

Internalizing Qur'anic Tolerance through Al-Kafirun 6 and Al-Baqarah 256 to Shape Students' Religious Moderation

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ABSTRACT

Background. Religious diversity in contemporary societies, particularly in Indonesia, presents challenges related to intolerance, exclusivist religious interpretations, and identity-based tensions among students. Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in addressing these challenges by internalizing Qur'anic values that promote tolerance and religious moderation.

Purpose. This study aims to explore how Qur'anic values of tolerance derived from Al-Kafirun verse 6 and Al-Baqarah verse 256 are internalized in shaping students' religious moderation at SMK Muhammadiyah Berau.

Method. This research employed a qualitative case study design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom and school observations, and document analysis involving Islamic education teachers, school leaders, and students. The data were analysed using an interactive qualitative model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Results. The findings reveal that the internalization of Qur'anic tolerance operates through the integration of institutional policies, pedagogical practices, and students' lived experiences. Qur'anic values are embedded in school regulations, dialogical teaching approaches, character education programs, and daily social interactions. Supporting factors include strong school leadership, inclusive school culture, and teacher role modeling, while challenges arise from external influences such as social media and diverse family backgrounds.

Conclusion. The study demonstrates that consistent and inclusive internalization of Qur'anic teachings effectively fosters students' religious moderation without weakening Islamic identity. These findings highlight the importance of integrating Qur'anic values into school culture and pedagogy as a strategic approach to promoting social harmony in pluralistic educational contexts.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity is an unavoidable reality in contemporary societies, particularly in multicultural countries such as Indonesia, where people of different religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds live side by side. Along with this diversity, challenges related to intolerance

exclusivist religious views, and identity-based tensions have become increasingly visible, especially among young people in educational settings (Nisa et al., 2025). Schools play a crucial



role not only in transmitting knowledge but also in shaping students' religious attitudes, either toward moderation and peaceful coexistence or toward rigid and intolerant orientations (Mufi et al., 2023). Educational institutions increasingly function as social laboratories where values of coexistence are either reinforced or weakened, making schools strategic spaces for preventing religious polarization (Sanusi et al., 2024). The way religious differences are managed in schools therefore has long-term implications for social harmony. Based on these Qur'anic principles, the process of cultivating religious tolerance in Islamic education can be understood as a gradual and interconnected educational pathway, as illustrated in Figure 1.

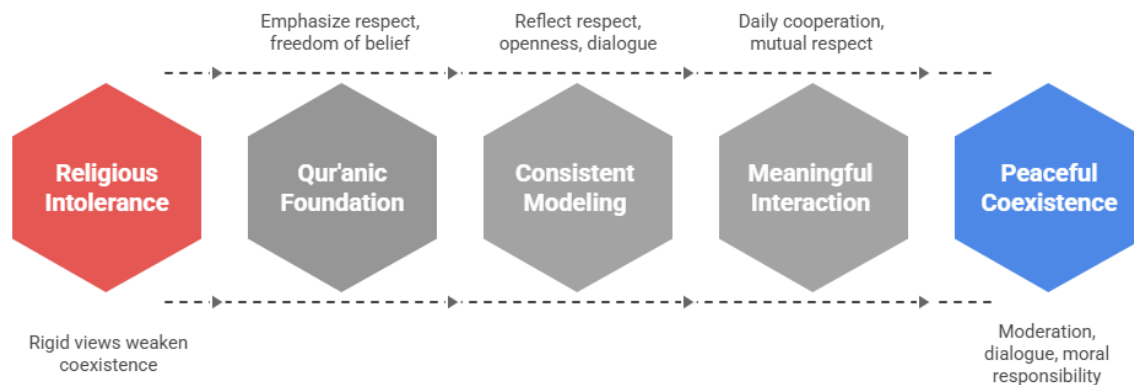


Figure 1. Cultivating Religious Tolerance in Islamic Education

Figure 1 illustrates how Qur'anic values of tolerance are translated into consistent role modeling and meaningful interaction within the school environment, ultimately fostering peaceful coexistence among students in diverse educational settings. Tolerance in Islamic teachings is not merely a social virtue but a fundamental theological principle rooted in the Qur'an. Two verses that clearly express this principle are Qur'an Surah Al-Kafirun verse 6, which emphasizes respect for religious differences, and Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 256, which affirms freedom of belief and rejects any form of religious coercion. These verses provide a strong normative foundation for peaceful coexistence and religious moderation in pluralistic societies (Wardani et al., 2025). Islamic theology thus recognizes diversity as part of divine wisdom rather than a threat to faith, positioning tolerance as an ethical obligation rather than a pragmatic compromise (Mukaromah, 2024). Qur'anic ethics therefore offer a framework that encourages dialogue, mutual recognition, and moral responsibility.

The challenge in Islamic education lies not only in how Qur'anic values are taught but in how they are transformed into lived practices within the school environment. Religious tolerance cannot be effectively developed through memorization or moral instruction alone; it requires consistent modeling, meaningful interaction, and an educational climate that reflects respect, openness, and dialogue (Amin & Matsum, 2023). Students learn religious attitudes as much from daily interactions as from formal lessons, making school culture as important as curriculum design (Samiaji et al., 2023). Classroom dynamics, teacher behavior, and peer relationships all play a role in shaping religious dispositions.

Islamic-based vocational schools, such as Muhammadiyah institutions, carry a dual responsibility of providing professional skills and cultivating ethical and religious character. These schools are expected to prepare students for participation in a diverse society while maintaining a strong Islamic identity. The integration of religious values with vocational education creates a unique educational environment in which tolerance is not only taught but practiced through daily cooperation and mutual respect (Tajussubki & Saifannur, 2025). Such institutions therefore become strategic spaces for cultivating practical forms of religious moderation.

This study focuses on the internalization of tolerance values derived from Al-Kafirun 6 and Al-Baqarah 256 in the context of SMK Muhammadiyah Berau. The research examines how these Qur'anic principles are implemented through teaching practices, school culture, and interpersonal interactions in order to shape students' religious moderation. Attention is given to how students interpret and experience these values in their daily school life, allowing an in-depth understanding of the internalization process (Rosmini et al., 2022). The school is treated as a living environment where religious ideas are continuously negotiated and enacted.

Contemporary societies face growing challenges related to religious polarization, digital radicalization, and identity-based conflicts. Young people are particularly vulnerable to simplistic and absolutist religious narratives disseminated through social media and informal networks (Faradila et al., 2024). Schools therefore become critical arenas for counterbalancing such influences through structured and meaningful religious education. The role of Islamic schools in nurturing balanced and tolerant religious identities is increasingly significant in this context.

Religious moderation does not imply weakening religious commitment, but rather promoting a balanced understanding of faith that respects diversity and avoids extremism (Misbah & Fahmi, 2025). Moderation involves the ability to remain faithful to one's beliefs while acknowledging the legitimacy of others' beliefs. Qur'anic teachings on tolerance offer ethical guidance for navigating religious differences without compromising religious identity.

The internalization of values refers to a process in which moral principles become part of an individual's personal belief system and behavior. In the context of Islamic education, internalization means that Qur'anic teachings are not only understood intellectually but also reflected in attitudes, emotions, and actions (Siregar & Ismaraidha, 2025). Such a process requires repeated exposure, reflection, and meaningful engagement with religious texts and practices. Schools play a decisive role in facilitating this process through curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture.

A school-based study of Qur'anic tolerance provides insights into how abstract religious values are translated into everyday social behavior. Observation of classroom interactions, teacher-student relationships, and peer dynamics allows a deeper understanding of how religious moderation is cultivated in practice (Ma'ani et al., 2024). The context of SMK Muhammadiyah Berau offers a concrete setting to explore these dynamics within an Islamic educational framework. This focus enables the study to contribute empirical evidence to broader discussions on Islamic education and social harmony.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design with a case study approach to explore the process of internalizing Qur'anic values of tolerance in shaping students' religious moderation. Qualitative research is widely recognized as appropriate for understanding complex social phenomena in their natural contexts, including educational settings and value internalization processes (Malahati et al., 2023). The case study approach allows an in-depth investigation of a bounded social setting and provides rich contextual insights into how values are constructed and practiced in everyday educational life (Çelik Görgüt et al., 2025). The research was conducted at SMK Muhammadiyah Berau, an Islamic-based vocational high school located in Berau Regency, Indonesia. Contextual research in Islamic educational institutions has been shown to reflect participants' lived experiences and religious meaning-making processes (Qolamani, 2023). Islamic schools that integrate religious instruction with vocational education provide an ideal environment for observing how Qur'anic values are internalized in daily school interactions (Gunadi, 2025).

The research subjects consisted of Islamic education teachers, school administrators, and students who were actively involved in religious learning and school activities. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their roles and direct involvement in teaching and practicing religious values. Purposive sampling is commonly used in contemporary qualitative educational research to ensure the inclusion of information-rich participants (Nurtamam & Jannah, 2025). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom and school observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews are effective for capturing participants' interpretations, beliefs, and experiences related to religious values (Qolamani, 2023). Observation enables researchers to examine how tolerance is enacted in natural classroom and school interactions (Irma Picauly & Listyani, 2024). Document analysis allows the identification of how tolerance and moderation are formally embedded in school curricula, regulations, and learning materials (Pardede, 2025).

The data collection process was carried out over several weeks to ensure sufficient exposure to the school environment and to capture consistent patterns of behavior and interaction. Prolonged engagement and repeated observation are essential for producing credible qualitative findings in educational research (Malahati et al., 2023). Data analysis was conducted using an interactive qualitative model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. This analytical process enables researchers to systematically organize qualitative data and to generate patterns and themes grounded in participants' experiences (Nurtamam & Jannah, 2025). Data were coded and categorized according to themes related to Qur'anic tolerance, internalization processes, and religious moderation.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed, including triangulation of data sources and methods, prolonged engagement, and careful verification of interpretations. Triangulation is widely recognized as a key strategy for enhancing the credibility of qualitative research (González-Moreira et al., 2023). Systematic validation procedures help ensure that interpretations accurately reflect participants' lived realities (Siti Fatimah et al., 2024). This methodological approach enabled the study to provide a rich and contextualized understanding of how Qur'anic values of tolerance are translated into students' religious attitudes and behaviors within an Islamic vocational school.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

School Context

SMK Muhammadiyah Berau is an Islamic-based vocational high school operating under the Muhammadiyah organization with a mission to integrate vocational competence, Islamic character, and religious moderation. The school promotes Islamic values that emphasize ethical behavior, discipline, and openness toward diversity. Its student population reflects a heterogeneous social and religious background, which positions the school as a relevant setting for examining how Qur'anic tolerance is internalized in everyday educational practice. Institutional identity in Muhammadiyah schools has been shown to shape students' civic and religious orientations in plural settings, particularly when religious instruction is framed through moderation and inclusivity (Hikmah & Putra, 2022). Organizational cultures that integrate professionalism with religious values tend to support inclusive interaction and social harmony in multicultural school environments (Wahyudi et al., 2024). This context strengthens the relevance of SMK Muhammadiyah Berau as a representative case for studying Qur'anic tolerance in practice.

The school actively promotes an inclusive educational climate through character education programs, student organizations, and religious activities that emphasize mutual respect and

cooperation. Teachers, school leaders, and student affairs officers collectively shape a school culture in which diversity is treated as a social asset rather than a threat. This institutional environment provides a fertile ground for implementing Qur'anic values of tolerance and moderation. Structured character education programs are empirically associated with improved intergroup attitudes and religious moderation in Indonesian Islamic schools (Zulfiter et al., 2023). Leadership commitment also strengthens the sustainability of moderation initiatives by embedding tolerance into school policies and routines (Kurniasari et al., 2025). These dynamics normalize tolerant behavior as a shared expectation among students and staff.

Internalization of Qur'anic Tolerance

The findings show that the internalization of tolerance at SMK Muhammadiyah Berau operates through three interconnected dimensions: institutional policy, pedagogical practice, and students' lived experiences. At the institutional level, school leaders embed moderation and inclusivity into the school's vision, mission, and regulatory framework. Policies such as anti-bullying rules, character monitoring, and the promotion of respectful interaction form a structural foundation for cultivating tolerant behavior. Value internalization becomes more stable when formal school regulations are aligned with daily routines and social practices (Rina Hasna & Agustina, 2025). Policy coherence reduces ambiguity in students' moral decision-making and strengthens their understanding of acceptable social conduct (Wahyudi et al., 2024). This alignment allows tolerance to be practiced not only as an ideal but also as a lived norm. To clarify the interrelationship among the three dimensions of tolerance internalization identified above and to illustrate their integrative process within the school context, the following figure presents a conceptual visualization of how institutional policy, pedagogical practices, and students' lived experiences interact at SMK Muhammadiyah Berau.

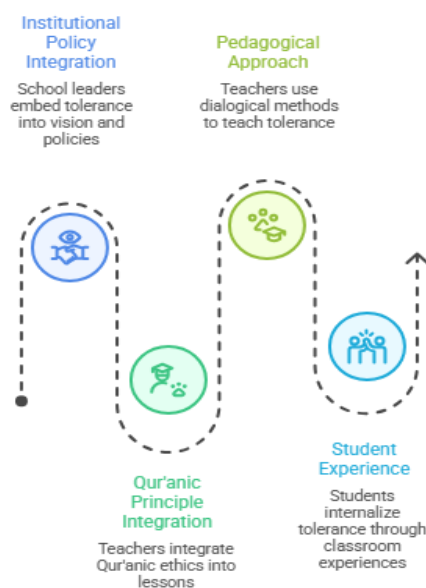


Figure 2. Internalization of Tolerance at SMK Muhammadiyah Berau

As illustrated in Figure 2, the internalization of Qur'anic tolerance operates as a dynamic and interconnected process rather than a linear sequence. Institutional policies provide a normative and structural foundation, pedagogical practices function as the primary mechanism for translating Qur'anic values into meaningful learning experiences, and students' lived experiences serve as the arena in which these values are interpreted, enacted, and reinforced in everyday social interactions. This integrative pattern underscores that the effective internalization of tolerance depends on the

alignment and mutual reinforcement of policy frameworks, instructional approaches, and experiential learning within the school environment.

The integration of Qur'anic principles from Al-Kafirun verse 6 and Al-Baqarah verse 256 is reflected not only in formal Islamic instruction but also in the school's everyday culture. Teachers are required to incorporate ethical and tolerance-oriented values into their lesson plans, particularly in Islamic Education and Al-Islam Kemuhammadiyah courses. The school also provides mediation and counseling spaces to resolve conflicts peacefully, reinforcing the message that coercion and discrimination are incompatible with Islamic teachings. Curricular integration of Qur'anic ethics enhances students' moral reasoning and sensitivity to diversity (AlFaruq & Yuliani, 2025). Counseling-based mediation has been shown to reduce religiously framed conflict and improve relational trust in schools (Pitdianti et al., 2024). These institutional supports translate religious doctrine into actionable social norms.

From a pedagogical perspective, Islamic Education teachers interpret Al-Kafirun 6 and Al-Baqarah 256 as theological foundations for religious freedom and mutual respect. These verses are taught through dialogical methods, contextual discussions, and examples drawn from students' everyday lives. Teachers emphasize that tolerance is not merely an abstract concept but a lived Islamic ethic that guides social interaction. Dialogical pedagogy significantly increases students' openness to difference and intercultural understanding (Kurniasari et al., 2025). Contextualizing sacred texts makes their ethical messages more socially meaningful and relevant to contemporary challenges (Fikri, 2025). These approaches bridge Islamic theology with everyday moral practice.

Students' perspectives indicate that these teachings are internalized in meaningful ways. Muslim and non-Muslim students alike describe tolerance as the willingness to respect differences, avoid imposing beliefs, and engage in dialogue. Many students report that their teachers present religious values in a humanistic and inclusive manner, creating a classroom climate where all learners feel respected. Perceived teacher fairness and inclusivity are strong predictors of positive interfaith attitudes (Zulfiter et al., 2023). Inclusive classroom environments foster empathy and reduce social distance between students of different backgrounds (Rina Hasna & Agustina, 2025). These experiences consolidate moderation at both the emotional and behavioral levels.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

The internalization of tolerance is supported by multiple institutional and social factors. School leadership provides clear policy direction, while teachers, counselors, and homeroom staff reinforce values through daily supervision and character monitoring. Extracurricular activities and student organizations create opportunities for interaction across differences, encouraging cooperation and mutual understanding. Distributed leadership strengthens consistency in value transmission across school units (Wahyudi et al., 2024). Peer collaboration within extracurricular settings increases social trust and intercultural competence (Kurniasari et al., 2025). These supports multiply opportunities for students to practice tolerance in real-life situations.

Several challenges remain, particularly external influences such as social media, which expose students to polarizing and intolerant narratives. Family backgrounds also vary, meaning that some students enter school with rigid or exclusivist attitudes that require sustained guidance. Digital misinformation has been shown to amplify identity polarization among young people (Pitdianti et al., 2024). Home socialization patterns can either reinforce or counteract the tolerant values promoted at school (Hikmah & Putra, 2022). These pressures necessitate proactive and continuous educational interventions.

Despite these challenges, the school employs strategies such as counseling, dialogue, and reflective practices to mitigate negative influences. Teachers actively monitor students' interactions,

encourage respectful communication, and provide mediation when conflicts arise. These practices prevent intolerance from escalating into social division. Reflective dialogue has been found to reduce prejudice and strengthen ethical awareness (Fikri, 2025). School-based mediation also restores relational trust and promotes reconciliation among students (Rina Hasna & Agustina, 2025). These mechanisms help stabilize a tolerant and inclusive school climate.

Implications for Students' Religious Moderation

The internalization of tolerance has significant implications for students' religious moderation. Students demonstrate increasing openness toward diversity, stronger empathy, and improved conflict-management skills. In classroom discussions and group work, they show a growing ability to listen to differing viewpoints and negotiate disagreements respectfully. Empathy is a key predictor of religious moderation and peaceful social interaction (Zulfiter et al., 2023). Cooperative learning further enhances intergroup respect and reduces social barriers (Kurniasari et al., 2025). These outcomes indicate that tolerance has moved beyond cognition into behavior.

School programs such as character education, extracurricular activities, and religious guidance sessions reinforce balanced religious understanding. Students learn that strong faith is compatible with respect for others and that Islamic teachings encourage peaceful coexistence. Routine interactions—such as greeting one another, cooperating in group tasks, and respecting religious practices—gradually shape a moderate and inclusive school culture. Habituation plays a crucial role in consolidating ethical norms and social behavior (AlFaruq & Yuliani, 2025). Balanced religiosity also contributes to civic harmony and social stability (Wahyudi et al., 2024). Daily rituals embed moderation into students' lived experiences.

Teachers, particularly Islamic Education teachers, play a central role by modeling tolerant behavior and guiding students through reflective dialogue. Students therefore do not merely learn about moderation but experience it as an everyday social practice. Role modeling is a powerful predictor of moral learning and ethical development (Rina Hasna & Agustina, 2025). Reflective guidance deepens value internalization and strengthens students' commitment to moderation (Fikri, 2025). These mechanisms sustain long-term character development.

Linking Internalization and Moderation

The findings demonstrate a clear relationship between the internalization of Qur'anic tolerance and the development of religious moderation. Repeated exposure to tolerant practices, supported by institutional policies and pedagogical strategies, reshapes students' attitudes toward diversity. Through habituation, dialogue, and ethical modeling, tolerance becomes embedded in students' moral frameworks and expressed in their behavior. Internalization mediates the consistency between attitudes and behavior in moral development (Kurniasari et al., 2025). Ethical modeling accelerates the uptake of values among learners (AlFaruq & Yuliani, 2025). These mechanisms explain the observed growth in moderation.

This pattern aligns with theories of value internalization that view moderation as the outcome of sustained educational, social, and experiential processes. The SMK Muhammadiyah Berau case demonstrates that even within a religiously oriented institution, strong Islamic identity can coexist with inclusivity when Qur'anic teachings are interpreted through a lens of mercy and pluralism. Pluralist interpretations of Islam support peaceful coexistence in diverse societies (Hikmah & Putra, 2022). Institutional consistency further protects inclusive religious identities (Wahyudi et al., 2024). This case therefore offers transferable insights for Islamic education in plural contexts.

Practical Reflections

The study highlights the importance of integrating curriculum, school culture, and leadership in fostering religious moderation. Schools can strengthen tolerance by embedding it in lesson plans,

expanding character-building programs, and supporting teachers through training and learning resources. Parental engagement and digital literacy initiatives are also crucial for countering external influences that promote intolerance. Teacher professional development improves pedagogical coherence and value transmission (Rina Hasna & Agustina, 2025). Digital literacy programs reduce vulnerability to online radicalization and misinformation (Pitdianti et al., 2024). These strategies enhance institutional resilience.

Future research may extend this inquiry to other educational contexts or explore the role of digital media in shaping religious attitudes. The findings from SMK Muhammadiyah Berau demonstrate that Qur'anic values, when internalized through inclusive education, effectively nurture moderate, ethical, and socially responsible students. Comparative studies will strengthen generalizability (Zulfiter et al., 2023). Longitudinal research can capture the durability of moderation over time (Wahyudi et al., 2024). The evidence supports the scalability of this educational model.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the internalization of Qur'anic values of tolerance derived from Al-Kafirun verse 6 and Al-Baqarah verse 256 plays a crucial role in fostering students' religious moderation within Islamic educational settings. At SMK Muhammadiyah Berau, tolerance is not treated merely as a doctrinal concept but is translated into lived practice through the alignment of school policies, pedagogical strategies, and everyday social interactions. When Qur'anic teachings are conveyed through dialogical learning, ethical modeling, and an inclusive school culture, students develop a balanced religious outlook characterized by respect for diversity, empathy, and peaceful conflict management. The findings highlight that strong Islamic identity can coexist with openness and inclusivity when tolerance is framed as an intrinsic Islamic ethic rather than a compromise of faith. Despite challenges posed by external influences such as digital media and varied family backgrounds, consistent institutional support and reflective educational practices enable schools to counteract intolerant narratives. This study underscores the strategic role of Islamic schools in nurturing religious moderation and offers a practical model for integrating Qur'anic values into character education, contributing to broader efforts to strengthen social harmony in plural societies.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.

Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; Investigation.

Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

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