

Strengthening Religious Moderation Values among Children in Babakanmulya Village, Cigugur Sub-District, Kuningan Regency through Traditional Dance

Balgis Bachmisd¹, Diana Putri Alam², Farah Zaida³, Ghazi Muhammad Tsany⁴, Mohammad Amirudin⁵, Uu Nurul Huda⁶

¹ Sunan Ampel State Islamic University

² Pontianak State Islamic Institute

³ State Islamic University of Sumatra

⁴ Walisongo State Islamic University

⁵ Sayyid Ali Rahmatullah State Islamic University

⁶ Sunan Gunung Djati State Islamic University

¹ balgisbachmisd11@gmail.com

² dianaputri221202@gmail.com

³ farahzaida03@gmail.com

⁴ ghazimuh327@gmail.com

⁵ mohammadamirudin10901@gmail.com

⁶ uunurulhuda@gmail.com

Abstract

The internalization of religious moderation in children through dance in Babakan Mulya is a strategic initiative to strengthen moderate attitudes in a pluralistic society. Implemented by KKN Religious Moderation IV students using the Sisdamas approach, the program involved four cycles: initial socialization, social mapping, participatory planning, and program implementation and evaluation. Survey results revealed misconceptions about local arts being tied to specific religions. The program addressed this by promoting tolerance and diversity through cultural activities, such as dance group formation. Local teenagers trained the children in dance, enhancing interfaith and ethnic relations. The evaluation results revealed varying levels of children's understanding of religious moderation. Most respondents (85%) acknowledged the existence of diverse religions in Indonesia, and 74% rejected religious teasing among peers, indicating a positive attitude toward tolerance. However, 72% had never participated in celebrations of religious holidays, and only 28% felt very comfortable playing with peers of different religions, reflecting social barriers in interfaith interactions. These findings suggest that while the program was successful in raising awareness of diversity, further efforts are needed to foster inclusive practices in everyday interactions.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Character Education, Local Culture, Children's Dance, Interfaith Tolerance

Introduction

Indonesia is a country comprising thousands of islands and exhibiting remarkable diversity. "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika," Indonesia's national motto, aptly encapsulates the aspiration for unity and integrity across the country's diverse ethnic groups, cultures, languages, traditions, customs, religions, beliefs, races, and cuisines.

The preservation of this diversity represents a significant challenge for the next generation. However, the findings in Babakanmulya Village indicate a distorted understanding of the arts, perceived as a religious rather than a noble heritage from Indonesia's ancestors.

The decline in appreciation for art is a significant challenge for the younger generation in Babakanmulya. In light of the diverse forms of art, it is imperative to prioritize the preservation and promotion of Sundanese dance, which holds immense potential to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation among children. One of the key issues is that parents often neglect to instill the values of tolerance and appreciation for Indonesian culture in their children.

Furthermore, parents have come to recognize the dearth of artistic and cultural performances in Babakanmulya Village. This shift has resulted in a lack of awareness among children regarding their cultural heritage. The next generation will readily adopt modern cultural practices from external sources, thereby contributing to the erosion of their cultural heritage.

Culture has a very strong relationship with society. Melville J. Herskovits and Bronislaw Malinowski stated that all aspects of society are influenced by the culture that develops in that society. This concept is known as Cultural Determinism (Ratnasari et al., 2021).

Herskovits posits that culture is a legacy that is transmitted from one generation to the next, a process he refers to as "super organic." In his analysis, Andreas Eppink posits that culture encompasses all aspects of understanding, values, norms, and knowledge. It includes the entire social, religious, and other structural elements, as well as all forms of intellectual and artistic expression that become the distinctive identity of a society (Hendra & Supriyadi, 2020).

The Indonesian archipelago is home to a rich and diverse array of art forms, each reflecting the distinct cultural heritage of its region. This cultural wealth, which encompasses the entire Indonesian archipelago from Sabang to

Merauke, represents a valuable national asset that must be maintained and preserved.

Babakanmulya Village is one of the villages whose inhabitants adhere to traditional practices and customs. Situated at the western extremity of Kuningan Regency, this village represents an expansion of Puncak Village, which was established in 1984 in the Cigugur District of Kuningan Regency. The village is comprised of three hamlets: Cirabak, Parenca, and Tarikolot, which are notable for their diversity of religious, cultural, and ideological traditions.

Tarikolot is a hamlet where a diverse population coexists, adhering to a multitude of religious and spiritual beliefs. One such belief system is Sunda Wiwitan, which its adherents consider to be a guiding principle and way of life. The Supreme Being, who is believed to be God, is referred to as Sang Hyang Kersa. For adherents of Sunda Wiwitan, belief in Sang Hyang Kersa is considered a conduit for prosperity in their lives (Saputra, 2020).

Nevertheless, this diversity gives rise to concerns regarding the safeguarding of the culture. Mr. Sudarna, the elder of Sunda Wiwitan and one of the founders of Babakanmulya Village, has stated that he does not wish for the village's culture and history to survive only in his generation. He expresses the hope that there will be successors who truly understand and do not forget their origins, emphasizing that regeneration is needed.

This article will explain the community service program focused on strengthening the values of religious moderation in the context of Islam, the majority religion in Indonesia. This activity is important because amidst religious and cultural diversity, there is still a misconception that art, especially dance, is synonymous with certain religious practices, which has the potential to weaken appreciation for art and create social distance between groups of different faiths. Through the tradition of children's dance, this community service activity aims to equip children with an understanding of tolerance, respect for differences, and the importance of maintaining harmony in a pluralistic society. The expected contribution is not only limited to preserving dance as cultural heritage but also to strengthening moderate and inclusive attitudes from an early age, while providing a model of empowerment based on local culture that can be replicated in other regions to build a harmonious and tolerant society.

Regeneration can start as early as childhood which is often considered the golden period. During this time, the means used to provide positive stimulation play a significant role in creating a sense of comfort and happiness for children. One such tool is channeling creativity through art (Wirjosantosa, 2022).

Dance is not merely an expression of emotional movements or feelings; it also functions as a stimulus that affects the human kinesthetic nervous system, thereby producing movement patterns that possess a distinctive structure (Gunada, 2022).

Indonesia, a nation with a rich artistic and cultural heritage, offers numerous avenues for introducing its diverse arts and traditions to children at an early age. Dance, as a significant aspect of Indonesia's cultural legacy, serves as an effective conduit for instilling cultural values and traditions in children (Djono & Sariyatun, 2016)

The objective of this study is to examine the efficacy of utilizing dance as a pedagogical tool to instill religious moderation in children. This approach is exemplified in Babakan Mulya Village, where dance is a customary component of children's education. This practice serves two purposes: firstly, to safeguard cultural heritage and secondly, to foster character development that is respectful of diversity. The diversity that exists in Indonesia is not a source of division; rather, it is a cultural asset that strengthens the nation's identity, enabling it to maintain the values of diversity in all aspects of community life.

Method

The community service method employed utilizes community empowerment-based service steps (Sisdamas) conducted by the LP2M Service Center Team of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, specifically Cycles I to IV (Sururie et al., 2016). Prior to embarking on their community service, the KKN participants conducted preliminary field observations, or transects, with the objective of gaining insight into the potential, challenges, and problems that exist in Babakan Mulya Village. These potentialities, difficulties, and issues were investigated through interviews with the village officials and local leaders of Babakan Mulya. To obtain a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter, in-depth interviews were conducted with the aforementioned individuals at regular intervals.

Furthermore, data was gathered through a combination of methods, including participatory observation during the implementation of the Sisdamas KKN. The KKN participants played an active role in fostering positive attitudes among children in Babakan Mulya by employing the medium of dance as a tool for artistic expression. The subsequent method entails the training and mentoring of dance arts for children in Babakan Mulya, as well as the formation of dance groups. Moreover, the KKN participants employed Google Forms to collate the requisite data from all residents.

The descriptive method was applied to analyze the data obtained through observation, direct interviews, and thematic Google Form interviews by explaining, categorizing, and interpreting the data. Triangulation was conducted in this study to increase the level of validity of the research results.

Result

In this case, the community service was conducted in Babakan Mulya Village, group 6 with 48 students from various religious campuses in Indonesia. Group 6 was divided again into several small groups of 5-6 people to reach all residents in Babakan Mulya Village which is divided into three hamlets, Tarikolot Hamlet, Cirabak Hamlet, and Parenca Hamlet. All series of KKN stages with Sisdamas must be completed by all KKN participants and DPL within 40 days in their respective places, location. The following is a series of steps or procedures carried out:

Cycle I: Initial Socialization, Community Meeting and Social Reflection

Before the students conducted the Religious Moderation KKN using Sisdamas, they received a two-day briefing on this system at the beginning of the meeting by the LP2M Service Center of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung. After two days of debriefing, students were then released with the guidance of their respective DPLs to several villages in the Cigugur sub-district including Babakan Mulya village.

In the first cycle, during the early weeks the students conducted socialization in the neighborhood, starting with walking around the village and visiting the houses of residents. The main objective was to build a good relationship with residents and learn about the environment around the village, to achieve the first cycle of community identification, community classification, community problems, and community expectations. The

students also visited the Babakan Mulya Village office and the homes of the Village Apparatus, including the Village head, the head of the Kadus, and the local RT house.

Still in the early weeks of KKN during the implementation of Cycle I, students held community meetings in three sessions, where each meeting represented one hamlet in the village, starting with the first meeting in Tarikolot Hamlet coinciding at SDN 1 Babakan Mulya in the classroom. The second meeting was held in Cirabak Hamlet in the multipurpose building there, and the last meeting took place in Parenca Hamlet at the At-Taqwa Babakan Mulya mosque. In these meetings, self-introductions and group member introductions were conducted and students also introduced KKN Sisdamas to the community to change the community's perspective on KKN in general, which assumes that KKN students only do community service. This explanation aimed to help the community understand what KKN students are doing in the future.

After a brief explanation of Sisdamas to the community, students then instructed the community to write down the problems that exist in the village and the hopes to be achieved for the village. After instructing, some students distributed blank paper along with stationery for the community to fill out. The guests responded enthusiastically to the instructions regarding the blank paper that had been provided.

After the community meeting, the students collected the notes written by the community. The students then categorized the problems and hopes. According to the results of the community's contents, there are several categories of problems confusion in marketing home products, plantation harvests, waste processing, and youth understanding of local culture. With that, researchers aimed to raise cultural issues in children among Babakan Mulya Village.

The objective of Cycle I was to examine the potential opportunities and challenges facing Babakan Mulya Village through a process of community consultation, which proved to be a fruitful endeavor. Several potential opportunities and challenges were identified. The KKN students expressed their profound gratitude to the community for their active involvement in this cycle. In this instance, the researchers are prepared to return for Cycle II to collectively identify the optimal solutions to the challenges facing the village.

Cycle II: Social Mapping and Community Organizing

Cycle II focuses on social mapping and community organizing. The purpose of Cycle II is to map the problems that need to be prioritized to have an optimal impact on the village community, As well as to form an organization that is aligned with and relevant to the residents' problems.

Group 6 has been divided into several small groups, and these groups play their respective roles for the success of Cycle II. Each group collected data from each house and approached each resident in every household throughout the village. Each person in the group divided their respective tasks: some recorded the data, some documented the process, and other tracked the data collection process. After completing the data collection, the small group mapped and verified the findings with the RT head in each small group.

After conducting social mapping through visits to residents' homes, researchers continued organizing children in the village. In this organizing effort, researchers conducted a survey of children in the village regarding their knowledge of the surrounding culture. In categorizing community problems in the village, researchers focused on cultural issues among children in Babakan Mulya Village.

The results of the survey indicate that there are still children who think that dancing and singing, or *menhaden*, are activities of non-Muslims, or that these practices are not cultural but belong to a particular religion or belief. With this, the researchers are interested in forming an empowerment community. The main objective of forming this community is to increase children's empowerment regarding culture and religious moderation among children in Babakan Mulya Village.

Cycle III: Participatory Planning and Program Synergy

The third cycle was conducted by Group 6 in the third week, on August 10, 2024. This cycle was a continuation of Cycle II. In other words, the activities in Cycle II had not been planned in a participatory manner. It is not enough to map the needs of the community, form an empowerment community, and identify various existing problems. However, it is necessary to develop a participatory program plan by involving the community and various elements to produce programs or plans that are needed and provide benefits. The Empowerment Community formed in Cycle II played its role in Cycle III. The community and cultural leaders of Babakan Mulya began to develop participatory planning concerning social mapping.

In this plan, program priorities were determined that must be synergized with various related government agencies. However, before this, KKN participants presented the results of mapping in Babakan Mulya, this was done to identify priority programs through the data obtained. The priority program is to preserve lost cultural sharing by empowering children through the formation of dance groups.

The community was again invited by KKN participants to run Cycle III on August 13, 2024, at Parenca Isya Field until completion. This time, the meeting was dominated by a report from the Empowerment Community representatives on the priority work plan to be carried out.

They revealed that to preserve a culture that is almost lost, it must start with the formation of a dance group structure, followed by training and strengthening tolerance for the differences that exist in Babakan Mulya. However, one community leader opined that,

“I feel very grateful, if not the children, then who will know the history and maintain the culture in Babakan Mulya if the elders die.”

Both KKN participants, the Empowerment Community, and the community present then discussed the visit to Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal. Efforts to restore the preservation of this culture serve as a unifier of the plurality of religions that exist in Babakan Mulya. One of them is the Sunda Wiwitan belief, which is still sustainable, ensuring that the differences that are present do not create divisions within the community.

Based on the Minister of Home Affairs Regulation number 52 of 2007 concerning guidelines for the preservation and development of customs and socio-cultural values of the community,³ states:

Preservation and Development of Customs and Socio-Cultural Values of the Community is carried out by:

- a. Basic concept
- b. Basic program; and
- c. Implementation strategy.

In article 4, it states that the basic concept referred to in Article 3 letter a includes:

- a. accommodating local diversity to strengthen national culture
- b. creating national stability in the fields of ideology, politics, economy, socio-culture, religion, and national defense and security

- c. maintaining, protecting, and fostering the customs and socio-cultural values of the community
- d. fostering the spirit of togetherness and mutual cooperation
- e. community participation, creativity, and independence
- f. a medium for developing social capital; and
- g. the formation of community commitment and concern that upholds socio-cultural values.

In Babakan Mulya Village, Islam is still the majority religion followed by the community, although there are other religions as well, Penghayat Kepercayaan (Sunda Wiwitan) 0.9%, Christianity 0.1%, and Catholicism 0.5%. This situation is a challenge in itself to unite them through the preservation of the same culture in the West Java region.

In the process of empowering these children, the gathering of creativity and participation from both parents is also expected to be able to form a strong synergy so that children, as the successors of their culture, will blend and unite in a unified West Javanese/Sundanese culture (Fahira et al., 2023)

From the information above in Cycle III, it can be concluded that the Resinpro Cycle has produced several programs with long-term and short-term priorities. of the short-term goals include the structural preparation of dance groups with village officials and making visits to Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal to recognize and learn tolerance. The long-term goal will involve training and coaching for children to be carried out in stages in each hamlet, ensuring they comprehensively be comprehensive and able to preserve culture and maintain religious harmony.

Cycle IV: Program Implementation and Monitoring Evaluation

The last cycle is known as Lakmonev, which involves program implementation and evaluation monitoring. Priority programs that have been agreed upon in the Resinpro Cycle began to be implemented in the fourth week in the form of training and empowerment.

The main objectives of this Lakmonev Cycle are to implement the priority results of the participatory planning program, form a working group or committee based on the principle of from, by, and for the community, mobilize the role of the community in implementing the program, and build community awareness in participating in the implementation of activities for

monitoring and evaluation. The implementation process of Cycle IV was carried out in Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal during the fourth week of August 14, 2019, by all groups of KKN Religious Moderation participants and dance groups as community organizations formed in Cycle III.

In the previous cycle, the KKN participants involved the community in each cycle. In this last cycle, the Religious Moderation KKN participants facilitated the community to implement the program according to Dorantif. The KKN participants functioned as children's companions in the Cultural Tour activities and the delivery of material from Rama Anom Gumirat Bartna Alam II, which was held at Paseban Tri Panca Tunggal.



Figure 1: Screening and Watching Saren Taun Movie and Delivery of Materials on Religious Moderation and Sundanese Culture

Figure 1 shows KKN participants accompanying Babakan Mulya children in the process of screening the Saren Taun movie, which discusses tolerance towards the various religions practiced by the Cigugur community. In addition, the movie also taught various meanings about the Saren Taun culture that is celebrated every year.

At the screening of the film and the material delivered by Rama Anom Gumirat Bartna Alam II, Babakan Mulya children and KKN participants were gathered in the living room to follow the material presentation from Rama. They were divided into three groups to be accompanied by KKN participants because, in some places, there were restrictions on sitting or others activities.

Therefore, Rama emphasized importance of guarding the children during the process of traveling around Paseban.



Figure 2: The Dance Group's First Performance at the Closing of the Religious Moderation KKN 2024

The children are trained by teenagers from Tarikolot, and the dance group practices at Paeban or one of the Babakan Mulya community houses. The target of the dance group is to perform at the closing ceremony of the 2024 Religious Moderation KKN. Eighteen members from the children take part in a series of activities from Babakan Mulya Social Culture.

At the event, it has been designed for children to follow the material session with Rama in Paseban. The material presented will increase the knowledge of children about the diversity of cultures typical of West Java so that they have a foundation to see diversity as a unity that must be appreciated, lived, and preserved (Akbar & Abidin, 2018)

Some of the names below are structures formed together for the Babakan Mulya Dance Group:

Table 1. Babakanmulya Dance Group Structure

Person in charge: Ibu Leni
Trainer: Muthia

Children's List:	
- Depi Nur Mala Sari	- Mira Aulia
- Nabila Asandra	- Nia Aprilia
- Herlina Putri	- Depira
- Nayla Siti Aprilianti	- Nazwa aziyah
- Ainiyah Salwa	- adiba nurbactiar
- Ghifania Aulia Regina	- Nabila Niza Maulida
- Marsha Aulia Zahra	- Anisa Maulina
- Aulia Yuspita	- Nia Aprilia

Discussion

Evaluation Test

The following are the results of the tests we conducted on the children who participated in the Babakan Mulya Social Culture activities:

N o	Question	Very Knowledge able	Knowledge able	Somewhat Knowledge able	Not Knowledge able
1	Did you know that in Indonesia there are many religions practiced by people?	46%	39%	11%	3%
2	Do your friends at school come from different religions?	12%	42%	9%	40%
3	How would you feel if a friend had a different religion from you?	35%	63%	0%	7%

4	Are you taught to respect your friends who have different religions?	60%	44%	0%	7%
5	Have you ever celebrated other religions' holidays with your friends?	2%	5%	21%	72%
6	Do you think it's important to maintain harmony with friends of different religions?	42%	33%	26%	0%
7	How would you behave if you saw a friend mocking someone else's religion?	21%	53%	23%	0%
8	Have your parents or teachers ever taught you about the importance of respecting religious differences?	14%	28%	51%	7%
9	Do you feel comfortable playing with friends of	28%	21%	26%	30%

	different religions?				
10	What do you think about studying with friends of different religions?	35%	42%	5%	0%

From the evaluation test results after the material presented by Rama Anom Gumirat Bartna Alam II, awareness of tolerance increased, and they began to understand the differences that exist in Babakan Mulya. Their attitudes and mindsets began to take shape from the activities organized by the 2024 Religious Moderation KKN Students (Mastur et al., 2017)

Discussion

Community service activities in Babakan Mulya Village demonstrate the dynamic relationship between religion and culture within a pluralistic society. On the one hand, religious plurality in Cigugur District fosters a diversity of religious expressions, but at the same time, local culture, particularly dance, acts as a social glue (Rahman & Yafie, 2023). Culture serves as a bridge that can mitigate potential tensions arising from differences in belief, as it is passed down as a collective identity that is acceptable across religions. However, modern developments have marginalized some traditional cultural practices, making the reinvigoration of local arts increasingly relevant (Wirjosantosa, 2022). In this context, children's dance serves as a medium to foster awareness that diversity is not a threat but rather a social strength that must be nurtured.

From a child education perspective, this community service also emphasizes that early childhood is a crucial phase in character formation. Montessori theory explains that children in their golden years more easily absorb values, customs, and experiences (Montessori, 1949/2002), making dance activities an appropriate medium for instilling the value of religious moderation. Learning to dance not only hones children's motor, cognitive, and emotional skills but also introduces them to the values of togetherness, respect for differences, and cultural preservation (Akbar & Abidin, 2018). The children's involvement in traditional dance in Babakan Mulya Village

demonstrates that art can serve as an effective vehicle for character education while also strengthening religious moderation through regular and enjoyable interfaith interactions.

Thus, the dialectic between religion and culture in this community service demonstrates that local arts, particularly children's dance, are not only instruments for preserving cultural heritage but also serve as a social educational platform capable of fostering values of tolerance and religious moderation in the younger generation. This demonstrates that a culture-based approach can be an effective alternative strategy for building social harmony in multicultural societies (Fauzan & Nashar, 2017).

Conclusion and Suggestion

Evaluation results indicate that the majority of children in Babakanmulya Village (85%) are aware of religious diversity in Indonesia, and most (74%) reject acts of mocking other religions, with 93% stating they are ready to respect friends of different faiths. This indicates that the value of tolerance is beginning to develop well. However, the practice of interfaith interaction remains limited, as evidenced by the fact that 72% of children have never participated in celebrating religious holidays and only 28% feel very comfortable playing with friends of different faiths. Furthermore, the role of families and schools still needs to be strengthened, as only 42% of children reported frequently receiving teachings about the importance of respecting religious differences.

This situation suggests that traditional dance has the potential to be an effective medium for instilling values of religious moderation while preserving local culture.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that culture-based programs such as dance be continued on an ongoing basis to provide a space for moderate character education for children. The role of parents and teachers also needs to be strengthened in providing an understanding of tolerance and respect for differences, so that learning does not stop at the Community Service Program (KKN) but continues in everyday life. Furthermore, support from village governments and educational institutions is crucial in preserving traditional arts while simultaneously transforming them into instruments for national education and religious moderation. Future research is needed to examine the long-term impact of culture-based activities on developing moderate attitudes among the younger generation in multicultural societies.

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