

## **TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION: A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK TO PROMOTE RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN INDONESIA**

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### **Abstract:**

This research aims to explore the role of multicultural education, active campus participation, and challenges in implementing moderation and tolerance in higher education. In an increasingly diverse society, universities play a pivotal role in promoting religious moderation and tolerance among students. However, despite these efforts, various challenges hinder their successful implementation. This study employs a qualitative approach, utilizing interviews with faculty and students, along with observational data, to analyze the integration of multicultural education and its impact on students' attitudes towards tolerance. The research identifies three key findings: (1) multicultural education fosters religious moderation through both theoretical learning and practical experiences; (2) active participation in campus activities such as interfaith dialogues and cultural workshops enhances students' understanding and appreciation of diversity; (3) external factors like social media and initial student resistance pose significant challenges to the development of moderation. The study contributes to the body of knowledge on multicultural education in higher education and recommends that universities adopt more inclusive policies and encourage broader student involvement in multicultural activities. Future research should expand on these findings by examining the impact of media and external societal influences.

### **Abstrak:**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran pendidikan multikultural, partisipasi kampus aktif, dan tantangan penerapan moderasi dan toleransi di pendidikan tinggi. Dalam masyarakat yang semakin beragam, universitas memainkan peran penting dalam mempromosikan moderasi dan toleransi beragama di kalangan mahasiswa. Namun, terlepas dari upaya ini, berbagai tantangan menghambat keberhasilan implementasinya. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif, memanfaatkan wawancara dengan fakultas dan mahasiswa, bersama dengan data observasional, untuk menganalisis integrasi pendidikan multikultural dan dampaknya terhadap sikap mahasiswa terhadap toleransi. Studi ini mengidentifikasi tiga temuan utama: (1) pendidikan multikultural mendorong moderasi beragama melalui pembelajaran teoritis dan pengalaman praktis; (2) partisipasi aktif dalam kegiatan kampus seperti dialog antaragama dan lokakarya budaya meningkatkan pemahaman dan apresiasi mahasiswa terhadap keragaman; (3) faktor eksternal seperti media sosial dan resistensi mahasiswa awal menimbulkan tantangan signifikan bagi pengembangan moderasi. Studi ini berkontribusi pada pengetahuan pendidikan multikultural di pendidikan tinggi dan merekomendasikan agar universitas mengadopsi kebijakan yang lebih inklusif dan mendorong keterlibatan mahasiswa yang lebih luas dalam kegiatan

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In the contemporary era of global interconnectivity, the preservation of social cohesion in a pluralistic society has emerged as a fundamental need to maintain national stability and peace. The urgency of this issue lies in the fact that while diversity is a source of cultural wealth, it also serves as a potential fault line for social fragmentation if not managed through systematic educational interventions (Oluwatosin & Rojak, 2023; Panarese et al., 2025; Shi & Yang, 2025). Global trends show a sharp increase in identity politics and exclusive ideologies, with digital Echo Chambers further exacerbating societal polarization and reducing the capacity for cross-cultural empathy among youth (Akinyetun, 2024; Amin & Ritonga, 2024). This phenomenon requires a strategic shift in how educational institutions, particularly in countries such as Indonesia, conceptualize and implement frameworks that align religious beliefs with civic tolerance (Nurbayti & Purnama, 2025; Widodo & Muchtar, 2020). Therefore, strengthening religious moderation is not only a local cultural agenda but a vital global imperative to ensure that higher education acts as a catalyst for inclusive citizenship, bridging the gap between theoretical pluralism and the practical realities of living together.

A common problem facing modern society, especially in developing countries with deep-rooted religious traditions, is the growing tension between traditionalist exclusivist views and the demands of modern democratic pluralism. As societies become more digitally integrated yet ideologically separated, the middle ground often referred to as moderation is increasingly surrounded by radical narratives that offer simple black-and-white solutions to complex social problems (Mahmudah et al., 2025; Mandala et al., 2024). This ideological shift often passes through the intellectual filter, leading to a decline in critical thinking and an increase in dogmatic intolerance among the educated class (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020). Higher education institutions now run the risk of becoming breeding grounds of exclusive sentiment if they fail to provide a strong counter-narrative. Without a structured pedagogical response, the erosion of moderate values threatens to undermine the foundations of the country's democracy, leading to social friction that hinders economic development and disrupts the collective pursuit of a multi-religious society that respects the sanctity of religion and human rights (Mustakim et al., 2021; Sapdi & Ali, 2022).

Field phenomena in Indonesia's higher education landscape reveal a paradox: high levels of religious ritualism do not necessarily correlate with greater social tolerance or multicultural awareness. Observations across campuses show that although students are academically proficient, many struggle to navigate the

complexities of a multi-faith environment, often retreating into homogeneous peer groups that reinforce the parish's worldview (Ardi et al., 2021; Subchi et al., 2022). There is a visible gap between formal curricula that often treat multiculturalism as a fringe subject and informal campus cultures where latent prejudices can sometimes arise. In addition, the lack of a standardized framework for religious moderation means that initiatives are often sporadic and depend on individual leadership rather than institutional policy (Prasetyo et al., 2025; Suwendi et al., 2023). This inconsistency creates a void that allows more radical external influences to permeate the student body, underscoring the urgent need for an integrated curriculum that translates abstract concepts "*Religious Moderation*" into real academic practice and social interaction within the university ecosystem.

Previous scholarship on multicultural education has extensively documented the theoretical underpinnings of pluralism, with a large focus on the James Banks dimension and the socio-anthropological aspects of diversity in Western contexts (Akcaoglu & Arsal, 2022). In Indonesia, existing research is mainly centered on descriptive analysis. "*Religious Moderation*" as a government policy or its implementation in schools/*Primary and secondary Islamic madrassas* (Malik & Busrah, 2021; Mukhibat et al., 2023). Scholars argue that religious moderation is key to Indonesia's resilience, but much of the research remains at the macro-conceptual level, offering broad generalizations without providing a concrete and replicable curriculum framework (Jamaluddin, 2024; Mukhibat et al., 2023). Although some qualitative questions have explored students' perceptions of diversity, they often fail to relate these perceptions to specific pedagogical strategies or institutional management models. As a result, the literature shows a significant disconnect between high-level policy discourse and the micro-level realities of classroom teaching, leaving educators without a clear roadmap for embedding these values into core academic structures.

A major weakness in current academic discourse is the absence of a comprehensive, framework-oriented approach that integrates multicultural pedagogy directly into the university's operational curriculum. Most of the existing studies are retrospective or purely ethnographic, identifying problems without proposing design-based systemic solutions that can be scaled across a variety of institutional settings (Cruz, Aguinaldo, et al., 2025; Cruz, Manera, et al., 2025). This research gap is particularly important because, without a formal framework, religious moderation remains a "hidden curriculum" that is easily ignored or inconsistently implemented. There is an urgent need to move beyond the celebration of diversity and towards the engineering of an educational environment that actively deconstructs extremism through structured intellectual engagement (Hatim et al., 2025). By failing to address the mechanical aspects of curriculum design such as learning outcomes, instructional materials, and assessment rubrics, previous research has left a void in the practical application of multicultural theory. This study seeks to address this specific shortcoming by developing a robust

framework that bridges the gap between abstract religious moderation policies and the practicality of higher education management.

The novelty of this research lies in the synthesis of global multicultural pedagogical theories with Indonesia's unique construction of religious moderation to create a specific curriculum framework. Unlike previous works that treated this dual concept as a separate entity, this study argues for a symbiotic integration in which multiculturalism provides pedagogical methods and religious moderation provides ethical content (Rahmawati et al., 2024). The research introduces a "Transformative-Inclusive" model that goes beyond traditional tolerance, instead focusing on active engagement and intellectual reconciliation of faith and pluralism. It is crucial to resolve this issue now as the future of Indonesian democracy depends on its ability to produce graduates who are not only professionally competent but also ideologically based on moderation. By providing a structured framework, the research offers an original contribution to the field of education management, shifting the focus from moderation "what" to "how" it can be systematically developed within the university's academic architecture, thus ensuring long-term institutional impact.

Based on the identified gaps and the unique socio-religious dynamics observed in the field, the main research problem of this study is how to systematically design a multicultural curriculum framework to strengthen religious moderation among students. At Yudharta Pasuruan University, a site characterized by its diverse religious and cultural environment, the challenge lies in moving beyond symbolic tolerance towards structured academic mechanisms that internalize moderate values. The problem discussed here is the lack of a clear pedagogical bridge that connects the university's multicultural identity with formal moderation outcomes. This research seeks to investigate the structural elements necessary to build such bridges, examining how course content, campus management, and social engagement can be woven into a single, cohesive strategy. By diagnosing current institutional limitations and exploring the potential for curriculum innovation, this research aims to provide clear answers to the question of how higher education can proactively protect students from exclusive ideologies while fostering a resilient and inclusive identity.

The main argument of this paper is that strengthening religious moderation in higher education requires more than just additional courses; it requires a comprehensive transformation of the curriculum through a multicultural lens. The study posits that when universities adopt a structured multicultural framework, it creates an academic ecosystem that inherently promotes critical thinking, empathy, and moderate religiosity as core competencies of students. A major contribution of this research is the formulation of a replicable "Multicultural Moderation" model that offers a practical blueprint for other private higher education institutions in similar multi-religious contexts. By documenting the implementation process and its impact, the study provides significant advances in education management and peace education. Ultimately, this study shows that a well-designed curriculum is the

most effective tool for transforming higher education into a bastion of moderation, ensuring that graduates are prepared to lead a pluralistic society with intellectual depth and social wisdom.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The study uses a qualitative case study design to facilitate an in-depth longitudinal exploration of the multicultural curriculum framework within its specific institutional environment. The choice of a case study approach is underpinned by its capacity to provide a "thick description" of complex social phenomena that are closely related to their real-life contexts, allowing for a detailed examination of nuanced pedagogical interactions that cannot be captured by quantitative metrics alone (Lim, 2025; Mtisi, 2022). By adopting an interpretive paradigm, this research prioritizes the experiences and subjective perspectives of academic stakeholders, thus offering a comprehensive understanding of how multicultural values translate from abstract national policies to transformative educational practices at the university level.

The research was conducted at Yudharta Pasuruan University in East Java, Indonesia, using a strategic and purposeful location selection process. Yudharta Pasuruan University is a critical case because of its unique institutional identity as a "Multicultural Campus" that operates in a diverse socio-religious ecosystem, integrating students and faculty members from diverse religious backgrounds and ethnic groups. In addition, the university's historical and geographical proximity to traditional Islamic boarding school culture, juxtaposed with its modern academic orientation, provides a rich and contested space to investigate the synergies between multiculturalism and religious moderation. This unique "living laboratory" of pluralism offers critical insights that are highly relevant to the broader global discourse on inclusive higher education in Muslim-majority societies.

To ensure the robustness and credibility of the findings, data is obtained through a multi-method approach designed to facilitate rigorous triangulation of data (Natow, 2020; Vivek, 2023). Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with multiple informants, faculty and students from various departments, allowing for a detailed exploration of the institutional intent and life experiences of those applying the framework. These interviews were complemented by non-participant observations conducted during classroom sessions and multicultural events across campuses to document the practical application of moderate values and the nature of interfaith social dynamics in real-time (Chand, 2025; Dolczewski, 2022). In addition, extensive documentary analysis was conducted on institutional artifacts, such as strategic plans, semester lesson plans, and core curriculum modules, to provide formal structural evidence of the integration of religious moderation in academic architecture.

Data analysis follows an interactive model that consists of three concurrent activity streams: data condensation, data view, and conclusion retrieval and verification (Li & Zhang, 2022; Miles et al., 2014). During the data condensation

phase, raw data from interview transcripts and field notes are systematically encoded and categorized to identify repetitive patterns associated with multicultural pedagogy and religious moderation. These categories are then compiled into thematic matrices and conceptual maps in the data display phase to visualize the linkages between curriculum design and student behavioral outcomes. Finally, conclusion drawing involves a rigorous process to verify emerging themes against the theoretical framework, while trust is maintained through member checks and peer briefings to ensure that the synthesized framework accurately reflects the institutional realities of the research site (Mbanaso et al., 2023).

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **RESULTS**

#### **Integration of Multicultural Education and Religious Moderation**

The integration of multicultural education and religious moderation refers to the systematic efforts made by the university to incorporate the values of cultural and religious diversity into the academic curriculum and campus activities. It aims to create an inclusive atmosphere that supports harmonious social interaction between students from different religious and cultural backgrounds. This multicultural education plays an important role in instilling an attitude of religious tolerance and moderation by emphasizing the principle of peaceful coexistence, avoiding radicalization and extremism.

Based on an interview with informant 1, it was explained that "Multicultural education on campus aims to provide students with an understanding so that they can respect each other's religious and cultural diversity, which in turn will foster a moderate attitude in religion. We integrate learning about religious moderation through various interfaith activities and courses that teach the values of pluralism." This shows that the implementation of multicultural education on campus aims to create a space where students learn to accept differences, appreciate diversity, and avoid extreme views.

Informant 2 revealed, "On this campus, we are often invited to participate in discussions about diversity, including religion and culture. Lecturers always insert the values of tolerance and religious moderation in every lesson, such as when we discuss religious differences in group discussions." This shows that students at the university are directly involved in the learning process that introduces them to the values of religious moderation and the importance of mutual respect. The multicultural education that is implemented is not only theoretical, but also practical through daily discussions and interactions.

Informant 3, who is a student of the Agribusiness study program, spoke about the application of the value of moderation in learning by saying, "In class, we are always given the opportunity to discuss differences, especially religion and culture. This helps us to better understand the perspectives of others and learn to be moderate. The discussion not only increases understanding, but also gives us the opportunity to appreciate the differences that exist." This shows that discussion

activities in the classroom are one of the means to instill the values of religious moderation, which encourages students to think critically and be open to religious and cultural differences.

Informant 4, a student from the Food Science and Technology program, added, "I feel that multicultural education on this campus is very important because we not only learn the theory of tolerance, but are also taught to apply it in daily life through various social activities and interfaith seminars. Activities like this make me better understand the importance of religious moderation." This information confirms that multicultural education on campus is not only provided in the classroom, but also practiced through external activities that support interfaith and cultural interaction.

During observations at the university, it was found that the campus actively hosts events that reinforce multicultural values, such as interfaith seminars and cultural activities involving students from diverse backgrounds. These activities provide students with the opportunity to engage in interfaith and cultural dialogue, as well as experience firsthand the importance of coexistence in diversity. This shows that the campus curriculum and policies are aligned with the goals of multicultural education to foster a moderate attitude.

Overall, the data shows that multicultural education at universities has a positive impact on fostering religious moderation among students. This can be seen from the implementation of courses that teach the values of diversity and tolerance as well as from activities that facilitate interaction between students across religions and cultures. Through this learning, students are invited to internalize the value of religious moderation, which allows them to interact more openly and tolerantly of differences.

The data pattern shows that multicultural education at universities is not only delivered theoretically through courses, but also applied practically through campus activities that prioritize dialogue between religions and cultures. From interviews and observations, it can be concluded that the values of religious moderation are instilled through various methods, both explicitly in the curriculum and implicitly through social and academic activities. This creates an ecosystem that supports students to develop tolerant and moderate attitudes in their lives.

**Table 1. Ideal Influence - Integration of Multicultural Education and Religious Moderation**

<b>Informant Position</b>	<b>Interview Excerpts</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Lecturer Head of the Pluralistic Religious Center (Informant 1)	"We integrate learning about religious moderation through a variety of interfaith activities and courses that teach the values of pluralism."	Integrating moderation values in interfaith courses and activities.
Students (Informant 2)	"Lecturers always insert the values of tolerance and religious moderation in every lesson, such as when we discuss religious differences in group discussions."	The application of religious moderation in practical learning through group discussions and student interactions.

Students (Informant 3)	"Discussions about religious and cultural differences in the classroom helped us understand other people's perspectives and learn to be moderate."	The application of religious moderation through class discussions and interactions that encourage cross-cultural understanding.
Students (Informant 4)	"The multicultural education on this campus teaches us to apply tolerance in our daily lives through various social activities."	The application of the value of religious moderation through external activities and interfaith seminars.

Table 1 above shows the pattern that both lecturers and students play an important role in integrating the values of religious moderation through multicultural education. Lecturers at universities not only teach the theory of pluralism, but also provide students with the opportunity to apply these values in their daily lives through academic and social activities. Meanwhile, students such as informant 2, informant 3, and informant 4 show that these values are instilled through group discussions, social activities, and interfaith seminars that encourage them to think openly and respect each other. This shows that the campus has succeeded in creating a space that supports the internalization of moderate attitudes, where students not only understand, but also practice tolerance in their lives.

### **Active Campus Participation and Cross-Cultural Dialogue**

Campus activities involving student participation in interfaith dialogues, cultural seminars, and workshops are an important means of strengthening students' understanding of religious moderation and cultural diversity. These activities support the creation of spaces for interaction that promote mutual respect and understanding between students from different backgrounds. The goal is to introduce students to social inclusion practices that not only teach theory, but also provide hands-on experience in interacting with people of different views and beliefs. Cross-cultural and interfaith dialogue enriches students' insights and teaches them how to create harmony in diversity.

Informant 1, who is a lecturer at the Head of the Pluralistic Religious Center, explained that "The campus actively organizes various interfaith activities that aim to introduce students to diversity, both through seminars and interfaith meetings. Through these activities, students not only gain knowledge but also the opportunity to interact with students of different religions and backgrounds, which strengthens their moderate attitudes." This statement shows that lecturers and the university integrate interfaith activities as part of a strategy to develop a moderate attitude among students.

Informant 2, a student from the Agribusiness Study Program, stated, "The Multicultural Ambassador Grand Final activity on campus was very memorable for me. At the event, I met students from various religious and cultural backgrounds. We shared views and experiences, and learned from each other to appreciate differences." This shows that cross-cultural and religious activities like this provide

opportunities for students to interact and learn to respect each other's differences in the campus environment.



**Figure 1. Flowchart of campus active participation and cross-cultural dialogue**

The flowchart above shows that active participation in interfaith and cross-cultural activities on campus not only enhances students' theoretical understanding of religious moderation, but also provides practical experiences that enable them to apply these values of moderation in their daily lives. From interviews with students and lecturers, it appears that these activities encourage students to engage in dialogues that not only enhance their understanding of diversity, but also facilitate valuable cross-cultural interactions.

Lecturers, as facilitators, play a key role in organizing and supporting these activities, which in turn gives students the opportunity to interact with individuals from different backgrounds. This creates a conducive space for students to discuss differences, formulate more inclusive understandings, and internalize the values of religious moderation.

During observations at the university, it was found that the campus actively hosts events that reinforce multicultural values, such as interfaith seminars and cultural activities involving students from diverse backgrounds. These activities provide students with the opportunity to engage in interfaith and cultural dialogue, as well as experience firsthand the importance of coexistence in diversity. This shows that the campus curriculum and policies are aligned with the goals of multicultural education to foster a moderate attitude.

Overall, the data obtained show that students' active participation in campus activities involving interfaith and cultural dialogue plays a major role in shaping their moderate attitudes. Through these activities, students are not only given the opportunity to enrich their knowledge about diversity, but also to develop their ability to interact with various groups in an inclusive and respectful manner. These

activities create an academic environment that facilitates a constructive exchange of ideas and helps to reinforce the value of religious moderation among students.

The data pattern shows that there is a direct relationship between students' participation in interfaith and cultural activities and an increase in their moderate attitudes. These activities, both competitive and educational, encourage students to actively engage in the process of dialogue and cross-cultural interaction. This indicates that well-designed activities can reinforce the values of tolerance, open students' insights, and encourage them to appreciate differences as a positive thing and enrich their experiences in social life.

**Table 2. Ideal Influence – Active Campus Participation and Cross-Cultural Dialogue**

<b>Informant Position</b>	<b>Interview Excerpts</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Lecturer Head of the Pluralistic Religious Center (Informant 1)	"This campus actively holds various interfaith activities whose purpose is to introduce students to diversity, both through seminars and interfaith meetings."	Integrating interfaith activities in campus curriculum and events to increase religious moderation.
Students (Informant 2)	"The Multicultural Ambassador Grand Final activity on campus was very memorable for me. At the event, I met students from various religious and cultural backgrounds."	Experience interacting in cross-cultural events that enrich insights and promote mutual respect.
Students (Informant 3)	"We often discuss religious and cultural differences in the classroom. Lecturers often give us assignments to reflect on the importance of mutual respect."	The application of religious moderation in class discussions that encourage interfaith and cultural understanding.
Students (Informant 4)	"On this campus, we are given many opportunities to interact with students of different religions. For example, in iftar events between Muslim and Christian students."	Involvement in interfaith activities that teach mutual respect for differences directly.

Table 2 above shows the pattern that students' active involvement in various interfaith and cultural activities is highly influential in improving their moderate attitudes. Whether through competitive activities such as the Multicultural Ambassador Grand Final or interfaith seminars and discussions, students are given the opportunity to interact with individuals from different backgrounds, allowing them to enrich their insights and strengthen attitudes of tolerance. Involvement in these activities creates a space for constructive exchange of ideas, which in turn helps to reinforce the values of religious moderation in their social lives.

### **Challenges in Implementing Moderation and Tolerance**

Although the university has been actively promoting the values of moderation and tolerance, there are challenges in its implementation. Some students show initial resistance or ignorance of the importance of moderation and tolerance in campus life. Sometimes, active involvement in activities that facilitate interfaith dialogue is lacking. In addition, external factors, such as the influence of digital media and social networks, can hinder the development of tolerant and

moderate attitudes. However, despite these challenges, support from the university, including leaders and lecturers, plays a crucial role in strengthening this message of moderation through educational policies, modeling from lecturers, and inclusive campus activities.

**Table 3. Challenges in the Implementation of Moderation and Tolerance**

<b>Interview Excerpts</b>	<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Informants</b>
"I feel that even though the campus holds interfaith dialogue activities, not all students are actively involved."	Lack of student involvement in interfaith dialogue activities.	Informant 1 (Student)
"Some of my friends still don't fully understand the importance of tolerance and moderation in campus life."	Ignorance or lack of understanding of moderation and tolerance.	Informant 2 (Student)
"External factors such as social media often exacerbate perceptions of diversity and stoke tensions."	The influence of social media in creating tension against diversity.	Informant 3 (Student)
"Leaders and lecturers play a very important role in strengthening moderate attitudes by supporting activities involving various backgrounds."	The role of lecturers and leaders in directing students towards moderation through inclusive activities.	Informant 4 (Lecturer)

From table 3 above, it can be seen that the biggest challenge in implementing moderation and tolerance in universities is related to the lack of active involvement of students in activities that encourage interfaith and cultural dialogue. This is reflected in Informant 1's statement, which highlights that despite the activities, not all students actively participate. Student engagement is essential in facilitating a deeper understanding of diversity and moderation.

In addition, there are also indications of ignorance about the importance of tolerance among some students, as expressed by Informant 2. This ignorance shows the need for a more effective approach in conveying the values of moderation, so that students can fully understand and internalize them in their campus life.

On the other hand, the negative influence of social media, as expressed by Informant 3, gives the impression that external factors also play a role in hindering the implementation of moderation. Social media is often a platform that exacerbates extreme views, which can exacerbate tensions over diversity.

However, despite the challenges, the support from leaders and lecturers, as mentioned by Informant 4, shows that the university has a central role in moderating student behavior. With a clear education policy, as well as the implementation of inclusive campus activities, lecturers and university leaders contribute to creating an atmosphere that supports the values of moderation.

Based on the results of observations on campus, it was found that although various interfaith activities have been held, student participation in the event is still limited. Most of the students who are actively involved in this kind of activity are those who already have an initial understanding of the importance of moderation and tolerance. This shows that there is a gap between students who are open to diversity and those who still do not understand or are not interested in participating.

In addition, external influences, such as news on social media and online discussion groups, cannot be ignored. Social media is often a platform that exacerbates polarization between groups, be it religious, cultural, or political, which can affect students' perceptions of diversity.

Overall, although the university has implemented a variety of policies and activities that support moderation and tolerance, the biggest challenge is how to increase student participation in activities that facilitate interfaith and cultural dialogue. In addition, there are obstacles in the form of a lack of understanding of moderation among some students, as well as the negative influence of social media that exacerbates tensions between groups. However, the support of leaders and lecturers who introduce the values of religious moderation through inclusive activities plays an important role in overcoming these challenges.

The pattern from the data obtained shows that despite strong support from universities in terms of policies and the implementation of activities that promote moderation, there is a gap in student engagement. Students who are more aware of the importance of tolerance tend to be more active in participating in such activities, while those who are less informed are still hesitant to get involved. This indicates the need for a more engaging and inclusive approach to engaging students who do not have a sufficient understanding of moderation. In addition, external factors such as social media should be taken into account in efforts to introduce the values of moderation, as they have a considerable influence on students' views.

**Table 4. Challenges in the Implementation of Moderation and Tolerance**

<b>Informant Position</b>	<b>Interview Excerpts</b>	<b>Indicator</b>
Students (Informant 1)	"I feel that even though the campus holds interfaith dialogue activities, not all students are actively involved."	Lack of student involvement in interfaith dialogue activities.
Students (Informant 2)	"Some of my friends still don't fully understand the importance of tolerance and moderation in campus life."	Ignorance or lack of understanding of moderation and tolerance.
Students (Informant 3)	"External factors such as social media often exacerbate perceptions of diversity and stoke tensions."	The influence of social media in creating tension against diversity.
Lecturer (Informant 4)	"Leaders and lecturers play a very important role in strengthening moderate attitudes by supporting activities involving various backgrounds."	The role of lecturers and leaders in directing students towards moderation through inclusive activities.

Table 4 above shows a pattern that despite campus activities that encourage interfaith dialogue, many students are not actively engaged, as revealed by Informant 1. This is a challenge in introducing and fostering moderation among students. On the other hand, some students who lack understanding of the importance of tolerance and moderation (as explained by Informant 2) need a more effective and in-depth approach to improve their understanding.

In addition, external influences such as social media, which can exacerbate views on diversity (Informant 3), should be considered in the university's strategy to strengthen moderation. Despite these challenges, support from leaders and

faculty (Informant 4) remains essential to reinforce the values of moderation and create an inclusive campus environment.

## **DISCUSSION**

In this study, findings related to the integration of multicultural education, active campus participation, and the challenges of implementing moderation and tolerance provide important insights into the university's efforts in promoting religious moderation and tolerance among students. The first finding highlights the important role of multicultural education in building moderate attitudes and understandings of diversity. This is in line with previous research that emphasized the role of higher education in shaping students' attitudes toward diversity (Marangell et al., 2024; Trolan & Parker III, 2022). Multicultural education, as reported in this study, involves not only theoretical learning, but also practical activities such as interfaith dialogue and collaborative cultural events. These findings support the view that education should be holistic, integrating cognitive knowledge and hands-on experience to enhance students' appreciation of diversity (Chang et al., 2023; Dong et al., 2025; Hsiao et al., 2022). The theoretical implication of these findings is that colleges need to continue to develop curricula that combine theoretical knowledge with practical experience, as well as create opportunities for students to engage with different perspectives. In practical terms, the integration of multicultural education into campus activities is essential to promote an inclusive culture that ultimately strengthens students' social cohesion and tolerance in an increasingly diverse society.

The second finding examined students' active participation in campus activities and cross-cultural dialogue, which is an important factor in the development of moderation. These findings are in line with previous research that emphasized the importance of student involvement in extracurricular activities for social and cultural integration (De Sisto et al., 2022; Thies & Falk, 2023). Participation in activities such as the Multicultural Ambassador Grand Final and interfaith discussions provide students with the opportunity to interact with individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds, which in turn promotes mutual respect and understanding. These activities provide students with the opportunity to experience cultural diversity firsthand, which is critical in building an inclusive and tolerant campus environment. The theoretical implication of these findings is that student participation in cross-cultural and interfaith activities should be a key component of university policies aimed at promoting religious moderation. Practically, universities need to create more opportunities for students to actively engage in interfaith and cross-cultural activities to further promote tolerance and understanding. This is in line with the idea that involvement in diversity-focused events can enhance students' empathy and their ability to deal with intercultural challenges, both in academic and professional life (Everett et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024).

The third finding addresses the challenges universities face in implementing moderation and tolerance among students. The study identified several barriers, including initial rejection from students and the influence of external factors such as social media. These findings are consistent with previous research that highlighted the role of media in shaping public perceptions of diversity and tolerance (Jhunjhunwala & Verma, 2024; Mokodenseho et al., 2024). Social media, while a platform for dialogue, often exacerbates divisions and polarizes views, making it more difficult for students to adopt a moderate and tolerant attitude. This poses a significant challenge for universities looking to promote inclusive values, as external factors can influence student attitudes and hinder the implementation of moderation initiatives. The theoretical implication of these findings is that universities need to pay more attention to external influences in the development of tolerance programs. In practical terms, universities should not only focus on campus internal activities, but they should also engage students in understanding the influence of digital media and its impact on their social attitudes. This may involve integrating media literacy programs into the curriculum to help students critically assess information and develop more tolerant views (Afrilyasanti et al., 2025; Afrilyasanti & Basthomi, 2023; Tebaldi & Nygreen, 2022).

The implications of these findings are crucial both theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the study highlights the importance of combining multicultural education with active participation in cross-cultural dialogue to effectively build moderation and tolerance. It suggests that an integrative approach, which combines theoretical education with practical activities, is indispensable for fostering an inclusive attitude among students. The practical implication is that universities need to continue to develop programs that encourage student engagement in cross-cultural activities, while also paying attention to external factors that may hinder the development of tolerance. In addition, universities should actively engage lecturers and leaders in reinforcing the message of moderation, as their role is critical in modeling inclusive behavior and guiding students through the challenges they face in confronting diversity.

The research also contributes to the ongoing discourse on multicultural education and the promotion of religious moderation in higher education. The study confirms that although universities have made significant progress in integrating multicultural education and encouraging students' active participation, challenges remain, especially related to external factors and students' initial refusal to adopt moderation. These findings suggest that universities should adopt a more holistic approach, combining theoretical education with practical engagement in cross-cultural dialogue, while also paying attention to the influence of social media and societal perceptions. By doing this, universities can better prepare students to face the complexities of living and working in a diverse and interconnected world (Hu et al., 2026; Seifert & Machado, 2025; Swe & Sithu, 2024).

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that multicultural education, active participation of students in cross-cultural activities, and challenges in the implementation of religious moderation are key aspects that can strengthen attitudes of tolerance and moderation among students. The most important finding of this study is the importance of integrating theory with practical experience, as reflected in campus activities involving interfaith and cultural dialogue. Although universities have made efforts to promote moderation through campus policies and activities, challenges remain, especially related to the lack of student engagement and the negative influence of social media. The main lesson of this study is that universities need to strengthen a holistic approach to education, combine theoretical teaching with students' direct involvement in cross-cultural activities, as well as overcome external barriers that hinder the development of moderation attitudes.

The strength of this paper lies in its contribution to the development of multicultural education theory and religious moderation at the higher education level. This research provides empirical evidence on the importance of practical activities in supporting theoretical understanding and strengthening inclusive attitudes among students. However, the limitations of this research lie in its focus on only one university, so the results may not be fully generalized to other institutions. For future research, it is recommended to conduct a broader study involving more universities to get a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and strategies for implementing religious moderation and multicultural education in various contexts. In addition, further research can also deepen the analysis of the influence of social media on students' attitudes towards diversity and tolerance.

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