

IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION-BASED RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH THE CULTURE OF TOLERANCE FESTIVAL FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN KUTAMBARU VILLAGE, KARO REGENCY

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Abstract. This study aims to describe the implementation of religious moderation through the Cultural Tolerance Festival organized by KKN UINSU 83 students in Kutambaru Village, Tiganderket District, Karo Regency. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method with an exploratory approach to understand the process, types of activities, and participant involvement during the festival. Data collection was carried out through participatory observation, documentation of activities, and relevant literature studies. The obtained data were analyzed thematically through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The results showed that the poetry competition encouraged courage to express and internalize the value of tolerance through literary texts, while the solo vocal competition strengthened self-confidence and togetherness across participant backgrounds. The quiz competition contributed to increased knowledge, teamwork, and sportsmanship, while the coloring competition fostered creativity, imagination, and a joyful atmosphere. Overall, this festival created harmonious interactions involving children, teachers, parents, and the community as a concrete practice of religious moderation. These findings confirm that an arts and culture-based cultural-educational approach is effective in instilling the value of tolerance from an early age and can be a relevant model of community service to be applied in other multicultural areas.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Tolerance Cultural Festival, KKN UINSU

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan implementasi moderasi beragama melalui kegiatan Festival Budaya Toleransi yang diselenggarakan oleh mahasiswa KKN UINSU 83 di Desa Kutambaru, Kecamatan Tiganderket, Kabupaten Karo. Penelitian menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan eksploratif untuk memahami proses, bentuk kegiatan, serta keterlibatan peserta selama festival berlangsung. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui observasi partisipatif, dokumentasi kegiatan, dan studi literatur yang relevan. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis secara tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa lomba puisi mendorong keberanian berekspresi dan internalisasi nilai toleransi melalui teks sastra, sedangkan lomba vokal solo memperkuat rasa percaya diri dan kebersamaan lintas latar belakang peserta. Lomba cerdas cermat berkontribusi pada peningkatan pengetahuan, kerja sama tim, serta sportivitas, sementara lomba mewarnai menumbuhkan kreativitas, imajinasi, dan suasana gembira. Secara keseluruhan, festival ini menciptakan interaksi harmonis yang melibatkan anak-anak, guru, orang tua, dan masyarakat sebagai praktik nyata moderasi beragama. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan kultural-edukatif berbasis seni dan budaya efektif untuk menanamkan nilai toleransi sejak dini dan dapat menjadi model pengabdian masyarakat yang relevan diterapkan di wilayah multikultural lainnya.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Festival Budaya Toleransi, KKN UINSU

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INTRODUCTION

Karo Regency is one of the areas in North Sumatra Province that is known for its social, cultural, and religious diversity. Although demographically the majority of the Karo people adhere to non-Muslim religions, this area still maintains a social space that is open for the growth of tolerance between religious communities. This diversity is actually a valuable social capital to build a harmonious life, especially through activities that unite communities in the realm of education, culture, and social activities (Barasa et al., 2025).

In this context, Kutambaru Village, which is located in Tiganderket District, has an important role as a real example of how the value of togetherness can be revived through educational programs that prioritize religious moderation. Religious moderation itself is a concept that emphasizes balance in religion, does not exaggerate, and does not reduce the essence of religious teachings. In a pluralistic society such as in Karo Regency, religious moderation is present as a strategy to maintain togetherness in the midst of differences (Harahap et al., 2022). The values of moderation are not only understood theoretically, but also need to be realized in the practice of daily life through social and cultural activities. One relevant approach is through festival activities that involve children, teachers, and the community to jointly celebrate diversity (Fathir, 2025). Thus, moderation is no longer just a slogan, but a practice that is alive and rooted in society.

The 2025 North Sumatra State Islamic University (UINSU) Real Work Lecture (KKN) activity in Kutambaru Village is a tangible form of student service in presenting spaces of togetherness based on the value of religious moderation. The Tolerance Cultural Festival held at SD Inpres (044835) is an educational facility that combines art, culture, and education with the spirit of togetherness. This festival is not just a competition forum, but a collaboration space that unites children from various backgrounds to express themselves through poetry, solo vocals, smart meticulous, and coloring competitions.

The implementation of the festival, which took place from August 21 to 25, 2025, featured interesting dynamics where the children of Kutambaru Elementary School enthusiastically participated in the competition. For example, in a poetry competition, participants show courage and self-expression even though they are still limited in delivery techniques. The value of tolerance is inserted in the text of the poem so that children learn to internalize moral messages through literary works.

Similarly, in solo vocal competitions, children not only channel their voice arts talents, but also learn to present themselves in front of the public regardless of background differences. The smart competition is a healthy competition space that fosters the spirit of cooperation,

sportsmanship, and intellectual agility. Children show their knowledge in general, religious, and cultural fields. Meanwhile, the coloring competition attended by the lower grade students featured a cheerful atmosphere where children were free to imagine through color. All of these activities not only produce works, but also create an atmosphere of togetherness that is the core of religious moderation. The presence of parents, teachers, and the community who also support further strengthens the meaning of the festival as a forum for harmonious social interaction. Based on this context, this research departs from the main question, namely how to implement religious moderation through the Cultural Festival of Tolerance activities carried out by UINSU 2025 KKN students in Kutambaru Village.

The formulation of this problem is important to study because there has not been much research that highlights the strengthening of religious moderation through a cultural-educational approach involving elementary school children as the main actor. In addition, this activity is unique because it takes place in an area that is predominantly non-Muslim, but is able to display the values of tolerance through art and education. The purpose of this research is to describe the process, form of activities, and impact of the implementation of the Cultural Tolerance Festival on children, teachers, and the community in Kutambaru Village. This research seeks to understand how religious moderation can be internalized through art, culture, and educational activities so that a harmonious space of togetherness is created. By describing this activity, it is hoped that the research can provide a complete picture of the role of KKN students in developing service programs that are in line with the needs of the community.

Based on these conditions, UINSU's 2025 Community Service Program (KKN) students implemented the Tolerance Culture Festival program at SD Inpres (044835) in Kutambaru Village as a form of community service. The festival was designed as an educational space integrating arts, culture, and education through various competitions, such as poetry, solo vocals, quizzes, and coloring. This activity served not only as a competition but also as a means of social learning that emphasized the values of togetherness, sportsmanship, and respect for differences. However, academic studies discussing the implementation of religious moderation through a cultural-educational approach involving elementary school students as the main actors are still relatively limited, especially in the context of a region with a predominantly non-Muslim population.

Therefore, this research is crucial to examine in depth the process, forms of activities, and impact of the Tolerance Culture Festival as a medium for implementing the values of religious moderation in Kutambaru Village. This study aims to describe the implementation of the Tolerance Culture Festival by UINSU's 2025 Community Service Program students and

analyze its role in building attitudes of tolerance and togetherness among students, teachers, and the community. Thus, this research is expected to provide theoretical and practical contributions in developing a model for strengthening religious moderation based on culture and education at the local level.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research type. The selection of this method is based on the objectives of the research that focuses on describing in depth how the implementation of religious moderation is carried out through the Cultural Tolerance Festival in Kutambaru Village. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the phenomenon that occurs naturally, so that each activity dynamic can be explained according to the social, cultural, and educational context in the environment (Haki et al., 2024). The location of the research is Kutambaru Village, Tiganderket District, Karo Regency, with the center of activities at SD Inpres (044835). This research was carried out on August 21-25, 2025, in conjunction with the Cultural Tolerance Festival. The presence of researchers at the location is important to observe firsthand the course of poetry, solo vocals, intelligent meticulous, and coloring competitions that are participated by elementary school students.

The research subjects include the children of SD Inpres (044835) as the main participants of the competition, the UINSU 2025 KKN committee as the organizer, as well as teachers and the community involved in the activity. The object of the research is the implementation of the value of religious moderation which is reflected through the implementation of the competition, participant participation, and the atmosphere of togetherness that emerges during the festival. Data collection techniques are carried out through participatory observation, documentation, and literature studies. Participatory observation is used to directly observe the behavior, expression, and interaction of participants in each activity. Documentation in the form of photos, videos, and student works was collected to strengthen the data obtained from observations. Meanwhile, a literature study was conducted to understand the concepts of religious moderation, character education, and community service which are the theoretical basis of the research (Putri, 2023). Data analysis uses the Miles & Huberman model which includes three stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. The data collected from the field is selected, presented in the form of a descriptive narrative, then conclusions are drawn that are relevant to the formulation of the problem (Qomaruddin et al., 2024

RESULTS

Implementation of the Tolerance Cultural Festival

The Cultural Tolerance Festival in Kutambaru Village lasted for five days, from August 21 to 25, 2025, at the courtyard of SD Inpres (044835). This activity was organized by UINSU KKN group 83 students with the support of schools, teachers, and village communities. The atmosphere of the festival felt lively from the first day, marked by the enthusiasm of the children who had prepared themselves to take part in the competition according to their respective interests. The activity began with an official opening by the principal and representatives of the KKN committee. After that, the poetry competition became the first agenda that children from various classes participated. On the next day, it was continued with a solo vocal competition, then a smart and meticulous competition, and closed with a coloring competition on the last day. Each competition shows the spirit of competition as well as togetherness. The presence of teachers, parents, and the community who watched made the atmosphere even warmer, showing that this festival does not only belong to children, but also becomes a social meeting space that involves all elements of society.

Analysis of Each Competition

Poetry Competition

The poetry competition was attended by a number of elementary school children from various grade levels. Each participant read a poem with the theme of togetherness, friendship, and tolerance that has been selected or made with the guidance of the teacher. Despite the limitations in the declamation technique, the children showed incredible courage to perform in public. This courage reflects increased self-confidence as well as the ability to express oneself through literary arts. The value of tolerance contained in the text of the poem is a means of internalizing moral messages from an early age, so that children learn to appreciate differences through the words they speak.

Solo Vocal Competition

The solo vocal competition featured students who had an interest in sound arts. Each participant sang a selected song that was mostly themed on the theme of friendship, passion, and togetherness. The children were seen enjoying the moment of appearing in front of the public with enthusiasm. This activity is not just a competition, but also an educational recreation space that builds children's confidence. Interestingly, the participants came from diverse backgrounds, but all appeared enthusiastically regardless of the barriers of differences.

Smart Competition

The smart competition involved a team of representatives from several classes. The questions provided include general knowledge, religion, and local culture. The enthusiasm of the participants was evident when they tried to answer quickly and precisely. This activity trains teamwork, increases knowledge, and fosters sportsmanship between elementary schools. Children learn that competition is not just about winning, but also about respecting your opponent and accepting results with open arms. Through this competition, the value of moderation is also present in the form of cross-background cooperation based on mutual respect.

Coloring Competition

The coloring competition was the closing of the festival and was dominated by low-grade students. The children brought their own coloring equipment, showing enthusiasm from the start. The atmosphere of the competition was full of cheerfulness with various various works. This activity trains creativity, imagination, and fine motor skills. More than that, the coloring competition presents an atmosphere of togetherness because the children sit side by side without discriminating against the background. The different works actually show the richness of the imagination of the children of Kutambaru Village which can be a symbol of beautiful diversity.

General Output of the Festival

In general, the Tolerance Cultural Festival succeeded in creating an atmosphere of togetherness involving children, teachers, parents, and the village community. The enthusiasm of the participants showed that this activity was able to answer the need for a space for expression for children. The value of tolerance inserted through art and culture has proven to be effective in building awareness of the importance of living in harmony in diversity. UINSU KKN student's group 83 succeeded in making a real contribution through activities that not only entertain, but also educate and instill character values in the younger generation. The following table illustrates the number of participants in each competition and an overview of the output achieved:

Table 1. Number of participants and outcomes of the tolerance cultural festival competitions

Types of Competitions	Number of Participants	Key Results
Poetry	20 people	Increased courage, self-expression, and internalization of tolerance values
Solo Vocals	15 people	Channeling sound arts talents, confidence, and togetherness across backgrounds
Smart Careful	5 teams	Enthusiasm for learning, cooperation, sportsmanship, and healthy competition
Coloring	25 people	Creativity, imagination, cheerfulness, and an atmosphere of togetherness

The results of the Cultural Tolerance Festival in Kutambaru Village show that the cultural-educational approach is very effective in internalizing the value of religious moderation. Religious moderation, as explained by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, is not only a matter of theology, but a social practice that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect for differences (Jamaluddin, 2022). In this festival, the value of moderation is present in the form of children's courage to express themselves, togetherness across backgrounds, and sportsmanship in competing.

From the perspective of character education, this activity is in line with the idea of Lickona (2019) about the importance of forming moral values from an early age through real experience. Children not only hear about tolerance, but directly practice it in educational competitive situations (Elyunusi et al., 202). Similar research by Alfiaz et al., (2025) also shows that arts and cultural activities in schools can increase multicultural awareness and mutual respect between students. This strengthens the finding that art is an effective medium in instilling the value of moderation.

In addition, this activity is relevant to the theory of participation-based community service. UINSU KKN students are not only facilitators, but also part of the community that helps build an atmosphere of togetherness. This is in line with the findings of Damayanti et al., (2024) who emphasize that KKN can be an effective medium in developing social awareness and tolerance values through creative programs. Thus, the Cultural Festival of Tolerance in Kutambaru Village not only provides entertainment, but also instills the value of religious moderation practically. This activity proves that character education and strengthening tolerance can go hand in hand through an art and cultural approach. Such a model can be replicated in various other regions with local context adjustments, so that religious moderation no longer stops at discourse, but lives in people's daily lives.

DISCUSSION

Implementation of Education-Based Religious Moderation Through the Culture of Tolerance Festival for Elementary School Students in Kutambaru Village, Karo Regency

The results of the study show that the Cultural Tolerance Festival carried out by UINSU 2025 KKN students in Kutambaru Village is a form of effective and contextual education-based religious moderation implementation. The implementation is not carried out through formal learning in the classroom, but through a cultural-educational approach that integrates art, culture, and educational competitive activities. This approach is in line with the characteristics of basic education that emphasizes meaningful learning through *experiential learning*. These findings are in line with research Sutrisno (2020) which states that the value of religious moderation is more easily accepted by children when conveyed through participatory and contextual activities rather than through a doctrinal approach. Religious moderation in the context of this festival is not understood as a theological concept, but is interpreted as a social practice that is manifested in mutual respect, togetherness, and sportsmanship in the midst of the different backgrounds of the participants.

This can be seen from the involvement of elementary school children who come from a pluralistic society, especially in areas where the majority of the population is non-Muslim, but are still able to create a harmonious atmosphere without social and religious barriers. These findings corroborate the results of previous research by Rohman et al., (2021) which affirms that religious moderation in multicultural environments can grow naturally if facilitated through inclusive social interaction spaces, especially in basic education units. From the perspective of character education, each type of competition in the festival contributes to the strengthening of the values of religious moderation. Poetry competitions, for example, are an effective medium of moral learning because children not only memorize texts, but also voice the value of tolerance through literary expression. The courage to appear in public reflects the growth of confidence, while the theme of the poem is raised as a means of internalizing the value of respecting differences.

This is in line with the findings Hidayati (2022) which states that language and literature arts have a strategic role in building empathy, social awareness, and tolerant attitudes in elementary school-age students. Solo vocal competitions act as an educational space that builds courage, self-expression, and acceptance of diversity. Children appear awkward despite coming from different backgrounds, indicating a social climate that favors inclusivity. In the context of religious moderation, this activity reflects the principle of balance and openness, where every individual has an equal space for expression without discrimination. Research

Yusran (2023) shows that performing arts activities in elementary schools are effective in fostering mutual respect and reducing social prejudice between students.

The smart competition shows the cognitive dimension of religious moderation education. Questions that include general knowledge, religion, and local culture encourage children to understand diversity as part of shared knowledge. In addition, the teamwork and sportsmanship shown by the participants emphasized that competitions can be a means of social learning that fosters mutual respect. These findings are in line with research Fauzi (2024) which concluded that learning based on educational games and healthy competitions can improve social skills, tolerance, and fairness in elementary school students. Meanwhile, the coloring competition contributes to strengthening the value of moderation through visual and creative approaches. The difference in children's works is actually a symbol of diversity that is beautiful and accepted together. This activity emphasizes that differences are not to be contested, but to be celebrated. These findings support the results of a study Alfiaz et al., (2025) which states that visual arts activities in elementary schools can be an effective medium to instill multicultural values and religious moderation indirectly but sustainably.

Overall, the implementation of the Cultural Tolerance Festival shows that the cultural-educational approach can be an effective strategy in religious moderation education. The involvement of teachers, parents, and the village community strengthens the function of the festival as a *social learning space* that goes beyond the boundaries of the school. UINSU KKN students play a role not only as activity organizers, but also as agents of change that facilitate the participatory value learning process. This is in line with research Damayanti et al., (2024) which emphasizes that community participation-based KKN programs can strengthen the internalization of the value of religious tolerance and moderation contextually. These findings reinforce the view that religious moderation education does not have to be delivered through lectures or doctrine, but can be integrated into arts, culture, and educational play activities that are appropriate to children's worlds.

Thus, the Cultural Tolerance Festival in Kutambaru Village is a model for the implementation of religious moderation education that is applicable, contextual, and sustainable. This model has the potential to be replicated in other regions with local context adjustments as an effort to instill the value of tolerance and togetherness from primary education.

CONCLUSION

The Cultural Tolerance Festival held by UINSU 83 KKN students in Kutambaru Village, Tiganderket District, Karo Regency on August 21-25, 2025 succeeded in becoming a means of real implementation of cultural-educational based religious moderation. For five days, various competitions such as poetry, solo vocals, smart and coloring are not only competitions, but also social learning spaces for children to grow confidence, courage to express themselves, sportsmanship, and creativity. The presence of teachers, parents, and the community in supporting activities further strengthens the meaning of togetherness and cross-generational interaction.

The festival shows that art, culture, and education can be an effective medium in instilling the value of tolerance from an early age, in line with the concept of religious moderation that emphasizes balance and respect for differences. From an academic perspective, this study enriches the literature on religious moderation by presenting empirical evidence that these values can be internalized through recreational-educational activities. Meanwhile, practically, this activity provides inspiration for schools, village governments, and the next KKN program to make cultural festivals a strategic means in building social cohesion in a multicultural society. Thus, the Cultural Tolerance Festival in Kutambaru Village is not only a local event, but a model of implementation of character strengthening and religious moderation that can be replicated in various regions.

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