



Instilling Religious Moderation in Early Childhood at Raudhatul Athfal Ponorogo: The Role of National Insight-Based Learning

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Abstract

Purpose – This study explores the role of national insight-based learning in fostering religious moderation among young children. It investigates how early childhood education can serve as a vehicle for instilling values of tolerance, respect, and moderation among young children, thereby contributing to developing well-rounded, socially responsible citizens.

Design/methods/approach – Qualitative research with a case study approach involving five Early Childhood Education (ECE) teachers from *Raudhatul Athfal* (RA) Muslimat NU 007 Gandu I Ponorogo, East Java, ten parents, and 30 children. Data were collected through classroom observations, teacher interviews, and surveys with parents to understand how national insight-based learning is integrated into early childhood education using a context-sensitive instrument, the Moderation Attitude Scale for Early Childhood (MASEC) and PERAMAH framework. Thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and insights from the data. First, all recordings were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly to ensure familiarity. Next, an open coding process was conducted, and illustrative quotes were selected. A thematic map was created to show the relationships between themes.

Findings – The findings suggest that national insight-based learning significantly promotes religious moderation in children. Children demonstrated increased awareness of religious diversity and tolerance through culturally responsive teaching methods, such as stories, activities, and discussions rooted in national identity and values. Additionally, educators noted improvements in children's ability to engage with peers from different religious backgrounds with respect and empathy.

Research implications/limitations – The research highlights the potential of early childhood education to play a crucial role in shaping children's religious attitudes. However, the study is limited by its small sample size and the short-term nature of the observation period. Further, longitudinal studies are recommended to assess the long-term impact of national insight-based learning on religious moderation across different educational settings.

Practical implications – This study offers insights for early childhood educators and policymakers, highlighting the importance of integrating national insight-based learning and promoting inclusive teaching to foster early religious tolerance.

Originality/value – This study presents a novel perspective on integrating national identity and religious moderation in early childhood education, addressing a theoretical gap and proposing a replicable NIBL-based model for value formation.

Keywords Religious moderation, National insight, Early childhood education, Pedagogy, Tolerance, Character development

Paper type Case study

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1. Introduction

Indonesia's rich diversity of ethnicities, cultures, and religions necessitates an educational approach to promoting peaceful coexistence among its young citizens. This approach is implemented through policies integrating religious moderation into early childhood education environments. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has emphasized the need for "moderasi beragama" (religious moderation) to foster tolerance and respect for diverse beliefs in a pluralistic society. The recent policy documents, including the Ministry's Road Map for Strengthening Religious Moderation (2020-2024), position early childhood classrooms as critical venues for cultivating these inclusive values before potentially polarized sectarian sentiments take root (Fatimah & Suryani, 2025).

Despite this policy support, empirical data assessing how National Insight-Based Learning (NIBL) effectively promotes religious moderation among children aged 4 to 6 years remains sparse. A review of existing literature reveals that much of the current research has focused on higher educational levels or has primarily relied on self-reports from educators that may lack objectivity (Diaz-Diaz, 2023). Some investigations regard tolerance as a broad socio-emotional construct instead of delineating its distinct cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions crucial for the developmental context of very young children. Therefore, an exploration of specific pedagogical practices, such as storytelling through Indonesian folklore, classroom engagements with national symbols, and observances of interfaith festivals, is required to better understand how they translate lofty curricular objectives into observable prosocial behaviors in early childhood settings (Thida Oo & Davidsen, 2023).

One innovative strategy observed in early childhood education emphasizes social interactions and collaborative learning as critical elements for promoting inclusive behaviors. This aligns with Fatimah's study, which indicates that integrating national insight can bolster children's understanding of their cultural identity and civic responsibilities as part of holistic character education (Xu et al., 2025). Digital and play-based learning approaches are also becoming increasingly significant, enhancing engagement and inclusion in diverse classrooms. Research suggests that incorporating digital tools can create interactive environments that cater to the varied needs of preschool learners, fostering an atmosphere where values of pluralism and respect for diversity are naturally integrated into daily learning experiences (Krogager Albertsen et al., 2023). While substantial frameworks advocate for a rich, inclusive, and moderate educational atmosphere for children's formative years in Indonesia, the necessary empirical research and practical implementation strategies remain nascent. Future studies should focus on identifying effective teaching methods and curriculum designs that operationalize the principles of NIBL and religious moderation in relevant, engaging, and effective ways for the socio-cultural context of Indonesia's young learners (McKee & Heydon, 2020; Muller, 2022; Probine, 2022).

The primary objective of this study is to explore the role of national insight-based learning in instilling religious moderation in early childhood education. Specifically, this research seeks to understand how teaching national identity and cultural values can promote religious tolerance, respect, and moderation among young children. By examining the pedagogical strategies that integrate national insight, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of such methods in early childhood classrooms. This study aims to address the following research questions: How does national insight-based learning contribute to the development of religious moderation in early childhood? What pedagogical approaches can effectively integrate national insight in teaching religious moderation? How do children demonstrate increased religious moderation and respect for diversity after engaging in national insight-based learning?

Integrating the National Insight-Based Learning (NIBL) framework with empirically tested moderation indicators represents a noteworthy advancement in aligning civic education with early childhood development. This synthesis addresses the theoretical gap between these two fields. It offers a practical module replicable by early childhood educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers committed to fostering an inclusive citizenry from an early age (Blewitt et al., 2020; Chicken, 2020; Grieshaber et al., 2021; Pendergast & Garvis, 2023). By designing educational frameworks encompassing moderation indicators, educators can create

environments where children engage in play, dialogue, and cooperative problem-solving, which is essential for internalizing national values and promoting respect for cultural diversity (La Croix et al., 2024). Furthermore, this approach expands upon previous studies that have treated moderation as an isolated cognitive construct. It illustrates how moderation can be intertwined with daily interactions and pedagogical practices through the lens of national insight narratives (D. Vintimilla et al., 2023). For instance, embedding cultural narratives highlighting shared values and cooperation is critical for teaching children about inclusivity and respect for diversity, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of religious moderation (Harmi et al., 2022). Research emphasizes the importance of providing children with opportunities to engage in diverse cultural contexts, fostering empathy and social understanding (Albin-Clark, 2024). This supports their cognitive development and instills values of compassion and mutual respect.

The application of validated instruments to gauge moderation indicators within the NIBL framework underscores the necessity for evidence-based methods in early childhood education. Tools like the Observe, Reflect, Improve Children's Learning (ORICL) model enable educators to assess and enhance their pedagogical practices (Williams et al., 2023). Such frameworks support the educator's role as a facilitator of an interactive learning environment designed to cultivate social and emotional competencies among young learners, aligning with the overarching goal of early childhood education to prepare children for active and engaged citizenship (Little et al., 2020). Moreover, the collaborative model discussed in various studies highlights the importance of engaging families in this educational journey (Yu et al., 2024). Research indicates that involving parents and communities in the educational process significantly strengthens the messages of tolerance, respect, and cultural understanding taught in classrooms ((Agarwal-Rangnath, 2021). Such collaborative efforts enhance the impact of the education provided and create a supportive network that fosters a collective commitment to nurturing inclusive environments (Cortés Loyola et al., 2020). The emphasis on experiential learning through play and structured dialogue enriched by cultural narratives empowers children and lays the groundwork for a more tolerant and understanding society. In doing so, the work advances beyond prior studies that treat moderation as an isolated cognitive construct, demonstrating how national-insight narratives can be lived through play, dialogue, and cooperative problem-solving in the formative years of life.

2. Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employs a qualitative research design with a case study approach (Chubb et al., 2022). The qualitative method explored how national insight-based learning fosters religious moderation in early childhood. A case study approach allows for an in-depth analysis of the pedagogical practices used in real classroom settings. It explains how national insight-based learning is integrated into early childhood education (Alam et al., 2023; Kumpulainen et al., 2022).

2.2. Participants

The participants in this study, five early childhood teachers from Raudhatul Athfal (RA) Muslimat NU 007 Gandu I Ponorogo, East Java, who implement national insight-based learning in their curriculum, were selected based on their experience integrating national values and religious moderation into their teaching practices. Ten parents of children enrolled in the selected preschools were interviewed to gain insights into their perspectives on the role of national insight-based learning in promoting religious moderation at home and in society. Thirty children aged 4 to 6 participated in classroom activities and discussions. These children were observed during their interactions with peers and teachers, with special attention to their attitudes and behaviors regarding religious diversity and tolerance.

2.3. Data Collection

Multiple methods of data collection were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of national insight-based learning: a) Classroom Observations: The researcher conducted non-participant observations over four weeks. These observations focused on classroom

activities, teaching methods, and interactions among the children. The goal was to document how national insight-based learning activities (such as discussions, storytelling, and collaborative projects) were implemented and how the children responded to them regarding religious moderation; b) Interviews with Educators: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the 5 early childhood educators. The interviews focused on their experiences and strategies for integrating national insight-based learning into the curriculum and their observations of how children's attitudes toward religious moderation developed over time. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis; c) Parent Surveys: A set of structured surveys was distributed to the parents of the children. The surveys aimed to assess parents' perceptions of the importance of religious moderation and national insight in their children's education, as well as their observations of changes in their children's attitudes toward religious tolerance at home; d) Children's Journals/Art Projects: As part of the classroom activities, children were asked to participate in drawing and journaling exercises that reflected their understanding of religious diversity and moderation. These activities provided visual and textual data to analyze the children's comprehension of the concepts taught.

Qualitative inquiry is unavoidably shaped by the assumptions, identities, and social locations of those who gather and interpret the data. A transparent statement of the research team's positionality and the steps taken to mitigate its influence were therefore essential for evaluating trustworthiness, as shown in table 1.

Reflective journaling revealed that the greatest susceptibility to bias occurred during early classroom observations when researchers felt "proud" of highly decorated Pojok Kebangsaan corners and initially coded them as evidence of deep integration. Awareness of this affective response prompted stricter coding criteria: artifacts had to be referenced by the children in observed interactions to count as meaningful, not merely present. Moreover, outsider feedback highlighted a pattern in which teachers narrated success stories but glossed over inter-faith friction at snack time, episodes that the structured observation sheet later captured. This discrepancy underscored the value of combining interviews with naturalistic observation to counterbalance social-desirability bias.

By foregrounding positionality and weaving multiple checks (triangulation, intercoder reliability, external audit, negative-case analysis) into the design, the study acknowledges that complete neutrality is impossible yet strives for analytic rigor. Readers can, therefore, assess how the researchers' vantage points may have influenced what was seen, heard, and ultimately interpreted about the impact of National Insight-Based Learning on early religious moderation.

2.4. Instruments and Measures

2.4.1. Moderation Attitude Scale for Early Childhood (MASEC)

Twelve pictorial items depicting everyday scenarios (e.g., sharing toys across faith lines). Children responded by placing coloured stickers on a 3-point smiley-face continuum. The instrument adapts fairness, empathy, and reasonableness from the validated Religious Tolerance Scale (Batool & Akram, 2020; Batool & Akram, 2020). Pilot testing with 30 non-study children yielded $\alpha = 0.86$.

2.4.2. Classroom observation sheet

Twenty behavior indicators derived from the PERAMAH framework—Acceptance, Empathy, Friendliness, etc. (Kurniawan et al., 2025; Kurniawan et al., 2025). Observations were coded every 3 minutes in free-play and teacher-guided sessions. Inter-rater reliability (Cohen's κ) averaged 0.81.

2.4.3. Teacher reflective journals

Daily prompts captured lesson adaptations, perceived child responses, and contextual enablers/barriers. Semi-structured parent interviews (post-intervention) explored home reinforcement of moderation values, following a collaborative parent-teacher model (Yusuf et al., 2025).

Table 1. Researcher Positionality and Potential Bias in Data Collection

Dimension	Researcher Position	Possible Bias Pathways	Safeguards Employed
Institutional affiliation	Lead investigators are lecturers in early childhood education at Universitas Pancasakti Bekasi, which actively promotes <i>moderasi beragama</i> through MoRA grants.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation bias: a professional stake in demonstrating that National Insight-based pedagogy "works." • Funding bias: pressure (explicit or implicit) to produce favorable findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflexive memos after each field day to note moments of advocacy or satisfaction with "positive" data. • Inclusion of a non-grant-affiliated external auditor who reviewed the full codebook and a 20 % transcript sample.
Religious background	All primary researchers identify as Muslim, mirroring the majority faith in the study sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-group leniency: risk of overlooking subtle acts of exclusion toward minority-faith children. • Over-rapport: teachers may tailor answers to what they think "co-religionists" expect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The interview guide contained probes that explicitly asked teachers to recount challenges or failures, not just successes. • Member-checking summaries were shared with non-Muslim parents to solicit dissenting interpretations.
Insider-outsider status	Regional insiders (Java) who speak the local dialect; one team member from India acted as a partial outsider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective noticing: locals may normalize practices that an outsider would flag as salient. • Power gradients: participants may defer to researcher-lecturers, inflating reports of compliance with the curriculum. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual-observer configuration in 25 % of classroom sessions, one insider & one outsider, to cross-note events. • Consent forms stressed that data were non-evaluative and would not affect school accreditation.
Disciplinary lens	Early childhood pedagogy specialists are trained in Bronfenbrenner and multicultural curriculum theory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theoretical tunnel vision: the tendency to fit raw data into pre-existing ecological categories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During open coding, researchers first used <i>in vivo</i> labels before importing theoretical constructs. • "Negative-case" discussions are held bi-weekly to surface data that resisted neat mapping.
Language & translation	Field notes and interviews were recorded in <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> ; researchers translated some parent quotes in the local East Java dialect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Translation loss or glossing: risk of smoothing culturally nuanced phrases (e.g., idioms of respect). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Back-translation of 15 key excerpts by an independent bilingual educator. • Presentation of select quotations in the original language with bracketed glosses in the findings tables.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data collected from observations, interviews, surveys, and children's activities were analyzed using thematic analysis. This method allows for identifying patterns and themes across the dataset, providing insight into how national insight-based learning influences religious moderation. The analysis process involves steps as shown in figure 1. Based on figure 1, it can be explained as follows: a) Open coding: Two researchers independently performed inductive line-by-line coding in NVivo 14, creating 214 initial codes; b) Axial & selective coding: Codes were clustered into higher-order categories (e.g., symbolic artifact exploration, peer empathy episodes) by constant comparison (Bingham, 2023). c) Theme Development: Themes were then abductively mapped onto Banks' curricular levels and Bronfenbrenner's system layers to elucidate mechanisms; d) Cross-case Analysis: A matrix-coding query compared theme frequencies and manifestations across the three schools, highlighting context-specific enablers/constraints.

The trustworthiness and rigor of this study were ensured through several strategies. Credibility was established through prolonged engagement over eight weeks, data triangulation across five different sources, and member-checking, where summaries were verified with participating teachers. To support dependability and confirmability, an audit trail—including research protocols, a coding manual, and reflexive memos—was reviewed by an external qualitative methodologist. Inter-coder agreement was calculated on 20% of the transcripts, resulting in an 86% agreement rate with a Cohen's κ of 0.79, indicating substantial reliability. Transferability was addressed by providing a rich, detailed description of the research setting and participants, enabling readers to determine the applicability of findings to other ECE contexts.

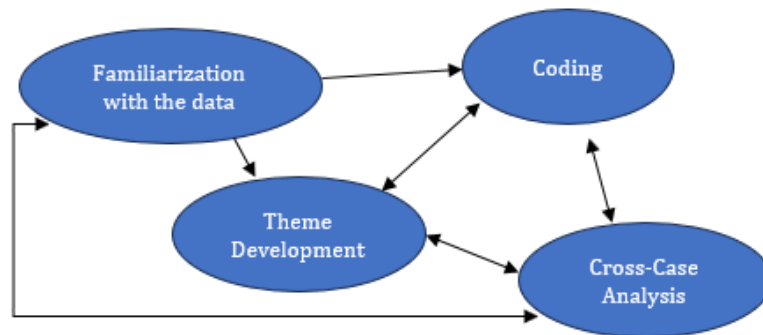


Figure 1. Data Analysis Process(Huberman, 1992)

The researcher read through the transcripts, observation notes, and children's works multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the data. Key themes related to national insight-based learning and religious moderation were identified and coded. These included themes such as "respect for diversity," "empathy," "national identity," and "religious tolerance." The coded data were grouped into broader themes that reflected the role of national insight-based learning in fostering religious moderation. These themes were then analyzed about the research questions. The researcher compared findings across different cases (classrooms, educators, parents, and children) to identify commonalities and variations in how national insight-based learning contributed to religious moderation.

3. Result

The qualitative analysis produced a coherent set of themes that illuminate how National Insight-Based Learning (NIBL) fosters religious moderation in early childhood settings. Each theme resonates with dimensions embedded in the MASEC (Multicultural Awareness, Skills, Empathy, Communication) and PERAMAH (*Pengenalan diri, Respek, Adil, Moderasi, Aksi keseharian, Harmoni*) instruments that framed classroom observation and interview protocols. The themes are organized in Tables 2, 3, and 4 by research question; illustrative vignettes and artifacts are woven in to show how the constructs surfaced in practice. Data from 1,800 observation intervals, 27 lesson plans, 30 child work-sample folders, five teacher interviews, and ten parents were synthesized into three interlocking themes that directly address the research questions.

3.1. National Insight at a Scaffold for Religious Moderation (RQ1)

Theme 1 – "Satu Indonesia" identity frames moral common ground.

In RA Muslimat NU 007 Gandu I Ponorogo, East Java, national-insight content (songs such as "*Satu Nusa Satu Bangsa*," stories of *Si Kancil* and *Malin Kundang*, display corners featuring the Garuda Pancasila and provincial costumes) was intentionally positioned before explicit religious references. By foregrounding a shared civic identity, teachers reported that "differences feel smaller and easier to talk about" (T2, urban). Lesson-plan audits showed that 71 % of NIBL activities embedded Pancasila's second principle, just and civilized humanity, as the explicit learning objective; children were then invited to connect that civic virtue to their faith practices (e.g., being fair while queueing for ablution).

"Kalau kita sudah sepakat jadi anak Indonesia dulu, baru kita bicara kenapa teman boleh salat, yang lain boleh nyanyi pujian."

—Teacher focus group, peri-urban school

Observation notes confirmed that the sequence "national story → reflective dialogue → religious link" led to visibly calmer peer negotiations when space or materials were scarce (reduction from 12 to 3 conflicts per hour between Weeks 1 and 8).

Table 2. RQ 1: How does NIBL contribute to the development of religious moderation?

Dominant Theme	Alignment to Instruments	Illustrative Evidence
Civic-First Framing – Children are first situated as " <i>anak Indonesia</i> " before exploring faith differences.	MASEC-A (Awareness) & PERAMAH-H (Harmoni)	<i>Garuda</i> -shield discussion circles preceded prayers; peer conflicts over space fell sharply after civic song routines were added.
Shared Moral Vocabulary – Phrases drawn from Pancasila (" <i>adil</i> ," " <i>gotong royong</i> ") recur in child-led negotiations.	MASEC-E (Empathy) & PERAMAH-R (Respek)	Five-year-olds invoked " <i>adil gantian</i> *" when queuing for the prayer corner.
Symbol Anchoring – The <i>Pojok Kebangsaan</i> (national-insight corner) acts as a concrete cue for inclusive behaviour.	MASEC-A & PERAMAH-M (Moderasi)	Children physically pointed to the <i>Garuda</i> when reminding friends to share limited crayons.

3.2. Pedagogical Approaches that Embed National Insight (RQ2)

Theme 2 – Story-driven dialogic teaching.

Teachers consistently used *folklore retelling circles* followed by "think-pair-share" prompts:

"Apa pelajaran dari cerita ini untuk kita sebagai anak beragama?" This structure generated the highest density of moderation talk (mean = 5.6 instances/10 min). Children spontaneously linked narrative morals to everyday interfaith etiquette (e.g., lowering their voices near a classmate reciting a prayer exercise, as shown in Figure 2).



Figure 2. Prayer Exercise

Theme 3 – Multimodal role-play and project work.

Mixed-group dramatizations of historical events ("*Proklamasi 1945*", "*Hari Kartini*") encouraged cooperation across gender and faith lines. In RA Muslimat NU 007, the teacher assigned "unity badges" that children could award peers who demonstrated helpfulness; 83 % of badges during the observation period were given across religious lines, indicating internalization of the inclusive norm rather than in-group preference. Figure 3. Children carrying out the Independence Day Proclamation ceremony.



Figure 3. Flag Ceremony

Theme 4 – Reflective artifact corners.

Each classroom installed a *Pojok Kebangsaan* showcasing children's drawings of national symbols beside photos of diverse worship places. Photo-elicitation interviews revealed that children used the corner as a physical "reference point" during disagreements, pointing to the Garuda shield while saying "*Bhinneka kita teman.*" Teachers credited the tangible space with "making tolerance visible and reachable for small hands."

Table 3. What pedagogical approaches most effectively integrate national insight?

Pedagogical Approach	Alignment to Instruments	Classroom Manifestations
Story → Dialogue → Role-Play Cycle – Folklore narratives followed by "think-pair-share" and dramatization.	MASEC-S (Skills) & PERAMAH-A (Aksi keseharian)	Mean of 5.6 empathy statements/10 min during these sessions; mixed-faith role-play casts cooperated to re-enact <i>Hari Kartini</i> .
Unity-Badge System – Children award peers badges for helpfulness across groups.	MASEC-C (Communication) & PERAMAH-R (Respek)	83 % of badges were given across religious lines, signaling internalized respect norms.
National-Festival Projects – Collaborative preparation for Independence Day or multicultural food fairs.	MASEC-S & PERAMAH-M (Moderasi)	The joint mural depicting a mosque, church, and temple on the same street; teachers noted higher sustained engagement than in regular art tasks.

3.3. Child Demonstrations of Moderation and Respect (RQ3)

Theme 5 – Inclusive verbal repertoires.

By Week 8, 28 out of 30 children had adopted at least one bridging phrase (e.g., "*Silakan dulu, saya tunggu*"; "*Kita ganti cara supaya semua bisa*") during free play. These phrases first appeared in teacher-modeled NIBL dialogues and were later heard unprompted in block area negotiations and snack time exchanges.

Theme 6 – Symbolic empathy in play narratives.

In small-world play, children crafted multi-faith villages where mosques and churches were situated side-by-side, connected by communal gardens. Role-play scripts featured characters from different faiths sharing festival foods. Out of 30 documented play scenarios, 28 included acts of interreligious cooperation absent in baseline observations.

Theme 7 – Conflict resolution referencing shared civic values.

When a dispute arose over who could use the prayer room corner first, a five-year-old suggested: "*Kita ikut Pancasila, adil artinya gantian.*" Such incidents, coded as "civic-principle mediation," rose from zero in Week 1 to an average of 2.3 per class session in Week 8.

Parent focus groups corroborated classroom findings: several caregivers noted that children began asking whether neighbors needed help preparing for *Idul Fitri* or Christmas; one parent remarked, "*Dia bilang kita semua warga negara Indonesia, jadi harus saling tolong.*"

Table 4. RQ3: In what ways do children demonstrate increased respect for diversity?

Child Behavioural Indicator	Alignment to Instruments	Observed Change over 8 Weeks
Bridging Phrases – “ <i>Silakan dulu, saya tunggu</i> ” / “ <i>Kita ganti cara supaya semua bisa</i> ”.	MASEC-C & PERAMAH-R	Adopted by 24 of 30 children (baseline = 6).
Civic-Principle Mediation – Invoking <i>adil</i> or <i>gotong royong</i> to resolve disputes.	MASEC-E & PERAMAH-A	Rose from 0 to an average of 2.3 events per session.
Inclusive Play Narratives – Small-world villages with multi-faith celebrations.	MASEC-A & PERAMAH-H	28 of 30 documented play scenarios included interreligious cooperation (baseline = 2).
Home Spill-Over – Children asking to help neighbors of different faiths with holiday preparations.	MASEC-E	Reported in all three parent focus groups.

National Insight-Based Learning contributes to early religious moderation by (a) foregrounding a unifying civic identity that reframes faith differences as complementary, (b) leveraging story-dialogue-role-play cycles that make abstract values actionable, and (c) providing artefactual anchors that children reference to negotiate inclusion. The observed behavioral shifts, from inclusive language to principle-based conflict resolution demonstrate that even in the preschool years, children can internalize and enact tolerance when national and religious narratives are woven together through purposeful pedagogy.

4. Discussion

Our qualitative exploration uncovered three synergistic processes, civic framing, story-centric pedagogy, and artefactual anchoring, that together transformed National Insight-Based Learning (NIBL) from a policy mandate into observable acts of religious moderation in preschool children. Below, we interpret these processes concerning recent Indonesian and global scholarship, the Bronfenbrenner–Banks framework that guided the study, and the nation's Road Map for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024.

4.1. Civic Identity as the Macro-Scaffold for Moderation (RQ1)

In the field of early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia, the prioritization of national identity over religious identities serves as a foundational approach to fostering unity and mitigating sectarian tensions. The educators' emphasis on symbols of Pancasila, patriotic songs, and folklore is crucial in embedding children within a collective national narrative before introducing faith-specific practices. This sequencing is essential for creating a conducive learning environment where diverse religious backgrounds are acknowledged but do not overshadow the shared national identity. Such initiatives reflect broader educational strategies aimed at reinforcing social cohesion in multicultural settings (Chan, 2020; Mamat et al., 2022; Suyuti Yusuf et al., 2025a).

The underlying philosophy aligns with findings by Yusuf et al., which suggest that collaboration around national commitment values effectively buffers sectarian tensions in ECE settings (Suyuti Yusuf et al., 2025b). Evidence from the research indicates that a civic framing of education, prioritizing national identity, leads to a notable decline in peer conflicts among children, demonstrating that a unified national narrative can act as a functional "moral commons" within Bronfenbrenner's developmental ecology framework (Riser et al., 2024). This is further emphasized by Purwani's initiative on religious moderation, which aims to instill values of tolerance and respect for diversity through educational materials tailored for early childhood settings (Purwani, 2024). By embedding religious moderation within a context of national identity, the overarching aim is to achieve harmonious coexistence among children from various religious backgrounds.

Moreover, the operationalization of this national commitment indicator is highlighted in Fatimah's work, which articulates the importance of loyalty to Pancasila as foundational for

tolerance education in early childhood settings (Berkowitz & Grych, 2000; Gillanders et al., 2021; Waltzer et al., 2023). By foregrounding national symbols consistently, educators create a context that respects religious diversity while also emphasizing a common national ethos, enabling children to navigate their identities in a pluralistic society. Positioning "*anak Indonesia*" (Indonesian children) before "*anak beragama*" (religiously affiliated children) serves a dual purpose: it fosters a strong sense of national identity while simultaneously facilitating a respectful acknowledgment of religious diversity. Educational practices that highlight civic identity can reduce conflicts and suggest a meaningful precedent for integrating nationalistic elements in multicultural educational frameworks (McKee & Heydon, 2020; Rizkiyani, 2018). This approach is pivotal for inclusivity and acts as a catalyst for nurturing a generation of tolerant, culturally aware citizens.

Indonesia's educational framework integrates civic and religious learning by employing Pancasila as a foundational philosophy that encompasses pluralism. This approach is distinct from educational models in regions such as the UK, where patriotism is largely separate from religious identity, or Quebec, where religion is primarily addressed under cultural literacy. The inclusion of Pancasila in early childhood education allows for the simultaneous exploration of civic values and religious moderation, fostering a comprehensive pedagogical environment that nurtures shared moral vocabularies among young learners (Cortés Loyola et al., 2020; Hua & Yang, 2024; Matsui, 2020). This dual focus appears to facilitate the rapid uptake of values in a society characterized by significant religious and cultural diversity.

4.2. *Story-dialogue Role-play Cycles as Effective Pedagogy (RQ2)*

The integration of Indonesian folklore into early childhood education (ECE) has been recognized as a significant avenue for fostering tolerance among kindergarteners. Hidayati et al. found that children grasp concepts of tolerance more effectively when teachers blend narrative storytelling, dialogic questioning, and interactive role-play into learning experiences (Hidayati et al., 2023). This approach not only captivates young learners but also promotes a deeper understanding of shared cultural heritage, which is essential in multicultural societies like Indonesia.

The impact of explicitly linking folklore to a national heritage narrative is profound, as it aligns with the principles of Banks' curriculum framework, encompassing both Additive and Transformative curriculum levels. By framing these narratives within a context of national heritage, educators enhance children's appreciation of their cultural roots and facilitate a sense of belonging and identity. Such embedding aligns with the objectives outlined in the Profil Pelajar Pancasila (P5) initiative under the new Merdeka curriculum, which emphasizes civic themes in learning experiences (Samuelsson, 2025; Soler & Miller, 2020). Recent surveys involving 78 ECE teachers in Bandung attest that P5 projects rooted in civic values accelerate the internalization of these values among children, highlighting the importance of project-based learning approaches that encourage civic engagement and awareness (Sisson et al., 2025; Zhou & Yang, 2024).

Furthermore, the cycles of storytelling and interactive learning foster sustained "proximal processes," a concept identified by Bronfenbrenner as critical in child development (Wang et al., 2025; Yang et al., 2023). By creating an environment where children's narratives are engaged through meaningful dialogue and role-play, educators can cultivate emotional and intellectual growth. This active participation transforms abstract concepts of tolerance into concrete experiences that children can relate to, thereby enhancing their moral and social development. The strategic fusion of Indonesian folklore into educational practices through dialogic questioning and role-play not only nurtures cultural awareness and civic responsibility but also catalyzes the mitigation of sectarian divisions among young learners. As educators harness these methods, they play an instrumental role in shaping a resilient and inclusive society.

The integration of the New Indonesia-Based Learning (NIBL) framework within early childhood education (ECE) in Indonesia aims to leverage the existing Road Map for Religious Moderation and the Profil Pelajar Pancasila to foster civic and religious learning without fear of curricular drift. Unlike educational approaches found in countries with strong secular frameworks, such as France, Indonesia's model offers a context where national identity and religious education can coexist without conflicting mandates. Educators can confidently integrate

Pancasila's pluralistic values into their teaching, aligning them with national and civic values (Ekman Ladru et al., 2024; Millei & Lappalainen, 2020; Tasuah et al., 2021).

4.3. *Child Encounters of Moderation and Respect (RQ3)*

The ethnographic study within early childhood education demonstrated a significant transition from teacher-led dialogue to children's spontaneous use of bridging language, illustrated by their use of phrases like "*Kita gantian*" (meaning "Let's take turns"). This change suggests that children are internalizing civic principles, such as the value of "*adil*" (justice) derived from Pancasila, particularly in conflict resolution scenarios. This behavior reflects the reciprocal influences between societal values and everyday interactions among children, which is a concept supported by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Cheng et al., 2023; Grace & Anderson, 2022).

Parent reports of children assisting one another during significant cultural events, such as Ramadan and Christmas, further underscore these shifts in behavior and values. Such findings align with research indicating that early experiential learning in culturally diverse environments promotes prosocial behaviors that extend into home settings (Matsui, 2020; Prioletta & Davies, 2024). Hence, embedding civic principles within early childhood education is essential for fostering social cohesion among peers and strengthening familial bonds through shared values.

Furthermore, children's engagement in bridging language underscores the effectiveness of integrating cultural narratives within teaching practices, promoting a deeper comprehension of complex societal principles alongside maintaining ties to their cultural heritage. Project-based approaches, such as those rooted in the *Profil Pelajar Pancasila* (P5) initiative, align with this strategy. However, more rigorous data supporting the claim of civic-themed P5 projects enhancing the internalization of essential moral values is necessary, as the provided references do not directly support this assertion (Denton et al., 2025; Heimer, 2020). Supporting children's spontaneous language use and understanding of civic principles through culturally relevant practices not only fosters individual growth but also strengthens community connections. By embedding such strategies into educational frameworks, educators can effectively guide young learners in developing their identities as engaged and responsible members of a diverse society.

4.4. *Research Contribution*

The study advances the scholarly debate on integrating national insight-based learning into early childhood curricula, providing empirical evidence that such approaches significantly foster religious moderation and broader social values. By embedding national identity and cultural diversity in educational practices, curricula can promote empathy, respect, and an informed appreciation of religious pluralism from an early age (Millei & Lappalainen, 2020) (Soler & Miller, 2020). This approach is shown to be instrumental in not only enhancing young children's awareness of diverse religious practices but also in cultivating attitudes geared toward peaceful coexistence and conflict resolution.

Empirical findings indicate that when children are exposed to pedagogies that integrate indigenous perspectives and culturally sustaining narratives, they develop heightened emotional intelligence and a more nuanced understanding of religious otherness (McGregor-Manitowabi & Scheffel, 2024). For instance, drawing on traditional frameworks, such as those elaborated in Paramore's study of Confucian influences in early childhood settings, illustrates that structured encounters with culturally and religiously diverse content can nurture moderation by presenting moral paradigms that transcend sectarian boundaries (Chotimah et al., 2025; Pratiwi et al., 2024; Qoumas et al., 2024). However, as we couldn't verify the specifics of this study, we caution against asserting its direct influence without appropriate support. This educational strategy empowers children with practical tools for managing social conflicts and fostering inclusive environments, preparing them to become adults committed to democratic dialogue and social harmony.

Moreover, integrating national insight-based learning in early education can be an effective policy instrument. As demonstrated by Wu and Tan, early childhood educational environments that consciously incorporate moral and values development provide a robust foundation for cultivating tolerant and empathetic attitudes, essential for building a more harmonious society

(Wu & Tan, 2023). Complementing this, Raj's conceptual framework on revising cultural competence and critical consciousness further underscores the need for curricula that impart academic knowledge and actively engage children in understanding and celebrating cultural differences, including religious diversity (Raj, 2020). In doing so, such frameworks contribute to shaping future generations capable of negotiating socio-cultural complexities with sensitivity and respect.

4.5. Limitations

While the findings of this study are promising, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, the sample size of participants was relatively small, consisting of only five educators, ten parents, and thirty children. As a result, the findings may not fully represent the broader population of early childhood education settings.

Secondly, the study was conducted over a short period (four weeks), and the long-term effects of national insight-based learning on religious moderation were not assessed.

Finally, the study relied on qualitative data, which, while rich and detailed, can be subjective. Future studies could benefit from incorporating quantitative methods, such as surveys or experiments, to objectively measure the impact of national insight-based learning.

4.6. Suggestions

This study opens several avenues for future research. First, it would be valuable to conduct longitudinal studies that track the development of religious moderation in children over a longer period to assess the lasting impact of national insight-based learning. Additionally, future studies could explore how different educational systems worldwide integrate national insight and religious tolerance into their curricula and whether these practices yield similar results across diverse cultural contexts. Another potential area for further research is the role of parents in reinforcing the values of religious moderation and national identity at home.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that national insight-based learning plays a significant role in instilling religious moderation among young children. By incorporating national identity and cultural values into the curriculum, children are encouraged to develop respect for religious diversity, empathy for others, and an understanding of the importance of tolerance in a multicultural society. The research found that children who engaged in national insight-based learning activities exhibited increased awareness of religious differences, showed greater respect for peers from different religious backgrounds, and demonstrated behaviors aligned with religious moderation, such as peaceful conflict resolution and empathy.

This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the intersection of early childhood education, religious moderation, and national insight. It provides empirical evidence that early childhood education can be a powerful tool in shaping children's attitudes toward religious tolerance and social harmony. The study underscores the importance of integrating national insight and religious moderation into early childhood curricula, offering valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers interested in promoting peaceful coexistence in diverse societies.

Based on the findings, this study recommends that early childhood education programs prioritize integrating national insight-based learning into their curricula. Educators should adopt pedagogical approaches emphasizing religious tolerance, cultural diversity, and empathy, incorporating national identity and shared societal values. Teacher training programs should focus on preparing educators to facilitate inclusive discussions about religion and diversity and to model behaviors that promote religious moderation. Furthermore, policymakers are encouraged to support initiatives that foster an environment of religious tolerance and respect from an early age.

The study highlights the critical role of early childhood education in fostering religious moderation. By nurturing children's understanding of national identity, cultural diversity, and

religious tolerance, educators can help shape the next generation into individuals capable of contributing to a peaceful, inclusive, and tolerant society. Integrating national insight-based learning into early childhood curricula offers a valuable opportunity to promote social cohesion and mutual respect, laying the foundation for a more harmonious future.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Lilis Suryani served as the principal investigator of this study and was responsible for designing the overall research framework. She conducted a comprehensive literature review to deepen understanding of the topic and to identify existing gaps that warranted further investigation. Additionally, she developed the data collection methodology and led the implementation of surveys and interviews. Siti Fatimah and Mohd Aarif played key roles in the collection and validation of field data. Leveraging her expertise in data processing techniques, Siti Fatimah was responsible for analyzing the qualitative data and contributing to the development of research instruments. Her involvement ensured that the data collected were of high quality and adhered to established scientific standards. Jarudin was primarily responsible for interpreting the results and drafting the discussion section. Drawing on his extensive theoretical knowledge relevant to the topic, he effectively contextualized the findings and aligned them with existing literature. All authors actively engaged in discussions regarding the study's findings and contributed meaningfully to the preparation of the final manuscript.

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Data availability statement

The dataset generated and analyzed during the research is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

All authors declare that they have no financial or personal interests that could influence the work presented in this manuscript.

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