflict among group members. Lastly, "participates constructively in the campaign" received an average of 3.5, suggesting meaningful student involvement in generating ideas and designing campaign materials. Overall, these findings suggest that students participated actively and exhibited observable behaviours aligned with the values of religious moderation during the activities.
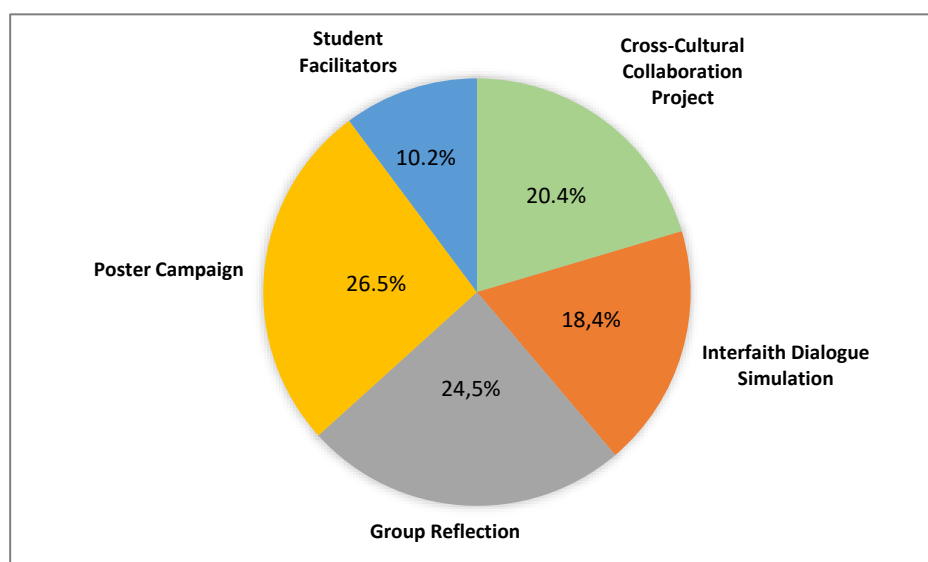

Figure 1. Student Participation in Moderation Projects

A pie chart in Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of students involved in each moderation activity. The data show that the highest student involvement was in the Poster Campaign (26.50%) and Group Reflection (24.50%), indicating strong interest in visual and reflective activities. Cross-Cultural Collaboration (20.40%) and Interfaith Dialogue (18.40%) also drew notable participation. The Student Facilitator role had the lowest involvement (10.20%), suggesting that fewer students took on leadership roles. This distribution highlights students' preference for creative and collaborative formats in applying moderation values.

Beyond numeric data, qualitative reflections from students provide deeper insight into internalised learning:

Before this, I thought respecting other beliefs meant just not arguing. But when I had to explain someone else's tradition in the dialogue game, I felt what it means to see from their side. That changed how I speak with friends from other faiths (Student A, Reflection Log).

Another student wrote:

When I drew my poster for the campaign, I realized peace is not just about ideas. It's about what we show in action—how we treat each other every day (Student B, Poster Reflection).

These narratives illustrate that students experienced a shift from superficial understanding to emotional and behavioural engagement with moderation values. The transformation was not limited to knowledge acquisition, but extended into their habits, speech, and attitudes toward peers from different backgrounds.

The observational data clearly demonstrate that the integration of experiential learning—through the Iceberg Analysis and U-Process methods—enabled students to move beyond abstract concepts into tangible actions. Their ability to design, lead, collaborate, and empathise within diverse settings points to a genuine internalisation of religious moderation.

This transition from knowledge to lived experience is especially crucial in values-based religious education. Religious values cannot merely be transmitted through lectures or rote memorisation; they must be reflected upon, internalised, and embodied in real-life contexts. Reflective practices such as classroom dialogue, personal journaling, self-assessment, and engagement with sacred narratives allow students to critically examine their own assumptions, biases, and ethical frameworks (Hill & Woolley, 2022; McCall, Waters, & White, 2015). When students are encouraged to explore religious texts and ethical dilemmas reflectively, they begin to connect abstract religious principles to their daily interpersonal relationships. These reflective dimensions are not merely academic exercises, but foundational processes that foster empathy, moral insight, and the ability to engage respectfully across differences.

Simultaneously, the participatory nature of the programme—through campaigns, simulations, and group projects—provides a social environment where values are enacted through shared experience. This model mirrors the concept of "communitas" in religious education, which views learning as a democratic and transformative process that thrives through collective action and mutual support (Agra Junker, 2013). When students are given roles as facilitators, designers, or dialogue participants, they take ownership of their learning and build deeper emotional and behavioural alignment with the values being promoted. Participation, in this context, becomes a vehicle for transformation, not only enhancing students' understanding of moderation but also shaping their character and civic responsibility.

The development of virtues such as compassion, respect, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence is not incidental to this model—it is integral. Numerous studies have shown that children and adolescents who engage actively in religious or moral education programmes tend to demonstrate more stable prosocial behaviours, greater emotional regulation, and stronger interpersonal ethics (Gašpar & Garmaz, 2016; Pop & Pop, 2017). These findings suggest that values are best nurtured not through coercion or dogma, but through consistent and meaningful participation in ethically grounded practices. Moreover, the presence of community-oriented tasks and peer interaction strengthens students' sense of responsibility and openness to others.

Further, the integration of peace education and religious discourse is especially relevant in multi-faith societies such as Indonesia. In such plural contexts, students must learn not only to tolerate differences, but to actively engage with them through dialogue, empathy, and collaborative problem-solving. Initiatives that blend religious teachings with principles of non-violence and global citizenship have been shown to foster students' capacities for critical thinking, cooperation, and intercultural sensitivity (Michalski & Wolińska, 2024; Thalgi, 2019). When this integrative approach is combined with frameworks such as positive education and social-emotional learning (SEL), students are supported not only cognitively but also emotionally and socially. They become practitioners of values, developing the character and skills necessary for leadership in diverse communities (Elias, Kranzler, Parker, Kash, & Weissberg, 2014).

Therefore, values education in religious contexts must be embodied through reflective and participatory experiences. It is not enough for students to know about values; they must experience, reflect on, and enact them within authentic social contexts. Only through this lived approach can education effectively cultivate durable attitudes of empathy, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. This is particularly vital in today's complex multicultural societies, where religious and cultural

pluralism is both a challenge and an opportunity for fostering resilient, compassionate, and engaged citizens.

4.   Discussion

This study examined the impact of combining the Iceberg Analysis—a method for uncovering underlying values and assumptions—and the U-Process, a reflective, transformative learning approach, on fostering religious moderation among students. The results demonstrated a marked improvement in students' cognitive understanding, as evidenced by the increase in average pre-test and post-test scores from 55 to 81.5. Significant gains were also observed in students' attitudes toward diversity (from 60 to 88) and their awareness of the dangers of radicalism (from 50 to 75), indicating a strengthened affective dimension. Beyond these metrics, observational data highlighted students' active participation in various moderation-oriented projects such as poster campaigns, interfaith dialogue simulations, and group reflections. These behavioural indicators confirmed that students were acquiring conceptual knowledge and translating moderation values into meaningful actions. Together, these findings underscore the effectiveness of reflective and participatory methods in supporting both the internalisation and practical embodiment of religious moderation in diverse educational settings.

The improvement in students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviours towards religious moderation can be attributed to the synergistic relationship between the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process. As hypothesised, combining these two methods fostered a deeper, more introspective learning experience. The Iceberg Analysis allowed students to critically examine and reflect on their deeply held, often unconscious, beliefs, values, and assumptions—elements that typically shape attitudes towards religious diversity. This introspective process, rooted in Dewey's reflective thinking (1933), created space for students to confront and reconsider their biases, facilitating cognitive and emotional engagement with religious moderation. In parallel, the U-Process, which involves a reflective cycle of observation, dialogue, and real-world application, encouraged students to translate this self-awareness into action. Students could put their newfound knowledge into practice by engaging in projects such as interfaith dialogues and moderation-oriented campaigns, reinforcing the transformation of internal beliefs into external behaviours. This experiential component, supported by Kolb's experiential learning theory (2015), facilitated a practical understanding of moderation, allowing students to internalise these values more effectively. Together, these methods created a holistic learning environment that integrated cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of religious moderation, leading to improved student attitudes and behaviours.

The findings of this study strongly resonate with a growing body of research highlighting the significance of reflective and experiential learning in fostering religious moderation. Prior studies, such as those by Zulfatmi (2023) and Ma'arif et al. (2022), emphasise that religious moderation is most effectively cultivated when students actively participate in learning processes that invite critical self-reflection and contextual experience. Similarly, Purwanto et al. (2024) found that pre-service teachers in Indonesia who engaged in participatory and dialogic learning demonstrated heightened tolerance and interfaith awareness. These outcomes mirror the effects observed in this study, where students not only improved their understanding of religious moderation but also internalised and enacted its values in daily life. Furthermore, phenomenological approaches that utilise reflective journaling—as discussed by Sutton et al. (2021)—enable learners to connect personal insights with broader social values, reinforcing the deep learning promoted by the Iceberg Analysis. Experiential learning techniques such as those explored by Hammond (Hammond, 2014) and Oldstone-Moore (2009) have likewise proven effective in translating abstract religious principles into meaningful, lived experiences. However, while previous research often treats reflective and experiential methods as separate pedagogical tools, the novelty of this study lies in its integration of both the Iceberg Analysis and U-Process within a unified framework. This combined model not only addresses the cognitive dimension of religious moderation but also transforms attitudes and behaviours through lived experiences. Particularly in the Indonesian context, where pluralism presents both challenges and opportunities,

this study contributes a fresh and empirically grounded approach to values education—one that bridges theory and practice, reflection and action, knowledge and transformation.

The findings of this study hold significant sociological, ideological, and historical implications, particularly in the context of pluralistic societies like Indonesia. Sociologically, the study affirms the role of religious moderation education in shaping collective awareness and fostering *social capital*—empathy, trust, and solidarity—across diverse religious and cultural groups (Rockenbach, Mayhew, Morin, Crandall, & Selznick, 2015; Waxstein & Cooper, 2023). The participatory and reflective strategies employed, such as interfaith dialogue and collaborative projects, mirror proven practices that strengthen community cohesion and reduce prejudice (Francis, ap Siôn, McKenna, & Penny, 2017; Purwanto et al., 2024). Ideologically, this research contributes to strengthening the foundational values of Indonesia's national identity as embodied in Pancasila, particularly the principles of belief in One God and national unity (Akil, Darmawangsa, & Hasibuddin, 2024; Rismawati, Qomariyah, Devy, Maisyal, & A'yun, 2021). By internalising values such as tolerance, anti-radicalism, and inclusivity, students are not only shielded from ideological extremism but also prepared to become civic-minded citizens (Muhajir & Nurcholis, 2024; Mustakim, Ali, & Kamal, 2021). Historically, the study reflects and revitalises Indonesia's longstanding heritage of moderation and pluralism, from the inclusive traditions of Islam Wasathiyah to the syncretic harmony practiced in multi-faith communities like Cigugur and Towani Tolotang (Daheri, Warsah, Morganna, Putri, & Adelia, 2023; Inayatillah, Kamaruddin, & M. Anzaikhan, 2022). Thus, this study contributes to the broader understanding that effective religious moderation education is not only a response to contemporary radicalism but a continuation of Indonesia's rich cultural and ideological legacy—reinforcing peace, mutual respect, and coexistence as cornerstones of national resilience.

While the findings of this study affirm the transformative potential of reflective and participatory strategies in cultivating religious moderation, they also call for critical reflection on both their functional strengths and possible limitations. On the positive side, the programme fostered a deeper, actionable understanding of moderation values, helping students internalise and practise empathy and intercultural tolerance. However, several challenges emerged. Uneven student participation—particularly in leadership or facilitation roles—may be influenced by differences in perceived autonomy, teacher connection, and cultural responsiveness, as noted by Hafen et al. (Hafen et al., 2012), Thomas & Nair (2023), and Johnson et al. (2022). Moreover, although short-term gains in knowledge and behaviour were evident, the sustainability of these changes remains in question. Without continued reinforcement, such efforts risk becoming superficial, echoing concerns raised by Vartanian & Hayward (2020) and Li (2022) on the importance of self-concept clarity and intrinsic motivation for long-term internalisation. Another potential dysfunction lies in teacher readiness: resistance to reflective methods and institutional rigidity may hinder the full integration of these pedagogies, especially where professional development is limited (Burkhalter, 2013; Nocetti-De-la Barra, Pérez-Villalobos, & Philominraj, 2024). Lastly, applying global models such as the Iceberg Analysis and U-Process without local cultural adaptation risks a mismatch between pedagogical intent and contextual relevance (Sun, 2012; Sze et al., 2024); Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2024). These issues underscore the need for systemic support—through teacher training, culturally informed practices, and sustained institutional commitment—to transform short-term interventions into enduring educational change.

Based on the findings of this study, a transformative and long-term educational policy agenda is required to ensure the sustainable integration of religious moderation values within educational practice. Firstly, teacher capacity must be strengthened through continuous professional development programmes grounded in reflective and participatory methodologies. Effective strategies include microteaching, lesson study, portfolio-based reflection, and the use of digital tools for self and peer evaluation, all of which have been shown to enhance pedagogical awareness and teaching quality (Groom & Maunonen-Eskelinen, 2006; M. Z. Iqbal, Jumani, & Saeed-Ul-Hassan, 2015; Nguyen, 2020; Peralta, Bennie, Gore, & Lonsdale, 2021). Secondly, the reinforcement of moderation values must be embedded through long-term strategies, including service-learning initiatives, value integration in physical and emotional education curricula, and the cultivation of a school culture that promotes

character development through collaboration among teachers, parents, and school leadership (Berkowitz, 2011; Effendi & Sahertian, 2022; Furco, 2023). Thirdly, curriculum and assessment systems must be reformed to incorporate affective and social dimensions, using developmentally appropriate and ethically sound tools such as the APASO framework or PISA's socio-emotional indicators (Govorova, Benítez, & Muñiz, 2020; McKown, 2017). Fourthly, global models such as the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process should be contextualised within local curricula through culturally responsive pedagogy, such as "duopedagogy", which synergises global frameworks with indigenous values and actively involves teachers in localised curriculum design (Bhatia, 2024; Sun, 2012; W. Wang, 2024). Fifthly, inter-ministerial collaboration—between the Ministries of Education, Religious Affairs, and related agencies—is essential for the coordinated development of religious moderation education policies, including teacher training, interfaith curriculum development, and the establishment of inclusive school networks (Mahmud & Umiarso, 2025; Mukhibat, Effendi, Setyawan, & Sutoyo, 2024). Finally, moderation values should be integrated into extracurricular activities and the wider school ethos, using interfaith student programmes, community-based projects, and inclusive leadership initiatives to build empathy, social connectedness, and ethical student agency (Bhullar, Singh, & Arora, 2024; Guest, Siamoo, & Maige, 2021; Lang, 2021). By implementing these actions in a structured and sustained manner, the vision of religious moderation can evolve from abstract discourse into an embodied, lifelong disposition among learners.

5.   Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the integrated application of the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process significantly enhanced students' understanding, awareness, and practical application of religious moderation values. The intervention programme, conducted at a religiously and ethnically diverse secondary school in North Sumatra, resulted in marked improvements across cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions. Quantitative data demonstrated a notable increase in students' pre- and post-test scores—rising from an average of 55 to 81.5 in understanding and from 48.75 to 78.25 in awareness—indicating greater tolerance, empathy, and rejection of radical attitudes. Qualitative observations further revealed that students internalised pluralistic values and embodied them through collaborative projects and dialogue-based activities. These results confirm that participatory and reflective learning strategies effectively foster transformative educational experiences that promote inclusive attitudes and interfaith harmony among youth.

This research offers a significant scientific contribution by proposing and empirically validating an integrated pedagogical model that combines the Iceberg Analysis and the U-Process within religious moderation education. Unlike previous studies that explored these frameworks in isolation, this study bridges them into a cohesive approach that simultaneously addresses both surface behaviours and underlying cognitive-emotional patterns related to interfaith tolerance. Integrating reflective and participatory methods advances the field of values-based education by introducing a dual-focus strategy that not only informs but transforms students' attitudes and actions. Moreover, the study introduces new operational indicators—such as behavioural application of moderation values and empathy-based role-play outcomes—that can serve as reference points for future moral and civic education research. By contextualising this approach within Indonesia's pluralistic society, the study also contributes a culturally grounded model that can inform educational policy and be adapted for use in other multi-faith, multicultural settings.

Despite its valuable contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations that may affect the generalisability and scope of its findings. Firstly, the research was conducted within a single school setting with a relatively small sample size, which may not fully represent the broader diversity of Indonesia's educational and socio-religious contexts. Secondly, while the study captured short-term cognitive and behavioural changes, it did not evaluate the long-term sustainability of these transformations, leaving questions about the durability of internalised values over time. Thirdly, the effectiveness of the intervention may have been influenced by the active involvement and commitment

of specific teachers, which might not be replicable in all educational environments. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to assess the enduring impact of reflective and participatory methods, expand to multiple school settings for broader applicability, and examine additional factors such as institutional support, peer influence, and digital learning tools that may enhance or hinder the cultivation of religious moderation in youth.

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