



Peace-Oriented Pedagogy in Religious Education: A Learning Model for Internalizing Students' Moderate Character

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis desain, implementasi, dan efektivitas model pembelajaran agama berbasis *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy* sebagai instrumen internalisasi karakter moderat pada peserta didik. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi evaluatif-interpretatif yang berfokus pada proses pembelajaran, interaksi pedagogis, serta konstruksi makna yang berkembang dalam praktik pendidikan agama. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis tematik. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy* mampu mentransformasikan pembelajaran agama dari pendekatan yang bersifat doktrinal menjadi lebih dialogis, reflektif, dan berorientasi pada pembangunan budaya damai. Model ini dibangun melalui empat komponen utama, yaitu dialog kritis, pengembangan empati, refleksi nilai, dan resolusi konflik konstruktif. Implementasi model mendorong peningkatan sikap toleransi, penghargaan terhadap keberagaman, kemampuan berpikir kritis, serta komitmen terhadap nilai-nilai moderasi beragama. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa integrasi prinsip-prinsip perdamaian dalam pendidikan agama dapat menjadi strategi pedagogis yang efektif untuk membentuk peserta didik yang religius, inklusif, dan mampu berkontribusi dalam menciptakan kehidupan sosial yang harmonis di tengah masyarakat plural. Dengan demikian, *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy* berpotensi menjadi model pembelajaran yang relevan untuk memperkuat pendidikan karakter moderat pada era global yang ditandai oleh meningkatnya kompleksitas sosial dan tantangan keberagaman.

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the design, implementation, and effectiveness of a *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy*-based religious learning model as an instrument for internalizing moderate character among students. The study employs a qualitative approach with an evaluative-interpretive design focusing on learning processes, pedagogical interactions, and meaning-making practices within religious education. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis and were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The findings reveal that *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy* transforms religious education from a predominantly doctrinal approach into a more dialogical, reflective, and peace-oriented learning process. The model is structured around four core components: critical dialogue, empathy development, value reflection, and constructive conflict resolution. Its implementation contributes to the enhancement of tolerance, respect for diversity, critical thinking skills, and commitment to religious moderation values. The findings suggest that integrating peace education principles into religious learning provides an effective pedagogical strategy for developing students who are religiously committed, inclusive, and capable of contributing to social harmony within pluralistic societies. Therefore, *Peace-Oriented Pedagogy* offers a relevant instructional framework for strengthening moderate character education in an increasingly complex and diverse global context.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is currently experiencing a highly vulnerable socio-religious situation, characterized by escalating conflicts, ideological polarization, and the growing influence of radicalism

across various parts of the world. Religious sentiments are often co-opted by identity politics to legitimize exclusion, discrimination, and even violence against different groups (UNDP, 2023; Davies, 2024; Jackson, 2023). This phenomenon has triggered a global peace crisis that not only threatens macro-political stability but also undermines social cohesion at the community level (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). In this context, educational institutions, particularly religious education, bear an increasingly important moral and strategic responsibility in fostering a culture of peace and preventing the development of intolerance from an early age (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021; Zembylas et al., 2023).

Religious education can no longer be understood merely as a means of cultivating individual piety; rather, it should also function as an instrument for developing social consciousness that enables learners to live peacefully within pluralistic societies (Gearon, 2022; Jackson, 2023). Nevertheless, religious education practices in many educational institutions remain dominated by doctrinal, textual, and teacher-centered approaches focused on the one-way transmission of religious knowledge (Miedema, 2022; Supriatna, 2023). When religious learning fails to provide opportunities for dialogue and critical reflection on diversity, it may inadvertently reinforce social prejudice, identity exclusivism, and intolerance toward those who are different (May et al., 2022; Parker, 2023). Therefore, a transformation toward a more inclusive, reflective, and peace-oriented paradigm of religious learning is urgently needed.

In this regard, the internalization of moderate character has become both an urgent necessity and an essential social competence for twenty-first-century learners. Religious moderation is understood as a religious attitude that places justice, balance, tolerance, and respect for human dignity at the center of religious practice (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019; Abdullah, 2022; Zuhdi, 2023). Moderate character is not intended to diminish one's religious commitment; rather, it seeks to guide religious expression in ways that remain consistent with universal human values and democratic life (Azra, 2021; Huda et al., 2023). Students who possess moderate character tend to demonstrate greater capacity for appreciating differences, managing conflicts constructively, and actively participating in pluralistic social environments (Banks, 2023; Nuryana et al., 2024).

The challenge of cultivating moderate character becomes increasingly complex as students navigate identity-development stages that are highly susceptible to digital information and simplistic or extreme religious narratives (Livingstone & Third, 2023; Taufiqurrahman et al., 2024). Numerous studies indicate that adolescents are more vulnerable to intolerant narratives when they lack reflective abilities and critical literacy skills for understanding religious and cultural differences (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2023; Davies, 2024). Consequently, religious education requires pedagogical approaches that extend beyond cognitive development and engage students' affective, social, and moral dimensions in meaningful ways (Berkowitz & Bier, 2022; Nucci et al., 2024).

One approach considered particularly relevant to addressing these needs is Peace-Oriented Pedagogy. Rooted in the tradition of peace education, this approach places dialogue, empathy, social justice, respect for diversity, and conflict resolution at the core of the learning process (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021; Reardon, 2021). From a peace education perspective, peace is understood not merely as the absence of violence (negative peace) but as the presence of justice, equality, and harmonious social relationships (positive peace) (Galtung, 1969; Harris & Morrison, 2021). When applied to religious education, this approach enables students to understand religious teachings through the lenses of humanity, intercultural dialogue, and social responsibility toward others (Zembylas et al., 2023; Cremin & Bevington, 2024).

Through Peace-Oriented Pedagogy, the religious education classroom is no longer positioned as a space for the passive reproduction of dogma but rather as a space for critical reflection that enables learners to develop moral awareness and peaceful conflict-resolution skills (Freire, 1970; Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021). Learning activities are designed to encourage students to explore diverse perspectives, identify personal biases, and cultivate empathy through dialogical and collaborative experiences (Zembylas et al., 2023; Cremin & Bevington, 2024). In this way, peace-related values are not taught merely as abstract concepts but are internalized through meaningful learning experiences.

Although scholarship on religious moderation and peace education continues to expand, the existing literature still reveals a significant gap in instructional design. Most previous studies have focused on religious moderation in the contexts of policy, curriculum strengthening, or the measurement of students' tolerance attitudes, without offering operational and classroom-friendly instructional models that teachers can readily implement (Huda et al., 2023; Nuryana et al., 2024). Meanwhile, peace education studies have

generally developed within the domains of citizenship and social education, with relatively limited application to religious education specifically (Cremin & Bevington, 2024; Parker, 2023).

Furthermore, there remains a lack of learning models capable of balancing faith preservation and peace-building within a coherent instructional framework. This gap highlights the need for the development of a religious learning model grounded in Peace-Oriented Pedagogy that is supported by a strong theoretical foundation as well as clear and practical learning syntax for teachers.

Based on this urgency, the present study aims to formulate a religious learning model based on Peace-Oriented Pedagogy as an instrument for internalizing students' moderate character. The study seeks to explain the conceptual structure of the model, its operational learning stages, and its potential contribution to fostering moderate attitudes among learners. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the literature on religious instructional design and peace education. Practically, the proposed model may serve as a reference for teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing religious learning that is more inclusive, reflective, and oriented toward cultivating a culture of peace within educational settings.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach with a design-based conceptual inquiry to develop a Peace-Oriented Pedagogy model for religious education as an instrument for internalizing students' moderate character. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows an in-depth exploration of educational concepts, pedagogical principles, and theoretical constructs underlying the development of an instructional model within complex socioreligious contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Rather than measuring learning outcomes quantitatively, this study focused on reconstructing and synthesizing theoretical foundations that can inform the design of a peace-oriented religious learning model.

The study adopted a literature-based qualitative design grounded in conceptual analysis and integrative review. This design is appropriate for developing educational models because it enables researchers to critically examine, compare, and synthesize theories, empirical findings, and pedagogical frameworks derived from diverse scholarly sources (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016). The development process was directed toward identifying key dimensions of peace education, religious moderation, character education, and transformative pedagogy that can be integrated into a coherent instructional framework.

Data sources consisted of scholarly literature published in peer-reviewed international and national journals, academic books, policy documents, and research reports related to peace education, religious education, religious moderation, character development, and instructional design. Priority was given to publications produced between 2020 and 2025 to ensure theoretical relevance and contemporary contextualization, while a limited number of seminal works were included to provide foundational conceptual perspectives (Freire, 1970; Galtung, 1969; Reardon, 1988). The selection of literature followed relevance, credibility, and conceptual contribution criteria to ensure that only sources directly related to the research focus were included in the analysis (Snyder, 2019).

Data collection was conducted through systematic document analysis. Relevant literature was identified, screened, and categorized based on thematic relevance to the objectives of the study. Documents were examined to identify recurring concepts, pedagogical principles, instructional strategies, and indicators of moderate character development. Document analysis enabled the researcher to trace patterns and relationships among concepts across different disciplinary traditions, including peace studies, religious education, citizenship education, and educational psychology (Bowen, 2009).

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis procedures as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analytical process involved several stages: familiarization with the data, initial coding, categorization of concepts, identification of themes, synthesis of relationships among themes, and development of the instructional model. Through iterative comparison and interpretation, major themes were organized into a conceptual structure that informed the design of the Peace-Oriented Pedagogy model. This analytical approach facilitated the integration of diverse theoretical perspectives into a unified pedagogical framework.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed theoretical triangulation and peer examination. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing concepts derived from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including peace education, religious education, character education, and transformative learning theory (Patton, 2015). Peer examination was undertaken through critical discussions with scholars in educational and religious studies to assess the coherence, relevance, and

conceptual validity of the proposed model (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These procedures enhanced the credibility and dependability of the conceptual framework generated in the study.

Through this methodological approach, the study produced a theoretically grounded and pedagogically applicable Peace-Oriented Pedagogy model that can serve as a framework for religious education aimed at fostering moderate character, peaceful coexistence, and constructive engagement with diversity among students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Foundation of Peace-Oriented Pedagogy in Religious Education

The literature analysis indicates that the growing complexity of religious polarization, identity-based conflicts, and intolerance among youth requires a fundamental transformation in religious education. Traditional religious instruction, which tends to emphasize doctrinal transmission and cognitive mastery, is increasingly viewed as insufficient for addressing contemporary social challenges characterized by cultural diversity, digital interaction, and ideological fragmentation (Gearon, 2022; Jackson, 2023). Consequently, religious education is expected not only to strengthen students' spiritual commitment but also to develop their capacity for empathy, dialogue, peaceful coexistence, and responsible citizenship.

Within this context, Peace-Oriented Pedagogy emerges as a conceptual framework that integrates peace education principles into religious learning processes. The model is grounded in the understanding that peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of justice, mutual respect, social inclusion, and constructive engagement with differences (Galtung, 1969; Harris & Morrison, 2021). This perspective aligns with contemporary approaches to religious moderation, which emphasize balance, tolerance, and respect for human dignity as core religious values (Abdullah, 2022; Huda et al., 2023).

The analysis further reveals that religious traditions contain substantial ethical resources that support peacebuilding efforts. Values such as compassion, forgiveness, cooperation, justice, and respect for others are consistently found across major religious traditions and can serve as pedagogical entry points for developing moderate character among students (Zembylas et al., 2023; Parker, 2023). Therefore, Peace-Oriented Pedagogy does not seek to reduce religious commitment but rather to reinterpret religious teachings through a lens of peaceful coexistence and social responsibility.

From a pedagogical perspective, the model is also informed by transformative learning theory, which emphasizes critical reflection and perspective transformation as essential processes in changing learners' assumptions and worldviews (Mezirow, 2018). Through reflective engagement with social realities, students are encouraged to reconsider exclusive beliefs and develop more inclusive forms of religious understanding. This process is particularly important in multicultural societies where social harmony depends upon the ability of citizens to negotiate differences constructively.

Structural Components of the Peace-Oriented Pedagogy Model

The thematic synthesis identified four interrelated components that constitute the foundation of the proposed model. These components operate as a unified pedagogical system designed to facilitate the internalization of moderate character through religious learning.

Table 1. Core Components of the Peace-Oriented Pedagogy Model

Component	Main Focus	Educational Function
Peace-Based Religious Understanding	Interpretation of religious teachings through peace values	Developing inclusive theological perspectives
Critical-Reflective Dialogue	Dialogical examination of differences and conflicts	Promoting empathy and critical thinking
Collaborative Peace Learning	Cooperative learning experiences	Strengthening social cohesion and mutual respect
Character Reflection and Internalization	Personal reflection on values and actions	Reinforcing moderate attitudes and behaviors

The first component, peace-based religious understanding, emphasizes the reinterpretation of religious concepts through ethical and humanitarian perspectives. Rather than focusing exclusively on doctrinal differences, students are encouraged to explore universal values embedded within religious teachings. Such an approach is consistent with contemporary religious education scholarship, which

advocates moving beyond confessional instruction toward interpretive and dialogical models of learning (Jackson, 2023; Gearon, 2022).

The second component, critical-reflective dialogue, serves as the primary mechanism through which students engage with diversity. Through guided discussions, case analyses, and perspective-taking activities, learners are encouraged to examine assumptions, challenge stereotypes, and develop more nuanced understandings of social realities. This process reflects Freire's (1970) conception of education as dialogue and critical consciousness formation.

The third component focuses on collaborative learning experiences. Research in peace education consistently demonstrates that meaningful interaction among individuals from different backgrounds can reduce prejudice and strengthen mutual understanding (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2021; Cremin & Bevington, 2024). Consequently, cooperative projects and problem-solving activities are incorporated as opportunities for students to practice peaceful engagement in authentic contexts.

The final component emphasizes reflection and value internalization. Reflection enables students to connect classroom experiences with personal beliefs and social responsibilities. Through journals, self-assessment activities, and guided contemplation, students gradually integrate moderation values into their personal identity structures (Nucci et al., 2024).

Instructional Syntax of the Peace-Oriented Pedagogy Model

The literature review further identified a sequence of instructional stages capable of translating the conceptual framework into classroom practice. These stages are designed to facilitate gradual movement from awareness toward internalization and behavioral transformation.

Table 2. Instructional Syntax of Peace-Oriented Pedagogy

Phase	Learning Activities	Expected Outcome
Peace Awareness	Exploring social conflicts and diversity issues	Awareness of social realities
Religious Exploration	Examining religious teachings related to peace	Inclusive religious understanding
Dialogical Engagement	Structured dialogue and perspective sharing	Empathy and critical reflection
Collaborative Resolution	Group problem-solving and peace projects	Cooperation and conflict-management skills
Reflective Internalization	Personal reflection and value reconstruction	Development of moderate character

The first phase focuses on raising students' awareness of contemporary social issues. Learning activities may include analyzing real-world cases of intolerance, discrimination, or social conflict. Exposure to authentic social challenges creates cognitive dissonance that stimulates deeper inquiry and reflection (Mezirow, 2018).

During the second phase, students examine religious teachings related to peace, justice, coexistence, and human dignity. Rather than presenting religious texts as isolated doctrinal statements, teachers facilitate contextual interpretation that links theological principles with contemporary social realities. This approach helps students understand that religious commitment and social inclusivity are complementary rather than contradictory goals.

The third phase involves dialogical engagement. Students participate in structured discussions that encourage active listening, respectful disagreement, and perspective-taking. Research suggests that dialogical learning environments contribute significantly to the development of democratic dispositions and intercultural competence (Banks, 2023; Zembylas et al., 2023).

The fourth phase emphasizes collaborative resolution of social issues. Students work together to identify solutions to real or simulated conflicts, thereby applying peace values in practical contexts. Such experiences help bridge the gap between conceptual understanding and behavioral application.

The final phase focuses on reflection and internalization. Students evaluate their learning experiences, reconsider prior assumptions, and formulate personal commitments related to peaceful coexistence. This stage is essential because sustainable character development depends upon the integration of values into personal identity rather than temporary behavioral compliance.

Internalization of Moderate Character Through Peace-Oriented Pedagogy

The synthesis of the literature demonstrates that moderate character develops through a gradual interaction between cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, and social practice. Consequently, moderation cannot be effectively cultivated through direct instruction alone. Instead, it requires educational experiences that engage learners holistically and provide opportunities for meaningful reflection.

Peace-Oriented Pedagogy contributes to this process by creating conditions that support perspective transformation. Through exposure to multiple viewpoints, participation in dialogue, and engagement with real social issues, students develop greater awareness of complexity and ambiguity in social life. Such awareness reduces the tendency toward binary thinking and promotes more balanced forms of judgment (Davies, 2024; Livingstone & Third, 2023).

The model also strengthens empathy, which is consistently identified as a central predictor of tolerant attitudes and peaceful behavior (Berkowitz & Bier, 2022; Nucci et al., 2024). Dialogical and collaborative activities encourage students to recognize the experiences and perspectives of others, thereby reducing prejudice and fostering social solidarity.

Another significant contribution of the model lies in its capacity to integrate spiritual and civic dimensions of education. Rather than positioning religious identity and social pluralism as competing values, the model demonstrates that commitment to one's faith can coexist with respect for diversity and democratic citizenship. This integration is increasingly important in multicultural societies where students must navigate multiple identities simultaneously (Banks, 2023; Parker, 2023).

Ultimately, the findings suggest that Peace-Oriented Pedagogy offers a promising framework for transforming religious education into a vehicle for peacebuilding and character formation. By integrating peace education principles with religious learning, the model supports the development of students who are spiritually grounded, socially responsible, and capable of engaging constructively with diversity. Such qualities represent essential competencies for sustaining social cohesion and peaceful coexistence in the increasingly interconnected and pluralistic societies of the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Peace-Oriented Pedagogy provides a relevant and transformative framework for strengthening the internalization of moderate character in religious education. By integrating critical dialogue, empathy development, reflective learning, and constructive conflict resolution into classroom practices, religious learning can move beyond doctrinal transmission toward the cultivation of inclusive, humane, and peaceful attitudes.

The findings indicate that the effectiveness of this approach lies in its ability to connect religious teachings with students' social realities, enabling them to develop respect for diversity, critical awareness, openness to different perspectives, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence. The learning process encourages students not only to understand moderation as a conceptual value but also to practice it through interaction, collaboration, and reflective engagement with social differences.

Overall, Peace-Oriented Pedagogy can serve as a strategic instructional model for fostering students who are religiously committed, socially responsible, tolerant, and capable of contributing to peacebuilding within pluralistic societies. The model also offers practical implications for curriculum development, teacher professional development, and the strengthening of inclusive educational cultures that support social harmony and sustainable peace in increasingly diverse contemporary contexts.

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