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## SOCIO-CULTURAL-BASED PAI LEARNING STRATEGIES IN FORMING ATTITUDES OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND MODERATION AT SMPN 1 PRIGEN

**Ahmad Huda<sup>1</sup>**

Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University (itahuda78@gmail.com)

**Wahidmurni**

Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University (nurasnawig@gmail.com)

**Indah Aminatuz Zuhriyah**

Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University (zuhriyah@pgmi.uin-malang.ac.id)

**Ita Jazariyah**

Al Khoziny Islamic Institute (itajazariyah80@gmail.com)

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### ABSTRACTS

This study is grounded in the importance of promoting tolerance and religious moderation values within Indonesia's pluralistic society. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education are expected not only to deliver cognitive understanding but also to shape inclusive and respectful student character. The aim of this study is to examine socio-cultural-based instructional strategies in shaping students' tolerance and religious moderation at SMPN 1 Prigen. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design, involving PAI teachers, school principals, students, and vice principals as informants. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The findings reveal that teachers implemented contextual, participatory, reflective, and culturally grounded strategies. Lessons were connected to students' daily lives, encouraging critical discussions, personal reflections, and collaborative social activities. The learning process was also supported by the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) and the role modeling of moderate behavior by teachers. In conclusion, the socio-cultural-based teaching strategies effectively fostered students' tolerance and religious moderation and are highly relevant to multicultural education settings in Indonesia.

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<sup>1</sup> Correspondence Author

## A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with extraordinary religious, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity (Munir, 2021). This diversity is both a strength and a challenge in maintaining national unity. In this context, education plays a strategic role in shaping the character of a young generation that is tolerant, inclusive, and able to live side by side harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Istianah, Darmawan, Sundawa, & Fitriasari, 2024). One important component of the national education system that directly contributes to this character formation is the subjects of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Building (Lisa Seprina Br. Sembiring et al, 2025).

(PAI) not only aims to instill a cognitive understanding of religion, but must also be able to shape students' spiritual and social attitudes (Nurjadid, Ruslan, & Nasaruddin, 2025). This is in line with the direction of the Independent Curriculum policy, which emphasizes the importance of character-based education, where aspects of spirituality, tolerance, and national values are the main foundation (Dwi & Hasanah, 2024). In practice, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning often remains trapped in the delivery of doctrine and memorization alone, thus being unable to equip students with life skills in diversity. Therefore, a more holistic and contextual learning approach is needed, which not only teaches religious teachings normatively, but also instills the values of religious moderation in an applied manner (Trismayanti, 2025).

Religious moderation is a strategic issue in national development, particularly in responding to the rise of radicalism, intolerance, and religiously motivated hate speech (Elvinaro & Syarif, 2022). In recent years, symptoms of intolerance among students have shown a worrying trend (Elvinaro & Syarif, 2022). Data from various surveys indicate that some young people tend to have a narrow and exclusive understanding of religion and are easily influenced by extreme religious narratives. (Nafsiyah & Wardan, 2024). This phenomenon cannot be allowed to continue, as it will undermine social cohesion and threaten national unity. Therefore, religious education in schools, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI), needs to be developed into a safe, open, and inclusive space to foster moderate religious attitudes.

In this context, teachers play a central role as agents of value transformation (Savira, 2024). Teachers are not only tasked with delivering subject matter but also with being role models in attitudes, thinking, and actions (Wardhani & Wahono, 2017). The learning strategies implemented by teachers will significantly determine the extent to which students are able to internalize moderate religious values and adopt them as a guide for their lives (Mahardika, 2024). Therefore, it is important to examine and develop Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies that can address the challenges of the times, particularly in fostering attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation among students.

This research was conducted at SMPN 1 Prigen, a public school located in Pasuruan Regency, East Java. This school is unique because its students come from diverse religious, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. This diversity is a great potential as well as a challenge in implementing Islamic Religious Education learning. Based on initial observations, Islamic Religious Education teachers at this school have implemented various contextual and participatory learning approaches, as well as involving local cultural values in strengthening students' character. This is an important reason why SMPN 1 Prigen was chosen as the research location, to examine

in more depth the learning strategies used in forming students' attitudes of religious moderation.

In its implementation, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SMPN 1 Prigen does not only take place in the classroom, but is also integrated into co-curricular activities and the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) strengthening project. Teachers integrate Islamic values into the context of students' social lives, both through interfaith dialogue, discussions on diversity, and social activities that involve all students without religious discrimination. This approach reflects the implementation of socio-cultural-based learning, which not only prioritizes knowledge but also fosters awareness of the importance of living together in peace and justice.

The presence of a socio-cultural approach in Islamic Religious Education learning is highly relevant to the social constructivism theory developed by Vygotsky (Tamrin, S. Sirate, & Yusuf, 2011). This theory emphasizes that learning occurs through social and cultural interactions, where students construct new knowledge based on the experiences and values they encounter in their social environment. With this approach, teachers not only act as conveyors of information, but also as facilitators who help students relate the subject matter to the context of their daily lives.

Furthermore, effective Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in fostering religious moderation requires the integration of various learning strategies, such as contextual strategies that connect material to students' realities; participatory strategies that enable students to actively discuss and collaborate; and reflective strategies that provide space for students to evaluate their own attitudes and behaviors (Suryanto, 2024). These strategies will be even more impactful if supported by an inclusive school environment and a visionary principal who fosters a diversity-friendly school culture.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine in depth the learning strategies of Islamic Education and Character Education with a socio-cultural approach in forming attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation in students at SMPN 1 Prigen. The focus of the research is directed at identifying the forms of learning strategies used by teachers, the implementation process in learning activities, and the extent to which these strategies are able to shape students' attitudes to be tolerant, open, and able to appreciate differences.

This research is significant because it provides an empirical contribution to the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning models relevant to the pluralistic social conditions of Indonesian society. Furthermore, the results are expected to serve as a reference for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, school principals, and policymakers in designing more humanistic, inclusive, and contextual learning strategies to strengthen students' character as moderate and globally competitive Pancasila learners.

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in its contribution to affirming the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning as a strategic instrument in building a culture of peace in schools. Amid the challenges of globalization, the unlimited flow of information, and the growing issues of intolerance and social polarization, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) must emerge as a pioneer in shaping a young generation that is not only academically intelligent but also wise in responding to differences.

Well-designed and consistently implemented learning strategies are key to achieving this goal.

## **B. METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type, which aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the learning strategies of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Budi Pekerti in forming attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation in students (Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to explore social realities holistically, especially the phenomenon of learning in the classroom which is closely related to social interactions, values, and culture (Dr. Umar Sidiq, M.Ag Dr. Moh. Miftachul Choiri, 2019). The case study was chosen as the research design because the focus of the research is directed at one case unit, namely SMPN 1 Prigen, with a specific social and cultural context.

The subjects in this study consisted of school principals, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education (Culture) teachers, students, and the vice principal for curriculum. Subjects were selected purposively, based on their knowledge, experience, and direct involvement in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning process and the implementation of the values of religious tolerance and moderation in schools. The number of participants was adjusted to meet the need for in-depth information, not to generalize the population.

The data collection techniques in this study used three main methods, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies (Intifada Zahroh, Amelia Nasution, Dzulfa Tazqia, Adzra Intan Faiha, & Nurhayati, 2025). Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that researchers could explore the informants' views and experiences flexibly while remaining focused on the research theme. (Mustafa & Hermina, 2025). Participatory observation was conducted by directly observing Islamic Religious Education learning activities in the classroom and activities outside the classroom related to strengthening the values of diversity and student character (Siti Romdona et al. 2025). Researchers recorded interactions between teachers and students, the learning atmosphere, and forms of student participation in discussions or joint activities. Documentation was used to supplement data obtained through interviews and observations. The collected documents included Lesson Implementation Plans (RPP), teaching modules, the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) schedule, and photographic documentation of learning activities and social projects.

The primary instrument in this study was the researcher herself, as is characteristic of qualitative research. The researcher played a role in designing the interview instrument, conducting data collection, analyzing the data, and concluding the research results (Kaharuddin, 2020). To increase data validity, the researcher employed triangulation techniques, including source triangulation (comparing data from various informants), technical triangulation (comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation), and time triangulation (conducting observations at different times) (Susanto, Risnita, & Jailani, 2023). This technique ensures data reliability and provides a more objective and credible interpretation of the phenomenon.

The data analysis process was conducted inductively and interactively, following the stages proposed by Miles and Huberman: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by filtering relevant information and focusing on the main research themes. The reduced data was then presented in narrative and matrix form to facilitate researchers in identifying patterns or relationships between categories. Next, researchers drew tentative conclusions that were continuously reviewed through a verification process throughout the research process. This analysis enabled researchers to uncover the meaning behind learning practices, rather than simply describing events in the field (Alfansyur, A., & Mariyani, 2020).

The credibility and *trustworthiness* of the data in this study were also strengthened by conducting member checks with informants, which involved requesting confirmation from research subjects regarding the researcher's interpretation of the data (Afiyanti, 2008). This step is crucial to ensure that the findings truly reflect their experiences and perspectives, not merely the researcher's assumptions. In addition, researchers also maintain research ethics by asking for participants' consent before collecting data, maintaining the confidentiality of identities, and using data only for academic purposes.

With this methodology, the research is expected to provide an in-depth description of how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education (Budi Pekerti) learning strategies are implemented at SMPN 1 Prigen and how these strategies contribute to the development of tolerant and moderate student character. This research design also allows for the exploration of the socio-cultural dynamics underlying the learning process, allowing the research findings to meaningfully contribute to the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning policies and practices relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic context.

## C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

This research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Prigen, a school that has a vision to form students who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are intelligent, skilled, and have environmental culture. This school is a strategic location for research because it has a diverse socio-cultural and religious background. This diversity provides a great opportunity to observe how Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Building learning strategies are applied to shape students' attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation. This research involved several key informants, namely the principal, deputy head of curriculum, Islamic Religious Education and Character Education teachers, and students. The data collection techniques used include direct observation in class, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies.

### **The concept of Islamic Education and Character Education learning through socio-cultural approaches in strengthening religious moderation**

Based on the results of in-depth interviews with the principal, vice principal for curriculum, and Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at State Junior High School (SMPN) 1 Prigen, a number of important findings were obtained regarding PAI

learning strategies through a sociocultural approach. This approach is believed to play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation.

#### **a) Islamic Education Learning Concept Based on Sociocultural Approach**

The findings show that the PAI learning concept applied at SMPN 1 Prigen emphasizes the integration of Islamic teachings with local cultural values and the social life of the surrounding community. This approach is realized through learning activities such as group discussions, case studies, and collaboration with the surrounding environment which enable students to understand religious teachings in the context of real, plural life.

The principal explained that Islamic Religious Education learning through a sociocultural approach emphasizes the integration of Islamic values with local wisdom and the culture of the surrounding community. He said that this concept aims to build a deeper understanding of Islam while still respecting existing culture and traditions, so that students are able to develop attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation.

This statement was reinforced by the vice principal for curriculum, who explained that the concept is implemented by incorporating local cultural elements into the learning materials. He added that the methods used are based on experience and social interaction and encourage students to think critically to understand religious teachings in a broader social context.

#### **b) Background to the Implementation of the Sociocultural Approach**

The application of the sociocultural approach in Islamic Education learning at SMPN 1 Prigen cannot be separated from the multicultural social context of the school. The diversity of students' cultural and religious backgrounds is a strong basis for the need for a learning approach that is able to bridge these differences. The principal revealed that the main background for implementing this approach was the cultural and religious diversity in Indonesia, especially in the school environment. He stated that the school wanted to ensure that students not only understood Islam dogmatically, but also contextually, so that they would be better prepared to live in a heterogeneous society.

The vice principal for curriculum supports this statement. He stated that this sociocultural approach is also driven by the need to instill values of tolerance from an early age, especially given the increasing incidence of intolerance in society. He believes that by understanding Islam in a social and cultural context, students are expected to become more open individuals and appreciate differences.

The Islamic Religious Education teacher also said that students currently live in an increasingly complex and open social environment, so the learning strategies used must be relevant to their daily lives. This aims to ensure that understanding of religious teachings is not only normative, but also applicable.

#### **c) The Role of the Principal and Deputy Principal of Curriculum in Implementing Learning Strategies**

The implementation of a sociocultural approach in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning cannot be separated from the structural support of school management. The principal stated that he is responsible for creating a conducive learning environment that supports this sociocultural approach. He also emphasized that his administration ensures teachers receive adequate training and that school policies are directed at encouraging the integration of local culture into the curriculum.

The vice principal for curriculum also explained that his role is to ensure that the curriculum implemented is in line with the concept of sociocultural learning. He added that he also provided guidance to teachers so that the learning methods used could accommodate the values of religious tolerance and moderation.

Islamic Religious Education teachers, as the direct implementers of the learning process, are responsible for delivering material using appropriate methods. These methods include interactive discussions, case studies, and social experience-based approaches.

#### **d) Implications of Learning Strategies for Attitudes of Religious Tolerance and Moderation**

Based on findings in the field, the sociocultural approach in Islamic Religious Education learning has been proven to provide a positive contribution to the formation of attitudes of tolerance and religious moderation in students. By understanding Islam in its social and cultural dimensions, students become more open in responding to differences and have a balanced religious understanding, not extreme and not closed to universal human values.

This finding confirms that Islamic Religious Education learning that adopts a sociocultural approach is not only relevant to the needs of the times, but is also capable of instilling values that are crucial for national and state life. This approach can be an inspiring model in developing Islamic Education learning strategies in other schools with similar diverse backgrounds.

### **Islamic Religious Education and Character Education Learning Strategy through Sociocultural in State Junior High School 1 Prigen**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education learning at SMPN 1 Prigen has implemented a sociocultural approach in order to form attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation in students. Based on interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, this approach is intended to connect Islamic teachings with the social and cultural life of the surrounding community. Teachers not only convey material theoretically but also instill contextual Islamic values, such as mutual cooperation, mutual respect, and maintaining harmony in diversity. Through this strategy, students are guided to understand religion not only as a spiritual teaching but also as a guide for living in society.

The Islamic Religious Education teacher explained that the concept of Islamic Religious Education learning with a sociocultural approach emphasizes the relationship between Islamic teachings and the social and cultural life of the surrounding community. The teacher also mentioned that the material taught was connected to local wisdom values, such as tolerance between religious communities and mutual respect, so that students could see religion as a guideline in building social relations.

In its implementation, teachers apply learning strategies that involve active student participation. These strategies include group discussion methods, case studies, and direct observation of cultural practices that reflect Islamic values. The Islamic Religious Education teacher said that students were involved in social activities such as community service and visits to interfaith places of worship as an effort to foster an understanding of the importance of tolerance. Teachers also stated that they use

learning media such as videos and inspirational stories of religious figures that reflect the attitude of living side by side in diversity.

This approach is considered effective in forming an attitude of moderation and religious tolerance. Islamic Education teachers said that students involved in sociocultural-based learning showed greater openness to differences. They understand that every individual has a different cultural background and beliefs, which still need to be respected. In addition, the teacher also emphasized that this approach helps students realize that Islam teaches balance, so that they do not easily fall into extreme thought patterns.

However, in its implementation, teachers face several challenges. Islamic Religious Education teachers stated that there are still students who have an exclusive understanding of religion, so they tend to find it difficult to accept diversity. In addition, some parents of students are still less open to this approach because they consider it a deviation from pure Islamic teachings. To address this, teachers strive to provide concrete examples through social activities and build intensive communication with parents so that they understand that education based on tolerance and religious moderation aims to shape students' inclusive and harmonious characters.

The Islamic Education teacher explained that schools play an important role in supporting this strategy. According to him, schools provide teachers with the freedom to develop learning methods that are adapted to local social and cultural conditions. In addition, the school also facilitates extracurricular programs that are relevant to the values of religious moderation, such as interfaith discussion forums and social activities. Collaboration with religious leaders and local communities is also carried out to enrich students' learning experiences in understanding and managing diversity.

The teacher expressed his hope that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning using a sociocultural approach could continue to be developed to foster moderate and tolerant student character. He hoped that students would grow into individuals who were not only devout in their religious practices but also possessed a strong social conscience and were able to live harmoniously in a diverse society. Thus, students are expected to become the next generation who carry the values of peace and unity into their social lives.

Interviews with students revealed that the teaching methods employed by teachers were not solely theory-oriented but also contextual. Students noted that the learning process involved discussion, storytelling, and the use of visual media such as videos and images. They stated that this approach made the material more engaging and easier to understand, especially when connected to real-life situations.

Furthermore, students also said that Islamic Education material was often linked to local culture that was familiar to them. For example, when the teacher explains the value of tolerance, the material is linked to the practice of mutual cooperation and community service that they usually do in their residential environment. This shows that linking teaching materials with local culture can strengthen students' understanding of Islamic teachings as a religion that is integrated with social life.

One of the advantages of this approach, as students noted, is its ability to bridge abstract religious concepts. Students felt that if the material was presented only theoretically, it would be difficult to understand. However, when it was connected to

personal experiences or real-life situations they were familiar with, understanding became faster and deeper. This proves that the integration of social and cultural experiences in learning can increase the effectiveness and internalization of religious values.

The impact of this learning strategy is also seen in students' attitudes towards diversity. They reported becoming more open and appreciative of differences in beliefs and cultures. Students expressed their understanding that all religions teach goodness, and therefore, it's inappropriate to denigrate others' religions or cultures. This attitude demonstrates the initial success of the moderate and tolerant character-building process, as aimed at the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Building (Budi Pekerti) curriculum.

The application of the sociocultural approach is also not limited to the classroom. Students revealed that they had participated in activities outside the classroom, such as interfaith discussions, visits to different places of worship, and sharing food with the community. Such activities provide hands-on experiences that strengthen the understanding and practice of tolerance values in real life.

As a form of reflection, students also provide input so that Islamic Religious Education and Character Education learning can be further improved. They expressed the hope that there would be more activities involving direct interaction between students from different religious and cultural backgrounds. This shows that students not only understand the importance of tolerance theoretically, but also want to implement these values in real life in school activities. This input is in line with the principles of student-oriented education and emphasizes direct experience-based learning.

### **The Impact of Islamic Religious Education and Character Education Learning through Sociocultural Methods on Religious Moderation at Prigen 1 State Junior High School**

The learning strategy for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education at State Junior High School 1 Prigen has undergone a transformation through a sociocultural approach. Based on the results of interviews with the Principal, it was explained that this approach was carried out by linking learning materials with the culture and daily lives of students. The principal stated that the teachers at the school encourage students to understand Islamic values through contextual activities, such as mutual cooperation (gotong royong), community service, and discussions about the value of tolerance found in their environment. This demonstrates that the learning process takes place not only in the classroom but also integrates with students' social experiences.

Islamic Education teachers also emphasize the importance of integrating local culture in learning. He explained that teaching materials such as tolerance, compassion, and mutual cooperation are linked to traditions within the local community. He provided concrete examples of how these values are linked to the tradition of mutual assistance during celebrations or community service activities. This reflects the teacher's efforts to make teaching materials relevant to the students' local context, so that moral messages and religious values are more easily absorbed.

In terms of student responses, the Deputy Principal for Curriculum explained that this sociocultural-based learning strategy received a positive response from

students. He observed that students appeared more enthusiastic and active in learning because they felt the material was more relevant to their lives. Thus, the sociocultural approach has been shown to increase student motivation and emotional and intellectual engagement, which are essential foundations for developing moderate religious attitudes.

The direct impact of this approach on students' religious moderation also appears to be quite significant. Islamic Religious Education teachers said that students became more open in responding to religious and cultural differences, and were accustomed to discussing and interacting inclusively. This shows that learning not only produces cognitive understanding, but also forms the character of students who are tolerant, non-exclusive, and respect differences in beliefs in social life.

The principal also added that the school facilitates various activities that can strengthen the value of religious moderation through direct experience. He explained that the school organizes interfaith activities such as student dialogues, visits to places of worship, and joint social activities that address religious differences. These practices broaden students' horizons and instill an understanding that diversity is a reality that must be embraced with openness and mutual respect.

However, this process is not without challenges. Islamic Religious Education teachers revealed that one of the challenges is ensuring that all teachers understand sociocultural concepts and can creatively relate them to teaching materials. Furthermore, students' diverse backgrounds require an inclusive approach to prevent misunderstandings or exclusivity in religious learning.

In closing, the Principal expressed his hope for the sustainability of this strategy. He hopes this strategy will continue to be developed and become a learning model that can shape a young generation with noble character, tolerance, and the ability to live harmoniously amidst diversity. This hope demonstrates the school's strong commitment to developing students who are not only intellectually superior but also mature in the values of diversity and spirituality.

## **Discussion**

The research results presented in the previous section indicate that the learning strategies used by Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education (Culture) teachers at SMPN 1 Prigen are not only focused on delivering cognitive material, but more than that, are directed at shaping students' character through a socio-cultural approach. These strategies include contextual, participatory, and reflective learning, which are implemented in an integrated manner in both intracurricular and extracurricular activities (Utami, Rahmawati, & Noktaria, 2025). This kind of approach makes a significant contribution to building attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation in students, competencies that are highly relevant to the challenges of multicultural life in Indonesia today.

The contextual learning implemented by teachers demonstrates a strong link between the teaching material and students' real-life experiences. This strategy aligns closely with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), which state that students learn more effectively when they can relate new knowledge to their life contexts (Mu'min, Rohayani, & Ginanjar, 2025). Teachers not only explain Islamic teachings normatively but also relate them to the social realities of the students' environments. For example, the value of tolerance is linked to students' experiences

interacting with friends of different religions or cultures. This provides space for students to reflect on religious values in real social contexts, and not just as theoretical concepts. This emphasis on concrete experiences makes learning more lively and meaningful, and forms a complete understanding of the values of religious moderation.

The use of participatory learning strategies also plays a crucial role in fostering an open and collaborative attitude. In participatory learning, students are no longer objects of learning, but rather active subjects who play a role in the learning process (Muhammad Jitu, Ahmad Agil, & Gusmaneli Gusmaneli, 2025). Student involvement in group discussions, simulations, and presentations of social analysis results trains them in critical thinking and acceptance of diverse perspectives. This is crucial in developing a moderate attitude, as moderation requires the ability to listen, understand, and appreciate differing perspectives. A participatory approach also fosters students' sense of social responsibility, as they recognize that the values they learn are not only for their own benefit but also impact their shared life (Asran, Amaluddin, Bulan, S, & Kadang, 2025).

Reflective strategies are an important complement to the learning approach. In this strategy, students are encouraged to reflect on the values they have learned and relate them to their personal experiences (Pasaribu, 2025). Assignments such as journal writing or reflections on experiences provide opportunities for students to recognize the meaningfulness of the religious teachings they are studying. In the context of character building, reflection serves as a bridge between knowledge and action (Darmawan & Mbura, 2024) . When students realize that the value of tolerance is not just a teaching, but a guideline for life, they will be more motivated to apply it in their daily lives. This reflection also strengthens the internalization of Islamic values, which emphasize compassion and social justice as key principles in religious life.

The socio-cultural approach applied by teachers also shows high effectiveness in building religious moderation. This approach recognizes that education cannot be separated from the social and cultural context in which students live. Islamic Religious Education teachers utilize local culture as a learning medium, such as using the tradition of mutual cooperation and local wisdom to explain Islamic values (Raikhan, Ningtias, & Karomah, 2024) . This way, students do not feel alienated or alienated from their religious teachings, as these values are inherent in their culture. This strategy aligns with Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs within social interactions and is shaped by culture. By utilizing local culture, learning becomes more authentic and contextual.

The implementation of the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) also serves as a concrete example of how the values of moderation are instilled through practical and collaborative activities (Habibi, 2025). These activities engage students in concrete actions such as diversity campaigns, community service, and environmental conservation. Through these activities, the values of tolerance and cooperation are not only taught but also directly practiced. Within the framework of character education, such activities provide a profound learning experience with long-term impact. The values instilled are no longer just slogans, but rather part of students' identity and behavior.

In addition, the success of this strategy is also supported by the role of teachers as role models. Teachers' exemplary behavior in being moderate, open, and inclusive

serves as a concrete example for students. In the context of character education, role modeling is the most effective method because students learn through observing the behavior of adults around them (Adhiningsih & Rokhmaniyah, 2024) . Teachers who are able to serve as role models will have a much stronger influence than simply delivering material verbally. In this study, Islamic Religious Education teachers successfully demonstrated a tolerant and fair attitude in interacting with students and creating a classroom atmosphere that is welcoming of differences. This strengthens the formation of students' character in a natural and sustainable manner.

The support of the principal and an inclusive school environment are also important factors that strengthen the success of this strategy. School policies that allow for diversity and uphold shared values create an educational climate conducive to student character development. A school environment that emphasizes cooperation, empathy, and mutual assistance provides positive social experiences for students (Kusuma, Wachidi, & Mustofa, 2025). In situations like this, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning does not occur in isolation but becomes an integral part of the school's overall character-building system.

The results of this study also show that the approach implemented by Islamic Education teachers at SMPN 1 Prigen has been able to produce real changes in attitudes in students. The students demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of living tolerantly, respecting differences, and avoiding discriminatory behavior. They are able to translate religious teachings into real actions such as respecting friends of different beliefs, helping regardless of background, and being active in social activities. This indicates that Islamic Education learning has succeeded in reaching the affective and psychomotor domains, not just cognitive.

Overall, this discussion indicates that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education (Budi Pekerti) learning strategies that are contextual, participatory, reflective, and socio-culturally based are highly relevant in 21st-century education. These strategies not only address the challenges of multicultural education but also foster the moderate character needed in Indonesia's pluralistic society. By strengthening this approach in national education policy, Islamic Religious Education learning can become a strategic vehicle in building social harmony and national resilience based on moderate and inclusive religious values.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study shows that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Character Education learning strategies implemented at SMPN 1 Prigen are able to effectively shape students' attitudes of religious tolerance and moderation. Islamic Religious Education teachers use contextual, participatory, reflective, and socio-cultural learning approaches. The contextual approach makes learning relevant to students' real lives; the participatory approach encourages students' active involvement in the learning process; the reflective approach allows students to reflect on religious values within the context of themselves and their environment; while the socio-cultural approach integrates local wisdom as part of learning Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

These strategies not only improve students' cognitive understanding of Islamic teachings, but also shape empathetic, inclusive, and open attitudes in dealing with differences. This can be seen from the attitudes of students who are able to appreciate

the diversity of their classmates, are actively involved in interfaith social projects, and demonstrate mutual respect in daily interactions. This success is also strengthened by the exemplary behavior of teachers, the support of the principal, and a school climate that is conducive to the development of moderate character.

This research provides evidence that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can be a strategic space in forming a young generation that has a deep and moderate understanding of religion, is able to become an agent of peace, and maintains social harmony in a multicultural society. By strengthening appropriate learning strategies, the values of tolerance, humanity, and justice can be internalized more deeply in students.

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