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Students' Perspectives on Religious Moderation in Pancasila Education: Insights into Multicultural Learning Practices

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ABSTRACT

The growing religious diversity and potential polarization in higher education highlight the urgency of strengthening religious moderation through civic education. However, limited studies have examined how students perceive and internalize religious moderation within Pancasila Education. This study analyzes students' perspectives on the implementation of religious moderation in Pancasila Education in higher education. Grounded in the conceptual framework of religious moderation as a balanced, anti-extremist, and tolerance-based approach, this research employs a descriptive qualitative design. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with students who had completed the Pancasila course and analyzed using an interactive qualitative analysis model. The findings reveal that students conceptualize religious moderation as a middle-path attitude that promotes harmony, justice, and respect for diversity. Pancasila learning particularly through dialogical discussions, contextual case studies, and reflective assignments facilitates the internalization of moderation values. The historical formulation of the first principle of Pancasila serves as a key entry point for understanding compromise and consensus in a plural society. However, challenges remain in translating conceptual understanding into consistent social practice. This study contributes by highlighting students' perspectives as a micro-level lens to understand the internalization of religious moderation, reinforcing the role of Pancasila Education in fostering inclusive and moderate student character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation can be understood as a religious attitude that prioritizes tolerance, mutual respect for differences, and avoids extreme religious views and behavior 1. Thus, religious moderation relates not only to how a person practices religious teachings but also to social attitudes in interacting with groups of different beliefs. In the context of Indonesia, known as a country with religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, religious moderation is crucial for maintaining social harmony and preventing intergroup conflict23. This shows that religious moderation serves as the primary foundation for maintaining social stability in a diverse society. Universities play a significant role in instilling these values in students. Through Pancasila Education courses, students are not only introduced to the fundamental values of nationalism but also guided to understand the importance of mutual respect in a pluralistic society 45. Thus, Pancasila education can be a strategic tool for fostering moderate religious attitudes among students.

Extensive research has been conducted on religious moderation in education. Several studies have shown that strengthening the value of religious moderation can foster students' tolerance of differences in beliefs and social backgrounds 67. Furthermore, other studies have focused more on religious moderation from the perspective of curriculum and educational policy 89. However, most of this research focuses on institutional or educator perspectives. Furthermore, research specifically examining students' views on the application of religious moderation in Pancasila learning is still relatively limited. Students are the ones who directly experience the learning process. Their learning experiences and perspectives are crucial for understanding the extent to which the value of religious moderation is truly implemented and understood in the classroom.

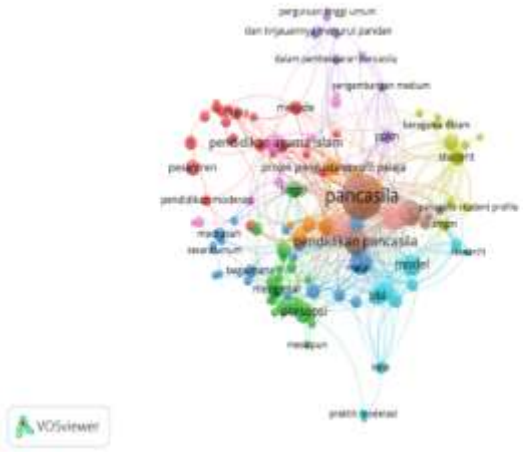


Figure 1. VOSviewer Analysis Results

[1] R Hasanah and A Slam, "Religious Moderation from a Student Perspective," *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 14, no. 1 (2025): 11–22, https://doi.org/10.31004/jpik.v14i1.45210.

[2] (Helmawati et al., 2025;

[3] Hatami & Palkih, 2024)

[4] (Pramesti, 2025;

[5] Azis, 2024)

[6] (Marsudi et al., 2025;

[7] Ayu & Rahmat, 2023)

[8] (Ahmad et al., 2025;

[9] Khamim et al., 2025)

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Despite the growing body of research on religious moderation and Pancasila Education, existing studies have predominantly focused on conceptual, policy-oriented, or institutional perspectives, with limited attention to students' lived experiences in internalizing these values. This gap indicates the need for a more grounded understanding of how religious moderation is perceived, interpreted, and practiced by students within the context of higher education. Therefore, this study offers a novel contribution by examining students' perspectives through direct, in-depth interviews, enabling a more nuanced and experiential understanding of Pancasila learning. This approach provides a concrete account of how students interpret religious moderation, how they apply it in academic and social contexts, and what challenges they encounter in the process of internalizing these values. The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform the development of more contextual, dialogical, and student-centered approaches in Pancasila Education, particularly in fostering inclusive and moderate attitudes in multicultural campus environments. Accordingly, the objectives of this research are: (1) to describe students' understanding of religious moderation; (2) to explain students' perspectives on the implementation of religious moderation in Pancasila Education; and (3) to examine the supporting and inhibiting factors in the internalization of religious moderation within the campus environment.

2. METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore students' views and experiences regarding the implementation of religious moderation values in Pancasila Education. This approach was selected to capture in-depth meanings and interpretations that cannot be quantified. The participants were students who had completed the Pancasila Education course. Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) having taken the course and (2) being willing to provide detailed and reflective insights into their experiences related to religious moderation. Based on these criteria, two informants were selected as primary participants to obtain in-depth, context-specific data. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, allowing flexibility while maintaining focus on the research objectives. The interviews explored four main aspects: (1) students' understanding of religious moderation; (2) their learning experiences in Pancasila Education; (3) their views on the implementation of religious moderation values; and (4) supporting factors, challenges, and expectations in the internalization process. Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This process enabled systematic identification of key themes and ensured a coherent connection between the data, analysis, and research findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with two students who had taken the Pancasila Education course. The interviews were conducted to explore the students' understanding of religious moderation, their experiences during Pancasila learning, their views on the application of religious moderation values, the teaching methods used by lecturers, the impact of learning on student attitudes, and the obstacles and expectations students face regarding future Pancasila learning. The interview data were analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form to provide a comprehensive and contextual overview of the application of religious moderation in Pancasila learning.

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Students' Understanding of Religious Moderation

Based on the interview results, both speakers demonstrated a fairly good understanding of the concept of religious moderation. This understanding is evident in how students interpret religious moderation as an attitude that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity in social life. The first speaker defines religious moderation as an attitude of taking a middle path in religious life amidst Indonesia's diverse society. He emphasized the importance of tolerance between religious communities, ethnicities, and cultures as the basis for creating a harmonious social life. This is evident from his statement: *"Religious moderation is a middle path that prioritizes tolerance. Even though we have different religions, ethnicities, and cultures because Indonesia is a multicultural country, with religious moderation we can tolerate each other's differences." (Speaker 1)*

Meanwhile, the second source views religious moderation as a religious attitude that is not extreme and is able to maintain harmony in social life. According to him, religious moderation functions as a guideline in expressing beliefs without imposing one's will on others. The second source stated: " *Religious moderation is a religious attitude that is tolerant, taking the middle path, living in harmony, and not being extreme." (Source 2).* The understanding of both sources shows that religious moderation is not only understood conceptually, but also as a practical value relevant to everyday social life.

Student Experience in Learning Pancasila

Students' experiences during Pancasila lessons play a crucial role in shaping their understanding of religious moderation. The first speaker revealed that Pancasila lessons, particularly when discussing the history of the formulation of the first principle, provide concrete examples of the practice of religious moderation in a national context. He explained: *"During Pancasila lessons, the lecturer discussed the first principle, Belief in One Almighty God. Judging from its history, there were many pros and cons, so it was finally reformulated and decided to become Belief in One Almighty God. In my opinion, this already embodies the values of religious moderation." (Speaker 1)*

Meanwhile, the second speaker explained that the value of religious moderation was understood through the lecturer's explanation that linked each principle of Pancasila to social life. He assessed that Pancasila teaches justice, unity, deliberation, and social justice without religious discrimination. The second speaker said: *"In the first and second principles, I understand that just and civilized humanity teaches us to be fair regardless of religion. The third principle explains the importance of maintaining harmony between religious communities, the fourth principle is about deliberation, and the fifth principle is about social justice without religious discrimination." (Speaker 2)* This experience was obtained through lecturer explanations, class discussions, and assignments related to the values of Pancasila.

Student Perceptions of the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Pancasila Learning

Both informants had positive perceptions of the application of religious moderation values in Pancasila learning. The first informant assessed that Pancasila fundamentally contains the values of religious moderation, particularly in the principles of Belief in the One and Only God and social justice. He stated: *"In my opinion, the values of religious moderation have indeed been applied in Pancasila learning, because Pancasila itself already contains the values of religious moderation." (Informant 1).* In addition, the first informant also linked the application of religious moderation to his daily life experiences, especially in interactions with friends of different religions. He added: *"In everyday life, like when I was in high school, even though there were people of different religions and the majority were Muslim, we still did not discriminate and respected each other's differences." (Informant 1)*

The second source assessed that the implementation of religious moderation was clearly visible through the teaching methods used by lecturers, such as case studies, group discussions, and healthy

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debates. He stated: *"Lecturers often use case studies such as intolerance or religious conflict. Group discussions and healthy debates are conducted to maintain a healthy level of disagreement and prevent hostility." (Informant 2).*

Learning Methods in Instilling the Values of Religious Moderation

Based on interviews, lecturers use various learning methods to instill the value of religious moderation in Pancasila learning. These methods are considered relevant and easy to understand because they are directly linked to the realities of students' social lives. The first informant stated that lecturers utilize a variety of learning media, such as videos, images, data, and articles related to religious moderation. He stated: *"Lecturers usually deliver material using methods that are easy for students to understand, such as showing videos, images, data, and articles related to religious moderation." (Informant 1)*

The second source added that lecturers also use interactive lectures, group discussions, interviews, and reflective assignments to encourage students to understand the value of religious moderation more deeply. He stated, *"The methods used by lecturers are quite diverse, including interactive lectures, group discussions, interviews, and assignments related to the value of religious moderation." (Source Source 2)*

Students' Views on the Importance of Religious Moderation in Pancasila Learning

Both speakers agreed that implementing religious moderation in Pancasila learning is crucial for shaping students' character and perspective as Indonesian citizens. The first speaker stated, *"I think implementing religious moderation in Pancasila is crucial because Pancasila serves to unite the nation amidst Indonesia's diverse diversity."*
(Source 1)

Meanwhile, the second speaker emphasized that religious moderation and Pancasila are closely linked in fostering tolerance and social justice. He stated: *"Religious moderation and Pancasila both shape the perspectives and character of Indonesian citizens. We are taught to be tolerant, respect diversity, and be fair to everyone." (Speaker 2)*

The Impact of Pancasila Learning on Student Attitudes

Learning Pancasila, which incorporates the values of religious moderation, has a positive impact on students' attitudes. The first interviewee revealed that this learning has helped him to better appreciate differences and be tolerant in social life. He stated: *"Learning Pancasila linked to the values of religious moderation has made me more appreciative of differences and tolerant."*
(Source 1)

The second speaker also experienced a change in attitude after participating in the Pancasila learning. He said: " *The more I learn, the more I understand that Indonesia has many differences. We can't impose our own opinions, and this learning has made me more sensitive to tolerance and justice." (Speaker 2)*

Student Obstacles and Hopes

Although the implementation of religious moderation in Pancasila learning was deemed to have gone quite well, the speakers encountered several obstacles. The first speaker stated that the main obstacle lies in the lack of application of religious moderation values in everyday life. He stated: " *In my opinion, the obstacle is that many students still only understand the material but have not yet applied it in real life." (Speaker 1)*

Meanwhile, the second speaker highlighted the lack of interfaith activities and the low participation of some students in class discussions. He stated, *"The lack of interfaith activities and the continued shyness of some students to ask questions during discussions are obstacles to learning." (Speaker 2)*

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The students' hope for the future is that Pancasila learning will not only focus on theoretical aspects, but also provide real-life experiences that can strengthen the instillation of the value of religious moderation. The first speaker said: *"Hopefully, Pancasila learning will include more direct examples, real-life case studies, or practices so that the value of religious moderation is easier to understand." (Speaker 1)* In line with that, the second speaker hopes that lecturers can be role models in implementing the value of religious moderation in academic life. He stated: *"Learning should not only stop at theory, but provide real-life experiences and lecturers can also be role models for students." (Speaker 2)*.

Discussion

Students' understanding of religious moderation is clearly illustrated in the interview results. The informant defines moderation as a middle attitude, tolerance, and an attitude of maintaining harmony in diversity. This understanding is similar to the concept of moderation explained by [10], which emphasizes that religious moderation is formed through the values of tolerance and anti- -extremism. [11]also stated that students who understand the concept of moderation tend to have better abilities in managing differences of belief in social interactions. Students' experiences in learning Pancasila also show that the value of moderation is understood through the material, lecturers' explanations, and case studies. The first informant argued that the strengthening of the value of moderation is found in the history of the formulation of the first principle, while the second informant focused more on the experience of class discussions and the presentation of material by lecturers. [12]explained that the integration of the value of moderation in learning Pancasila can enrich students' understanding of diversity. [13]also added that the presentation of real case studies encourages students to be more critical and reflective about diversity issues.

During the implementation process, students observed that the learning included the value of religious moderation through discussions, case studies, issue analysis, and class discussions. This observation aligns with the view [14]that lecturers who use a dialogic approach are able to encourage students to develop moderate ways of thinking. The same sentiment was expressed by [15]those who emphasized the importance of a dialogue space in understanding moderation. The learning methods used by lecturers, such as video screenings, discussions, interactive lectures, and assignments, also strongly supported the process of instilling the value of religious moderation. [16]emphasized that the use of visual media can help students understand the context of moderation more concretely. Furthermore, the dialogic learning model, as described, [17]was deemed effective in developing critical and moderate thinking.

Students also consider religious moderation to be a crucial aspect of Pancasila learning because it is directly related to the formation of national character. [18]He stated that strengthening religious moderation encourages students to develop a tolerant attitude and the ability to resolve conflicts peacefully. [19]He also emphasized that moderation is a fundamental part of character building based on

[10] Alwi (2023)
[11] Mutakin & Fauzi (2024)
[12] Yuliana (2023)
[13] Son (2024)
[14] Ramadan (2025)
[15] Khasanah & Qodri (2023)
[16] Lestari & et al (2024)
[17] Setyawan (2025)
[18] Paradise (2024)
[19] Azzahra (2023)

Pancasila values. The impact of this learning is seen in students' increased awareness of differences, growing tolerance, and understanding that extremism must be avoided. [20]He revealed that moderation-based Pancasila learning can strengthen students' empathy and ability to understand diversity. Interview results show a picture that aligns with this view.

Obstacles to its implementation arise from several aspects, such as the lack of interfaith activities, students' shyness in discussions, and a tendency to only understand the theory without applying it. [21]found similar obstacles in the context of moderation learning in higher education, particularly the lack of interfaith interaction spaces and the limited use of experiential learning models. Students hope for increased practice-based learning activities, the implementation of more relevant case studies, and role models from lecturers.[22] stated that experiential learning is the most effective approach to instilling the value of moderation. [23]He also emphasized that lecturers' role models are a crucial factor in shaping students' moderate attitudes.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that students' understanding of religious moderation is effectively developed through Pancasila Education, which promotes tolerance, respect for diversity, and rejection of extremism. This understanding is shaped not only through instructional content but also through participatory learning processes such as discussions, reflections, and contextual engagement with Indonesia's pluralistic society. As a result, religious moderation is internalized as a lived attitude rather than merely a conceptual framework. The study further finds that the implementation of religious moderation in Pancasila learning is generally effective, although challenges remain, particularly in the limited opportunities for interfaith practice and uneven student participation. These findings highlight the need for more experiential and interactive learning approaches. The main contribution of this study lies in emphasizing students' perspectives as a micro-level basis for understanding the internalization of religious moderation. This insight underscores the strategic role of Pancasila Education in fostering inclusive and moderate character in higher education. Future research is recommended to explore experiential learning and interfaith collaborative models to strengthen the practical application of moderation values in students' daily lives.

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