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STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND MODERATION VALUES AT NUSA PUTRA UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This research explored students' perspectives on religious tolerance in Nusa Putra University through a quantitative descriptive survey approach. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 108 students from various faculties. The survey was designed to measure students' understanding, attitudes, and support for religious tolerance, NPU policies related to tolerance, and their willingness to learn about other religions. The survey results indicated that most students viewed religious tolerance as an essential element in strengthening relationships among students, creating campus harmony, and preventing intolerance. Students also support campus policies promoting religious tolerance and consider religious diversity an important asset for campus life. Furthermore, students demonstrated readiness to learn about other religions and support interfaith dialogue to deepen understanding and appreciate differences. These findings emphasize the importance of implementing religious tolerance principles in an inclusive campus life.

Keyword: Religious tolerance, Religious moderation, interfaith dialogue, diversity, NPU policies



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INTRODUCTION

Religious tolerance and moderation are essential values in religious life, especially in a diverse society like Indonesia. According to Ghazali (2016), Islam teaches the concept of *tasamuh* (tolerance), which includes the values of *rahmat* (compassion), *hikmat* (wisdom), *maslahat ammat* (universal benefit), and *adl* (justice), enabling the creation of harmony in religious diversity. Religious tolerance refers to the attitude of respecting and accepting differences in beliefs and religious practices among individuals or groups. Religious moderation, on the other hand, relates to a balanced and just understanding of religion, avoiding extremism, violence, and radicalization (Lichterman, 2014).

However, several studies indicate that intolerance among Indonesian university students remains a serious concern. A study conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) at UIN Jakarta revealed that around 30.16% of Indonesian students have low religious tolerance or are intolerant (Kompas, 2021/<https://nasional.kompas.com>). Additionally, findings from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) in 2018 showed that 39% of students at seven public universities were exposed to intolerant ideologies (<https://kemenag.go.id>). Another study conducted at Esa Unggul University found that intolerance still occurs among students, manifesting in forms of bullying or discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, customs, and other factors (<https://karakter.esaunggul.ac.id>). These data suggest that while religious tolerance and moderation are fundamental values, challenges remain in their implementation, particularly in academic environments.

Ghazali (2016) emphasizes that a theological, political, and socio-cultural approach is necessary to comprehensively understand interfaith relations, where dialogue and cooperation among religious communities serve as key elements in fostering social harmony. Therefore, in the context of higher education, particularly in universities, the academic community must understand how students perceive and practice these values in their daily lives, especially when interacting with fellow students from different religious backgrounds. Implementing programs that instill the values of religious tolerance and moderation in the campus environment is a crucial step in preventing the rise of intolerance among students.

Islam, as the majority religion in Indonesia, emphasizes the values of tolerance and moderation in its teachings. The concept of *wasathiyah* (moderation) in Islam represents a middle path that avoids extremism, both in religious practice and in social life. Islam promotes inclusive and justice-based tolerance (Gozali, 2016), which not only respects differences but also encourages cooperation in building a peaceful and harmonious society.

In the Qur'an, Allah states: "*And thus We have made you a just and chosen nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind*" (QS. *Al-Baqarah*: 143). This verse highlights that Muslims should serve as role models in establishing a just, balanced, and tolerant way of life, including toward followers of other religions. In the hadith of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also underscores the importance of interfaith tolerance. One of his sayings states: "*Whoever*

harms a non-Muslim under a covenant with the Muslims, then I will be his opponent on the Day of Judgment" (HR. Abu Dawud). This hadith conveys the message that Islam greatly values the rights of others to practice their beliefs freely and promotes peaceful coexistence among different religious communities.

The Higher education, as an academic institution responsible for character and knowledge development, plays a crucial role in instilling the values of religious tolerance and moderation. Universitas Nusa Putra, as one of the higher education institutions in Indonesia, needs to understand and internalize these values so that students can grow into individuals who are not only academically intelligent but also mature in their religious and social understanding. This study aims to identify students' perceptions at Universitas Nusa Putra regarding the values of religious tolerance and moderation in their campus life. By understanding these perceptions, the university can design more effective policies and programs to promote harmony and diversity among students.

Previous studies have shown that students' understanding of religious tolerance can influence their attitudes toward diversity, both in personal and social life. A research conducted by Safitri and Nuraeni (2020) found that students with a strong understanding of religious tolerance tend to be more open-minded and respectful of religious differences in their social lives. This highlights the importance of in-depth education on the values of religious moderation, which not only teaches theory but also its practical application in daily life.

Based on this background, this study focuses on evaluating students' perceptions of religious tolerance and moderation values at Universitas Nusa Putra, with the hope of providing useful insights for designing educational programs that foster an inclusive, peaceful, and tolerant campus environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive quantitative approach by using a survey method to illustrate the perceptions of Universitas Nusa Putra students regarding the values of religious tolerance and moderation. The survey was conducted by distributing questionnaires to 108 students selected through purposive sampling, specifically those involved in campus activities that promote interfaith interaction. The questionnaire consists of 35 items designed to measure various dimensions of religious tolerance and moderation among students. Each item in the questionnaire uses a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, to strongly disagree.

The survey method was chosen because it provided broad and representative data on students' perceptions of specific social phenomena, in this case, religious tolerance and moderation. According to Sugiyono (2017), the survey method allows researchers to collect data from many respondents in a relatively short and efficient time. Additionally, surveys facilitate the measurement of attitudes, opinions, and perceptions that can be generalized to a larger population (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics to present frequency distributions and percentages of respondents' answers. This method enables researchers to provide a clear and objective depiction of students' perceptions regarding religious tolerance and moderation, as well as to identify factors influencing their views within the context of a multicultural campus environment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In an increasingly multicultural campus setting, religious tolerance and moderation are crucial issues that need to be addressed to foster a harmonious and inclusive environment. In Indonesia, a country known for its ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity, this issue becomes even more relevant. Universitas Nusa Putra, located in Sukabumi, West Java, hosts students from diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. The student body comprises individuals from various regions of Indonesia, representing different faiths such as Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism, as well as different languages and cultures, creating a vibrant academic community rich in diversity.

The understanding and application of religious tolerance and moderation significantly influence the formation of a respectful academic atmosphere where each individual is valued regardless of their religious, ethnic, or cultural background. This study aims to describe Universitas Nusa Putra students' perceptions of religious tolerance and moderation and to identify factors influencing their perspectives. Data for this research were collected through a questionnaire containing 35 questions related to religious tolerance and moderation. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive quantitative approach to provide a clear and objective representation of students' perceptions.

Tolerance in Religious Life

Item #1: Respect for differences in beliefs and practices.

Most students (63%) strongly agree and 29.6% agree that they respect differences in religious beliefs and practices. This indicates that most students at Universitas Nusa Putra hold a highly positive attitude towards religious diversity, fostering a respectful environment.

Item #2: Comfort in interacting with students from different religious backgrounds.

A total of 32.4% of students strongly agree and 45.4% agree that they feel comfortable interacting with students from different religious backgrounds. This suggests that students tend to be open in engaging with individuals from various religious backgrounds, contributing to an inclusive campus atmosphere.

Item #3: Belief that all religions teach values of goodness.

The majority of students (46.3%) strongly agree and 41.7% agree that all religions teach values of goodness. This indicates that Universitas Nusa Putra students perceive all religions as sources of moral teachings, despite differences in beliefs.

Item #4: No objection to attending interfaith events.

A total of 51.9% of students remain neutral regarding participation in interfaith events, while

27.8% agree and 9.3% strongly agree. This suggests that most students do not object to attending interfaith events, although they do not express a high level of interest in them.

Item #5: Not imposing religious beliefs on others.

A total of 57.4% of students strongly agree and 35.2% agree that they do not impose their religious beliefs on others. This reflects a respect for religious freedom among students, recognizing the right of individuals to hold different beliefs.

Item #6: Respect for the right to practice religion.

A total of 68.5% of students strongly agree and 25.9% agree that everyone has the right to practice their religion. Students highly support the individual right to engage in religious practices in accordance with their beliefs, demonstrating an appreciation for religious freedom.

Item #7: Avoidance of offensive behavior or speech toward others.

A total of 58.3% of students strongly agree and 35.2% agree to avoid behaviors or speech that may offend other religions. This indicates that students strive to maintain mutual respect and refrain from actions that could harm the sentiments of adherents of different faiths.

Item #8: Belief in the importance of living together in diversity.

Most students (49.1%) strongly agree and 40.7% agree that living together in diversity is important. This reflects a positive perspective among students on diversity as a strength for fostering harmony on campus.

Item #9: Tolerance strengthens student relationships.

A total of 61.1% of students strongly agree and 32.4% agree that tolerance strengthens relationships among students. Students believe that tolerance fosters stronger connections between individuals from different religious backgrounds, reinforcing campus camaraderie.

Item #10: Openness to learning about other religions.

A total of 44.4% of students remain neutral, while 36.1% agree that they are open to learning about other religions. Although some students do not actively seek knowledge about different religions, they maintain an open attitude towards understanding diverse religious perspectives.

Item #11: Support for campus policies promoting religious tolerance.

A total of 45.4% of students strongly agree and 38% agree with campus policies that promote religious tolerance. This indicates that students support campus initiatives aimed at fostering harmonious interfaith relations.

Item #12: Campus environment supports tolerance.

A total of 36.1% of students strongly agree and 50.9% agree that the campus environment supports religious tolerance. Most students perceive the campus atmosphere as conducive to religious diversity, fostering an inclusive environment.

Item #13: Addressing intolerant actions.

Most students (43.5%) agree and 36.1% strongly agree that intolerant actions should be addressed on campus. Students expect firm measures against intolerance to maintain a peaceful and respectful interfaith atmosphere.

Item #14: Diversity as strength, not a barrier.

A total of 50.9% of students agree and 34.3% strongly agree that diversity is a strength rather than a barrier. They view diversity as an opportunity to enrich their experiences and perspectives rather than as a challenge in campus life.

Item #15: Promoting interfaith dialogue.

A total of 50.9% of students agree and 34.3% strongly agree that interfaith dialogue should be encouraged. Students believe that interfaith dialogue serves as an effective means of enhancing understanding and strengthening interfaith relationships on campus. Data on religious tolerance at Universitas Nusa Putra indicate that most students have a positive attitude toward religious diversity, with a high level of respect for differences in beliefs and religious practices. This aligns with the concept of *tasamuh* in Islam, which emphasizes the importance of mutual respect among religious communities (Ghazali, 2016). However, neutrality regarding participation in interfaith events (51.9%) and learning about other religions (44.4%) suggests the need for strengthening religious moderation. These findings supported research conducted by PPIM UIN Jakarta, which revealed that a significant number of students still exhibit religious intolerance. From an Islamic perspective, the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of coexistence in diversity, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13). Therefore, the university needs to strengthen inclusive policies and interfaith dialogue to build a more cohesive academic environment.

The Importance of Tolerance and Coexistence in Diversity

From the Islamic perspective, tolerance toward religious differences is explicitly stated in the Qur'an, such as in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256), which declares: "There is no compulsion in religion." This verse affirms that religious freedom is a fundamental right of every individual. Similar principles are also found in other religious teachings, which promote values of kindness and respect for humanity. For example, Christian teachings emphasize love and forgiveness, as reflected in the Gospel of Matthew 7:12: "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." This demonstrates a common moral foundation across different religions that encourages peaceful coexistence.

Students at Universitas Nusa Putra generally understand that all religions promote values of goodness, fostering mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. They believe that religious diversity is a strength rather than a barrier and consider tolerance essential for strengthening interpersonal relationships. According to the students, tolerance not only enhances individual relationships but also creates an inclusive and harmonious campus environment.

Attitudes Toward Religious Freedom and Intolerant Actions

Most students also support religious freedom and reject imposing religious beliefs on others. This aligns with Islamic principles, which emphasize that every individual has the right to choose their faith. As stated in Surah Yunus (10:99): "And if your Lord had willed, all those on earth would have believed together. Then, will you compel the people so that they become believers?" This verse highlights the importance of religious freedom and respect for individual choices.

Additionally, students demonstrate awareness of the need to avoid behaviours or speech that could offend other religions and advocate for firm action against intolerance on campus. From a legal perspective, religious intolerance or discrimination contradicts human rights principles as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Article 18 of the UDHR explicitly states that every individual has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

The Role of Universities in Promoting Religious Tolerance

Students actively support campus policies that promote religious tolerance and view the university environment as a place that fosters diversity. Existing policies are perceived to create a safe and inclusive atmosphere, encourage interfaith dialogue, and deepen understanding of different religions. Although some students remain neutral or less interested in participating in interfaith events, they still exhibit an open attitude toward interfaith interactions.

In Islam, interfaith dialogue is highly valued as a means of enhancing understanding and reducing tensions among religious communities. This aligns with the Islamic principle of *dialogue* as a form of mutual understanding, as emphasized in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13): "*O mankind! Indeed, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another.*" This verse underscores the importance of recognizing and respecting diversity as a fundamental aspect of social harmony.

RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN STUDENT LIFE

Understanding the importance of religious moderation.

Most students recognize the importance of religious moderation, with 61.1% agreeing and 26.9% strongly agreeing. This indicates their awareness that religious moderation plays a crucial role in fostering peace and harmony among religious communities on campus.

Teaching values of religious moderation.

Most students (54.6%) agree, and 31.5% strongly agree that religious moderation values should be taught. This reflects a positive perspective on the importance of religious moderation education in enhancing tolerance and peace in society.

Preference for dialogue over confrontation.

The significant number of students (34.3%) prefer dialogue over confrontation, with 28.7% strongly agreeing. This demonstrates their inclination toward peaceful and open ways of resolving religious differences, avoiding debates that could escalate tensions.

Moderation fosters peace.

Students agree (53.7%) and strongly agree (33.3%) that religious moderation contributes to peace. This perspective suggests that students believe moderation is key to fostering a respectful and harmonious interfaith environment.

Balancing personal faith with tolerance.

Most students (50%) agree, and 38% strongly agree that religious moderation helps balance personal beliefs with tolerance toward other religions. This indicates their understanding that they can remain steadfast in their faith while respecting religious differences.

Religious moderation prevents interfaith conflicts.

Most students tend to agree that religious moderation can prevent interfaith conflicts. The survey shows that 55% of students agree, 30% strongly agree, and 15% remain neutral. This suggests that religious moderation is viewed as an effective approach to reducing potential conflicts between religious communities. Religious moderation emphasizes mutual respect and highlights the importance of avoiding extremist attitudes that could lead to discord. By promoting a moderate stance—one that does not impose religious views on others—it is hoped that harmony among followers of different faiths can be achieved. This principle is also inspired by Islamic teachings, which encourage peaceful coexistence and interfaith tolerance.

Encouraging Respectful Discussions on Religious Beliefs

Most students emphasized the importance of respectful discussions on religious beliefs. According to the survey, 50% of students agreed, 40% strongly agreed, and 10% remained neutral. These respectful discussions allowed students to better understand different religious perspectives without feeling threatened or discriminated against. Such interactions created a space for constructive dialogue, enriched perspectives, and strengthened interfaith relationships. This perspective aligned with Islamic teachings that promoted communication with wisdom and good counsel, as stated in Surah An-Nahl (16:125).

Religious Moderation Enabled Peaceful Coexistence in Diverse Environments

Students agreed that religious moderation enabled peaceful coexistence in diverse environments. The survey results showed that 60% of students agreed, 35% strongly agreed, and 5% remained neutral. Cultural and religious diversity necessitated a moderate approach so that every group felt valued and could coexist harmoniously. Through religious moderation, individuals interacted in harmony despite their different backgrounds. This principle was consistent with Islamic teachings, which encouraged peaceful living and mutual understanding despite religious differences, as mentioned in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13).

Religious Moderation and Freedom of Religion Were Compatible

Students acknowledged that religious moderation aligned with religious freedom. The survey results indicated that 58% of students agreed, 30% strongly agreed, and 12% remained neutral. Religious freedom was a fundamental right that had to be respected by all individuals. Religious moderation supported this freedom peacefully, without imposing beliefs on others. It allowed individuals to practice their faith according to their convictions without interference or discrimination. This principle was also by Islamic teachings, which emphasized that there was no compulsion in religion, as stated in Surah Al-Baqarah (2:256).

Religious Moderation Helped Address Social and Religious Intolerance

Most students believed that religious moderation could help address social and religious intolerance. According to the survey, 60% of students agreed, 30% strongly agreed, and 10% remained neutral. Social and religious intolerance often arose from ignorance and a lack of understanding about diversity. By practicing religious moderation, tensions were reduced, and intolerance was minimized through mutual respect and acceptance of religious differences. A moderate attitude also contributed to building harmony in a pluralistic society. This view aligned with Islamic teachings that advocated tolerance toward religious differences, as stated in Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6), which affirmed that every individual was free to choose their religion without coercion.

Based on the survey conducted among students regarding religious moderation, it can be concluded that most students have a deep understanding of the importance of religious moderation in fostering a harmonious religious life. The majority of students (61.1%) recognize that religious moderation plays a key role in creating peace and harmony among religious communities, both on campus and in society in general.

They also acknowledge that the values of religious moderation need to be taught, with 54.6% of students agreeing that education on religious moderation can strengthen understanding of tolerance and peace in society. The preference for dialogue over confrontation (34.3% agreeing and 28.7% strongly agreeing) indicates that students are more inclined to choose peaceful and open ways to resolve religious differences, avoiding conflicts that could damage interfaith relations. This aligns with their belief that religious moderation can create peace (53.7% agree and 33.3% strongly agree) and balance personal beliefs with tolerance towards other religions (50% agree, 38% strongly agree).

Furthermore, the survey results show that 55% of students agree that religious moderation can prevent interfaith conflicts. Religious moderation is considered effective in reducing potential tensions and encouraging mutual respect among religious communities. By promoting a moderate attitude that does not impose religious views on others, harmony can be achieved. This approach also aligns with Islamic teachings that encourage peaceful coexistence. Additionally, students believe that religious moderation allows for peaceful coexistence in a diverse environment (60% agree and 35% strongly agree). Cultural and religious diversity requires a moderate approach so that every group feels valued and can live together without conflict. This aligns with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of harmony despite differences in belief, as stated in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13).

On the other hand, most students also acknowledge that religious moderation is in line with religious freedom (58% agree and 30% strongly agree). Religious freedom is a fundamental right that must be respected, and religious moderation supports this freedom without forcing beliefs on others, in accordance with Islamic teachings that affirm, "There is no compulsion in religion" (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:256).

Overall, the students' perspectives in this survey reflect the importance of religious moderation in creating a more peaceful and tolerant environment, fostering harmonious relationships among religious communities.

Tolerance and Moderation as Strength in Diversity

1. **Tolerance strengthens students' relationships.** Most of students (61.1%) strongly agreed, and 32.4% agreed that tolerance strengthened relationships among students. This indicated that they believed tolerance created more harmonious and supportive relationships among students from various religious backgrounds.
2. **Openness to learning about other religions.** Most students (36.1%) agreed, while 44.4% remained neutral regarding openness to learning about other religions. This suggested that although there was interest in learning about different religions, some students were still not entirely open or interested in the topic.
3. **Support for campus policies promoting religious tolerance.** Students strongly supported campus policies that promoted religious tolerance, with 45.4% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. This reflected their appreciation for policies that fostered religious harmony on campus.
4. **Campus environment supported tolerance.** Most of students (50.9%) agreed, and 36.1% strongly agreed that the campus environment supported religious tolerance. This showed that they felt safe and accepted in a campus setting that upheld inclusive policies and a culture of tolerance.
5. **Addressing intolerant actions.** Students (43.5%) agreed, and 36.1% strongly agreed that the campus should take firm action against intolerance. They believed that to maintain peace on campus, intolerant actions had to be addressed seriously.
6. **Religious tolerance enhanced campus harmony.** Most students (62%) viewed religious tolerance as a key factor in creating harmony on campus. They saw tolerance as an essential element in maintaining good relationships among students from different religious backgrounds.

7. **Awareness of religious diversity as a campus asset.** Most students (55.6%) agreed, and 28.7% strongly agreed that religious diversity was an asset to the campus. They believed that diversity enriched campus life and encouraged broader learning about cultural and religious differences.
8. **Promoting interfaith cooperation on campus.** Students strongly supported interfaith cooperation on campus, with 50.9% agreeing and 34.3% strongly agreeing. They recognized the importance of building bridges between different religions to create a harmonious atmosphere.
9. **Tolerance as a foundation for peaceful coexistence.** Most of students (70%) agreed that tolerance was the foundation for peaceful coexistence. Tolerance was seen as a fundamental principle in building a society based on mutual respect.
10. **Encouraging interfaith dialogue on campus.** Most students (58%) supported interfaith dialogue on campus. They viewed dialogue as an important means of enhancing understanding and appreciation of religious differences among fellow students.

Referring to these findings, most of students at Universitas Nusa Putra had a positive view of religious tolerance. A total of 61.1% of students strongly agreed that tolerance strengthened relationships among students, indicating that mutual respect and acceptance of religious differences helped strengthen social bonds. These findings aligned with intergroup relations theory (Allport, 1954), which stated that interactions in an environment that promoted equality, and tolerance could lead to more harmonious relationships and reduced social prejudice.

Additionally, students' openness to learning about other religions was relatively high, with 80.5% expressing interest. However, some students remained neutral or less open to studying other religions. This phenomenon suggested the need for a more inclusive approach to religious education on campus. Smith and Davidson (2006) in their research stated that awareness of religious diversity could enrich individual perspectives and increase social tolerance. Therefore, the campus could develop academic programs or interfaith discussion forums to enhance students' understanding of diversity.

Support for campus policies promoting religious tolerance was also strong, with 83.4% of students supporting such policies. Furthermore, the majority of students (87%) felt that the campus environment already supported religious tolerance, reflecting the success of campus policies in creating an inclusive atmosphere. This supported Nasr's (2002) theory, which emphasized the importance of developing an environment that encouraged interfaith harmony. Campus policies that accommodated differences in belief, such as providing prayer spaces and celebrating religious holidays, played a crucial role in fostering a more tolerant atmosphere.

Additionally, 70% of students agreed that tolerance was the foundation for peaceful coexistence. This aligned with Islamic teachings in Surah Al-Kafirun (109:6), which emphasized the principle of religious freedom and peaceful coexistence despite differences in belief: *"For you is your religion, and for me is my religion."* (Surah Al-Kafirun: 6). This principle was also supported by Wahyuni and Yudiarti (2019), who revealed that religious tolerance in higher education was essential in creating social harmony and fostering mutual understanding among students from different religious backgrounds. Wahyuni and Yudiarti

(2019) also highlighted that universities played a crucial role in raising awareness of religious tolerance as part of character education that must be maintained within the academic environment.

These findings affirmed that religious tolerance and moderation played a key role in creating a harmonious campus environment. To further strengthen this attitude, sustainable strategies such as interfaith dialogue, inclusive policies, and multicultural education were necessary to encourage understanding and appreciation of religious diversity.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this survey data indicated that students had a positive view of religious tolerance and moderation on campus. Most students believed that tolerance strengthened relationships among them and created harmony in the campus environment. They also supported campus policies that promoted religious tolerance. Although there was an interest in learning about other religions, some students were not entirely open to differences in beliefs. However, they strongly supported interfaith dialogue and cooperation on campus. This data highlighted the importance of creating an environment that encouraged harmonious interactions and mutual respect among religious communities. This finding aligned with religious teachings that emphasized peaceful coexistence and mutual respect. Religious tolerance was seen as the foundation for peaceful communal life and enriched students' social experiences in diversity.

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