

Strengthening National Identity and Religious Moderation through Civic Engagement-Based Citizenship Education in Higher Education

Aulia Sholichah Iman Nurchotimah ¹⁾, Alif Aditya Candra ²⁾, John Mark S. Astorga ³⁾,
Sigit Pandu Cahyono ⁴⁾, Meysita Intan Patrisya ⁵⁾

^{1, 5)} Faculty of Ushuluddin and Adab, State Islamic University of Cyber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon,
Indonesia

²⁾ Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

³⁾ Research and Development Department, Granby Colleges of Science and Technology,
Philippines

⁴⁾ CBDC, Binus University Semarang, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Aulia Sholichah Iman Nurchotimah, Email: auliasin@uinssc.ac.id

History: Received 04/08/2025 | Revised 15/08/2025 | Accepted 25/10/2025 | Published 30/10/2025

Abstract. This study aims to: (1) describe students' understanding of national identity and religious moderation at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon; (2) explain the role of civic engagement as a bridge between national values and religious moderation within the dichotomy of religious-based and participatory social approaches in higher education; and (3) analyze the similarities and differences in civic engagement approaches within Citizenship Education curricula at both institutions. Employing a qualitative approach with a multiple case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model and Yin's cross-case analysis framework. The findings reveal that students' comprehension of national identity and religious moderation varies, influenced by academic background, social experience, and campus environment. At UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, the *Rumah Moderasi Beragama* (House of Religious Moderation) plays a central role in promoting the integration of religious and national values, although tensions remain between students of general and religious study programs. Meanwhile, Universitas Jambi has established the *Griya Moderasi Beragama dan Bela Negara* (GMBBN), which fosters student civic engagement through multiethnic, intercultural, and social initiatives. Civic engagement effectively serves as a meeting point between religious and civic values. The Citizenship Education curriculum at UIN is more ideologically religious, while Universitas Jambi applies a more contextual and participatory approach. This study recommends strengthening the integration of civic engagement into the Citizenship Education curriculum to enhance students' national identity and inclusive religious attitudes in multicultural higher education environments.

Keywords: Civic Engagement; Citizenship Education; National Identity; Religious Moderation; Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Various issues related to national identity and religious moderation remain significant challenges in many regions, including Cirebon and Jambi. In Cirebon, which is known for its strong Islamic cultural roots, a study by BPS (2022) indicates a tendency toward exclusivism within traditional pesantren communities, which potentially hampers the integration of national values into religious discourse.

The 2023 report by the Setara Institute (2023) also noted an increase in reports of religion-based intolerance in the Cirebon area, particularly in public spaces and on social media. Meanwhile, an internal survey by LP2M UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati (2024) involving 300 students revealed that only 61% of respondents had a comprehensive understanding of the principles of religious moderation, while 22% still interpreted religiosity in a black-and-white manner without taking national values into account.

In the Jambi region, the complexity of its multiethnic and multicultural composition presents its own challenges in shaping an inclusive national identity. According to a 2023 survey conducted by the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) at Universitas Jambi, 47% of students had not yet developed an integrative understanding between national values and their local ethnic identities.

Observations of student organization discussions revealed that primordial sentiments (based on regional and religious affiliations) still dominate national discourse, occasionally triggering horizontal polarization. This is further supported by a study by Usman et al. (2025), which noted the presence of discriminatory practices within intra-campus student organizations.

Meanwhile, in Cirebon, mentoring activities for TPQ (Qur'anic Learning Center) teachers conducted by Umayah et al. (2023) found that 57% of them did not yet hold a moderate understanding of religious values, indicating a need to strengthen religious moderation through deeper comprehension of the Qur'an.

According to the 2023 report by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), 25% of university students in Indonesia have been exposed to intolerant content—either directly through social media or indirectly via closed-group discourse. This exposure is feared to become a gateway to radicalism if not counterbalanced by strong civic education and religious moderation values (BNPT, 2023).

This research was conducted at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, as both institutions represent different socio-cultural backgrounds, providing a rich context for examining the reinforcement of national identity and religious moderation through Civic Education. Universitas Jambi, a public university located in Sumatra, reflects the region's ethnic and religious diversity. These characteristics make it a strategic site for understanding civic engagement practices in a pluralistic society.

Meanwhile, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, an Islamic-based university in West Java, offers a unique potential for fostering religious moderation through faith-based education aligned with national values. UIN Siber also faces specific challenges in integrating moderation values into a

religiously oriented curriculum, making it highly relevant for investigation within the civic engagement framework.

Preliminary findings confirm that Universitas Jambi has established a "House of Religious Moderation," as has UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati. This parallel initiative at both institutions strengthens the foundation for producing more comprehensive and comparative research outcomes.

Initial observations at Universitas Jambi indicate that although programs such as the House of Religious Moderation (*Griya Moderasi Beragama*) and the National Defense Unit (*Unit Bela Negara*) have been established, the implementation of moderation and national values has not yet fully permeated learning practices and student activities. In the delivery of Civic Education courses, it was found that most students perceive civic engagement as an additional activity rather than a core component of civic learning. This is reflected in the low levels of student participation in community service programs that emphasize diversity and social inclusion.

Meanwhile, at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, the House of Religious Moderation (*Rumah Moderasi Beragama*) has become an active center for promoting a tolerant religious narrative. However, field observations reveal a duality of perspectives between students in general academic programs and those in religion-based programs regarding the relationship between religion and the state. Some students still perceive national values as secular constructs that conflict with sharia principles, despite institutional efforts by the university to integrate religious moderation into the curricula of various study programs.

these findings indicate that, although initiatives such as the House of Religious Moderation (*Griya Moderasi Beragama*) and the National Defense Program (*Bela Negara*) based on Pancasila values have been implemented—as affirmed by Purwaningsih et al. (2022), who emphasized that integrating Pancasila values into the learning process can strengthen students' multicultural character—significant challenges remain in the internalization of national values and religious moderation at Universitas Jambi and the House of Religious Moderation at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. Therefore, it is essential to systematically examine how a Civic Education model based on civic engagement can serve as an effective alternative strategy to strengthen national identity and promote moderate religious attitudes at both campuses.

National identity and religious moderation are two fundamental pillars that underpin the preservation of social stability and harmony amid Indonesia's diverse society. As a nation with a multiethnic and multireligious population, Indonesia faces considerable challenges in maintaining national unity in the face of threats such as social polarization, radicalism, and disintegration. In this context, education plays a strategic role particularly Civic Education (*Pendidikan*

Kewarganegaraan, or PKn) which aims to instill national values, tolerance, and respect for diversity.

According to the theory of civic engagement proposed by Putnam (2000), individuals' active participation in community life can strengthen social capital, which includes trust, social networks, and norms of reciprocity. In the context of higher education, a civic engagement approach offers relevant learning experiences in which students are directly involved in social activities that encourage them to deeply understand national identity and religious moderation. This aligns with the concept of character education, which emphasizes the importance of shaping attitudes, skills, and moral values as integral parts of the learning process (Lickona, 1992).

On the other hand, the theory of religious moderation emphasizes balance in understanding and implementing religious teachings, thereby fostering tolerance and inclusivity (An-Na'im, 2008). Religious moderation-based education becomes essential in higher education institutions, considering their dual role not only as centers for scientific development but also as arenas for character formation and the reinforcement of national consciousness (Muliawan, 2017).

These two institutions provide a broad spectrum of civic engagement-based citizenship education practices, allowing this study to explore and compare the approaches used to strengthen national identity and religious moderation. Therefore, this research is not only academically relevant but also offers practical contributions to developing curricula capable of addressing the challenges of nationalism and religious diversity in Indonesia.

Within this framework, the study focuses on three interrelated main issues. First, how students at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon understand national identity and religious moderation. This understanding is crucial as it forms the foundation for developing inclusive and integrity-based citizenship character. Second, how civic engagement serves as a bridge between national values and religious attitudes amidst the dichotomy between normative religion-based approaches and more contextual participatory social approaches. This is critical since higher education often finds itself trapped in the pedagogical dichotomy between ideological values and reflective social practices. Third, what are the similarities and differences in civic engagement approaches within the Citizenship Education curriculum in the two universities. This comparison is essential to assess how religious and public institutions adopt civic engagement in systematically shaping students' national and religious character. These three questions form the main foundation for the analysis and arguments presented in this article.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore and understand the subjective meanings individuals assign to social phenomena. This approach emphasizes the natural context, the role of the researcher as the primary instrument, and an inductive and thematic data analysis process. Therefore, the qualitative approach in this study enables the researcher to gain a deep understanding of civic engagement practices within the context of Citizenship Education at two different universities (Creswell, 2014).

A qualitative approach with a multiple case study design was employed, involving two higher education institutions: UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati and Universitas Jambi. This approach was selected to explore in depth the phenomena of strengthening national identity and religious moderation through civic engagement-based Citizenship Education across different institutional and social contexts.

According to Yin (2018), a multiple case study is a research strategy that allows for comparative analysis of two or more cases studied in parallel and systematically. This design is used when researchers seek to determine whether findings from one case can be replicated (literal replication) or produce contrasting patterns (theoretical replication). Unlike a single case study that focuses on a unique or critical unit, multiple case studies allow for analytic, rather than statistical, generalizability.

The unit of analysis in this study is the practice of civic engagement-based Citizenship Education at each university, as represented in the experiences, perceptions, and involvement of students. This study also considers institutional policies and programs that support civic engagement, as well as the integration of national identity and religious moderation values within the curriculum.

Table: Local Characteristics of the Study

Aspect	Universitas Jambi	UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon
Type of Higher Education	General Public University (PTU)	Religious-Based Higher Education Institution (PTKI)
Socio-Cultural Environment	Multi-ethnic, religiously diverse	Predominantly Islamic, rooted in West Java's local culture
Implementation of Civic Engagement	Community-based local social projects	Islamic curriculum integrated with civic values
Center for Religious Moderation	Present	Present

These differing characteristics were purposively selected to enable the researcher to observe variations in implementation contexts, which may enrich data interpretation and help affirm or refute findings across cases. Case Study Research Flow This research was designed by following the stages recommended by Yin (2018), which include:

1. Designing the case study and developing the research protocol;
2. Collecting data from multiple sources: interviews, observations, and documents;
3. Providing in-depth descriptions of each case (intra-case analysis);
4. Conducting cross-case synthesis to identify patterns of similarities and differences;
5. Drawing conclusions through triangulation and data verification.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three primary techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted with students, lecturers of Citizenship Education courses, and managers of religious moderation programs to obtain diverse perspectives. Second, participant observation was carried out during teaching processes and relevant civic engagement activities to gain a direct understanding of implementation dynamics in the field. Third, document analysis was conducted to examine curriculum documents, syllabi, learning modules, activity reports, and institutional policies related to the research topic.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study follows the interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman (1994), which is considered relevant for qualitative research due to its ability to systematically capture the complexity and dynamics of field data. This model consists of three main stages that occur simultaneously and cyclically.

The first stage is data reduction, which involves the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation into meaningful information focused on the research objectives. This reduction is carried out through initial coding, thematic categorization, and grouping based on predetermined indicators.

The second stage is data display, where the reduced data are organized in narrative form, tables, or matrices to facilitate interpretation and decision-making. This presentation serves as a bridge between the reduction process and the conclusion-drawing phase.

The data analysis in this study follows the interactive model developed by Miles & Huberman (1994), which is considered relevant for qualitative research as it systematically captures the complexity and dynamics of field data. This model consists of three main stages that occur simultaneously and cyclically.

The first stage is data reduction, which refers to the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation into meaningful information aligned with the research objectives. This reduction is carried out through initial coding, thematic categorization, and grouping based on predetermined indicators.

The second stage is data display, in which the reduced data are organized in narrative form, tables, or matrices to facilitate interpretation and decision-making. This stage serves as a bridge between data reduction and conclusion drawing.

The third stage is conclusion drawing and verification, conducted by examining emerging patterns from the data and comparing them with the theoretical framework. The conclusions are provisional and continuously tested through source and method triangulation to ensure their consistency and validity.

In the context of a multiple case study, the analysis was carried out in stages. First, intra-case analysis was performed to understand the characteristics and dynamics of each case in depth. Subsequently, inter-case or cross-case analysis was conducted by comparing findings from both research sites using the logic of replication as proposed by Yin (2018), in order to identify significant patterns of similarity and difference between the two institutional contexts under study.

Data Validity

To ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the data, this study applies qualitative principles as outlined by Lincoln & Guba (1985), which include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. This research utilizes source, method, and time triangulation to guarantee the reliability of the findings.

In addition, the researcher employed a case study protocol and established a chain of evidence, as recommended by Yin (2018), to enhance transparency and traceability throughout the analytical process. Data validity was further reinforced through member checking, by which preliminary findings were confirmed with key informants to ensure the accuracy of interpretations derived from field data.

Research Subjects

This research was conducted at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon and Universitas Jambi. The research subjects were students from both institutions. These subjects were selected based on the consideration that university students represent a group with dynamic social awareness and strong potential to engage in strengthening national identity and religious moderation through civic engagement within Citizenship Education courses.

The perspectives of students from both universities are expected to provide valuable insights into how they perceive, understand, and potentially participate in the reinforcement of national identity and religious moderation through civic engagement in higher education Citizenship Education

RESULT

Students' Understanding of National Identity and Religious Moderation

The research findings were obtained through in-depth interviews with students of Universitas Jambi, students of UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, lecturers of Civic Education from both universities, as well as members of the Religious Moderation House at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon **and** members of the House of Religious Moderation and National Defense (GMBBN) at Universitas Jambi. These data were further supported by participant observations in classroom and extracurricular activities, and document analysis of institutional programs on civic engagement and religious moderation.

The results reveal that students' understanding of national identity and religious moderation varies across both universities, influenced by academic background, social experience, and institutional context.

At Universitas Jambi, national identity is perceived through the principles of *Pancasila*, the 1945 Constitution, and the motto *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* (Unity in Diversity), which are internalized through Civic Education courses and student activities promoting pluralism and local democracy. Interviews with several students show that nationalism is understood not merely as symbolic pride in the nation, but as an ethical commitment to respect cultural and ethnic diversity within campus life.

At UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, national identity is more deeply rooted in religious values, particularly through the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love of the homeland as part of faith). Interviews with Civic Education lecturers and members of the Religious Moderation House reveal that national and religious values are integrated into both curriculum and community service programs. However, some differences remain between students of general and religious study programs regarding the relationship between Islam and state ideology.

Both institutions show progress in fostering religious moderation. Universitas Jambi promotes tolerance through interfaith and multicultural initiatives under the GMBBN, while UIN Siber instills *wasathiyah* (moderation) values through moderate Islamic education and interfaith dialogue. Students actively participating in these programs display higher levels of empathy, openness, and national commitment than those who are less engaged.

The Role of Civic Engagement as a Bridge Between National Values and Religious Moderation

Interviews with lecturers and students from both universities indicate that **civic** engagement serves as an effective pedagogical bridge that connects national values with religious moderation in higher education contexts.

At Universitas Jambi, civic engagement is practiced through GMBBN activities such as tolerance facilitator training, interfaith service-learning projects, and national dialogue forums. A GMBBN member emphasized that “religious moderation is part of national defense; we learn to love our country by appreciating the differences of faith and culture around us.” Such participatory experiences help students to develop an inclusive and practical understanding of nationalism rooted in daily social life.

At UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, civic engagement is implemented through *service-learning* activities guided by Islamic moderation principles such as *wasathiyah*, *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood), and *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy to all creation). Interviews with Civic Education lecturers and members of the Religious Moderation House indicate that students are encouraged to translate religious values into civic practices by participating in community projects in pluralistic settings. One lecturer noted that “our civic engagement goes beyond technical participation it touches the students’ spiritual dimension in understanding diversity as a national destiny.”

Thus, civic engagement functions as a dialectical and reflective space where religious and civic values intersect, allowing students to cultivate civic responsibility and spiritual consciousness simultaneously.

Differences and Similarities in Civic Engagement Approaches within the Citizenship Education Curriculum

Although both universities have integrated civic engagement into the Civic Education curriculum, the approaches differ in orientation and implementation.

At Universitas Jambi, the approach is contextual and participatory (bottom-up). Interviews with Civic Education lecturers reveal that students are encouraged to identify real social issues such as environmental conflict, cultural diversity, and social inclusion—and design community-based projects to address them. This approach strengthens students’ understanding that national values must be practiced through social action, not only discussed in theoretical terms.

In contrast, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon applies a religious-ideological (top-down) approach. Civic engagement is framed by moderate Islamic theology that emphasizes the harmony between faith and citizenship. Students are involved in activities such as *pesantren*

outreach, religious moderation training, and inter-madhab dialogue under the guidance of the Religious Moderation House. The head of the institution stated that “religious and national values are not contradictory but mutually reinforcing within civic learning.” Despite their differences, both institutions produce similar outcomes: the enhancement of students’ tolerance, civic empathy, and commitment to inclusive nationalism.

Cross-Case Synthesis

The cross-case analysis demonstrates that civic engagement-based Citizenship Education at both institutions effectively strengthens students’ understanding of national identity and religious moderation, albeit through different institutional and cultural pathways. UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon emphasizes a *faith-driven civic consciousness*, cultivating moral integrity and religiously grounded civic attitudes among students.

Universitas Jambi focuses on a *community-driven civic action* model, nurturing students’ social empathy and pluralistic national awareness through practical participation. Together, these findings affirm that integrating civic engagement into higher education serves as a transformative approach to harmonizing religious and civic values. It simultaneously reinforces national identity and promotes moderate religiosity, shaping students into active, reflective, and responsible citizens in a multicultural democracy.

DISCUSSION

Students’ Understanding of National Identity and Religious Moderation at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati

Students’ understanding of national identity and religious moderation at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon reveals intriguing conceptual differences, despite sharing common foundational values. At Universitas Jambi, national identity is understood as an awareness of the importance of Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, and unity in diversity, internalized through the Citizenship Education (PKn) curriculum and student activities focused on pluralism and local democracy.

In contrast, at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, national identity is more closely tied to religious values, particularly through the concept of *hubbul wathan minal iman* (love for the homeland as part of faith), which forms the spiritual foundation of the Religious Moderation House activities.

In this context, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) explains that students’ national identity formation is greatly influenced by their social group membership and dominant institutional values—cognitively (as awareness of being a citizen), affectively (as pride in national symbols), and evaluatively (as positive assessment of diversity). A study by Nasution and

Zulkarnain (2023) confirms that educational institutions play a crucial role in shaping students' national identity amid rising socio-political polarization.

Religious moderation at both universities shows a positive trend. At Universitas Jambi, students cultivate tolerance through interfaith activities facilitated by the Griya Moderasi Beragama dan Bela Negara (GMBBN), while at UIN Siber, the principles of *wasathiyah* (moderation) are instilled through moderate Islamic teachings and interfaith dialogue. According to Saifuddin (2018), balanced and inclusive religiosity is key to preventing extremism and building peaceful coexistence. Research by Adnan, Siregar, and Wahyuni (2024) supports this finding, showing that students actively involved in religious moderation programs tend to be more open-minded, tolerant, and nationally committed.

Students who value tolerance, reject symbolic violence, and engage in interfaith social activities demonstrate that moderation is functionally transmitted through higher education ecosystems. Hence, both national identity and religious moderation develop synergistically at the two universities, though shaped by different institutional approaches and socio-cultural contexts.

Civic engagement in university life is increasingly recognized as a pedagogical strategy that bridges students' religious and national identities. A recent study by Chen and Abdullah (2023) found that students' participation in community-based projects significantly enhances their tolerance and loyalty to constitutional values. This aligns with conditions at Universitas Jambi, where students involved in GMBBN projects deepen their understanding of pluralism through interfaith and social collaboration. According to Badillo et al. (2024), citizenship education integrated with civic action fosters deeper internalization of civic values than conventional classroom approaches.

At UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, the integration of *wasathiyah* values into civic engagement is a distinct institutional hallmark. Research by Ahmed and Fatimah (2022) highlights that religious universities can play a strategic role in promoting inclusivity when civic projects are designed for interfaith and collaborative goals. This is reflected in the testimony of RD, a Citizenship Education lecturer at UIN, who stated that students are trained to regard religious values as a social ethos rather than ideological barriers.

This is consistent with the philosophy of citizenship education, in which scholars argue that civic values, skills, and behaviors are essential not only for the sustainability of the nation but also for society at large (Nurchotimah et al., 2023).

In practice, student service-learning projects function as a concrete medium to bridge the dichotomy between religious-based and social approaches. According to Kavakli & Sari (2023), engagement with diverse communities creates students' reflective awareness of the importance

of social harmony within national identity. A study by Martinez & Rojas (2024) found that interfaith civic engagement enhances students' capacity for intercultural dialogue.

Instructor strategies also play a vital role. Ismail et al. (2023) found that transformative pedagogy is more effective in simultaneously developing civic identity and religious moderation values than traditional lecturing methods. This was evident in RD's interview, who described PKn classes at UIN as spaces for dialogue between religious and civic values.

This aligns with Astuti and Wibawa (2024), who found that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can foster tolerance and cultural diversity values effectively from primary education onward—supporting the notion that civic engagement-based Citizenship Education strengthens national identity and religious moderation in higher education.

Furthermore, Singh & Andayani (2023) highlighted that institutional support for civic projects enhances student participation sustainability. In this regard, the presence of the Religious Moderation House at UIN and GMBBN at Universitas Jambi provides a structural foundation that reinforces both moderation and nationalism. Observations also revealed that students active in these institutions demonstrated higher levels of reflection and social empathy.

Zhang & Hidayat (2025) concluded that effective civic engagement must be rooted in culturally relevant local approaches. Therefore, UIN's service-learning model, based on moderate Islamic narratives, and UNJA's model, grounded in Jambi's local multiculturalism, are both valid—though distinct—approaches. Prasetyo & Azzahra (2024) added that integrating spiritual and civic values must be institutionally regulated to avoid being merely symbolic.

Ultimately, this study strengthens Bukhari & Yoon's (2025) argument that civic engagement is a dialectical space where religious and civic values need not conflict but can be synthesized into an inclusive and civil national consciousness.

The students' understanding of national identity and religious moderation continues to be an academic concern, especially within multicultural higher education. Nugroho and Iswandi (2023) found that students' digital citizenship literacy significantly shapes their understanding of nationalism in the post-truth era. Meanwhile, Lestari et al. (2024) confirmed that cross-cultural project-based learning enhances students' appreciation for national and diversity values.

In the context of religious moderation, Suryani and Fathoni (2022) found that students engaged in interfaith dialogue exhibit greater social tolerance than those with purely theoretical exposure. Similarly, Rakhmat and Qamar (2025) concluded that internalizing *hubbul wathan* (love of the homeland) is more effective when embedded in cross-identity service-learning. Hanifah and Chandra (2023) added that the use of reflective media such as vlogs and online journals strengthens students' awareness of the relationship between religion and nationalism.

These findings reinforce the relevance of civic engagement as a pedagogical approach capable of deepening students' understanding of national identity and moderate religiosity both contextually and simultaneously.

The Role of Civic Engagement as a Bridge Between National Values and Religious Moderation Amid the Dichotomy Between Faith-Based and Social Participatory Approaches in Higher Education at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati dan Universitas Jambi

This study reveals that civic engagement plays a central role in bridging national values and religious moderation within the context of higher education. Students at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon actively participate in inclusive social and religious activities, which directly shape their identities as both religious and nationalistic citizens.

Activities such as tolerance facilitator training, interfaith service projects, and national dialogue forums organized by the Griya Moderasi Beragama dan Bela Negara (GMBBN) at Universitas Jambi serve as dialectical spaces where religious and civic values interact. In an interview, SH, an active member of GMBBN UNJA, stated, *"Religious moderation is part of defending the nation; students learn to love their country by appreciating differences in faith and culture around them."* This statement illustrates how civic engagement environments encourage students to transcend sectarian boundaries and foster a sense of national awareness grounded in inclusivity.

Meanwhile, at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, civic engagement is implemented through the strengthening of the Religious Moderation House and the integration of moderate Islamic values into the Citizenship Education curriculum. In an interview, ML, a lecturer in Citizenship Education at UIN Siber, emphasized that, *"The civic engagement we promote goes beyond technical participation; it also touches the spiritual dimension of students in understanding diversity as a social destiny of this nation."* He added that community service activities in pluralistic areas such as Cirebon are effective means of instilling values such as *wasathiyah* (moderation), *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood), and constitutional nationalism.

In practice, students do not only learn about citizenship theory in the classroom; they also directly experience how moderate Islamic values can be applied in diverse social contexts.

These findings are in line with Putnam's (2000) theory of civic engagement, which posits that active participation in social life fosters social capital such as trust, solidarity, and cross-identity networks. Civic engagement thus becomes a space for integrating religious and civic values—especially in higher education institutions with their distinct ideological narratives. Thomas Lickona's (1992) theory of character education is also relevant here, as it emphasizes the importance of real-life experiential learning in shaping moral attitudes and social empathy.

Furthermore, An-Na'im (2008) argues that authentic religious moderation can only emerge through social encounters—not from exclusive doctrines. Therefore, civic engagement activities that combine religious and nationalistic dimensions not only expand students' civic horizons but also deepen their contextualized spiritual consciousness.

Accordingly, the results of this study affirm that civic engagement serves as a synthesizing arena between faith-based and socially participatory approaches in citizenship education. Through programs collaboratively designed by religious moderation institutions and course instructors, students at both campuses develop a dual identity: as citizens who love their country and as individuals who practice religion moderately. This form of citizenship education is not only cognitive but also affective and practical—a promising middle ground for a pluralistic nation's future.

Students' involvement in civic engagement practices appears to be a tangible bridge between national values and religious moderation principles. In an interview with a Citizenship Education lecturer at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, RD stated, *"Community service and interfaith projects not only teach students about tolerance, but also instill a sense of responsibility as both religious and nationalistic citizens."* This statement supports classroom observations in UIN's Civic Education course, where students often connect discussions on religious moderation with community-based patriotic practices. Active participation in the Religious Moderation House also demonstrates that the understanding of national identity is not rigid, but built through contextual social experiences.

These findings align with Ahmed and Fatimah (2022), who show that students' involvement in religiously oriented social projects fosters the development of inclusive and spiritually rooted civic identities. At Universitas Jambi, civic engagement is promoted through GMBBN, which integrates patriotism and interfaith discussions as part of character education. In an interview, the GMBBN chairperson remarked, *"Religious moderation and national spirit must be nurtured through real social experiences, not just classroom theory."* Thus, civic engagement functions not merely as an extracurricular activity, but as a reflective medium that unites religious and civic values within students.

Research by Singh and Andayani (2023) further supports this by showing that universities facilitating the integration of social-religious experiences into education are more successful in cultivating an inclusive sense of nationalism

Differences and Similarities in Civic Engagement Approaches within the Citizenship Education Curriculum at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati

The civic engagement approaches within the Citizenship Education (PKn) curriculum at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati share foundational values but differ in practice and narrative orientation. At Universitas Jambi, civic engagement is implemented through project-based learning and service learning, emphasizing social participation, local democracy, and contextual civic issues.

A PKn lecturer at UNJA noted in an interview, *“We emphasize how students learn from their surrounding social realities: from environmental conflicts and cultural pluralism to participation in village deliberations.”* This approach reflects a bottom-up character, where student and community initiatives serve as the primary drivers. Israpil and Suardi (2021) also highlight that integrating religious moderation values into Civic and Sociology education at both Islamic and public schools can be strengthened through creative and context-sensitive learning media innovations.

In contrast, at UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati, civic engagement is more closely tied to the integration of moderate Islamic values such as *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) and *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (mercy for all creation).

The Head of UIN’s Religious Moderation House emphasized, *“Our civic approach is framed by moderate Islamic theology, which unifies religious duty with national responsibility.”* UIN students are involved in activities such as national outreach to Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), community-based religious moderation training, and cross-madhab discussions within the context of Islamic nationalism. This reflects a more ideologically top-down approach, in which religious values serve as the core foundation of civic engagement.

While students at both institutions express enthusiasm toward civic engagement, their perceptions of learning emphasis differ. UNJA students reported that their programs allow for the actualization of civic values without ideological pressure, whereas UIN students believe that embedding religious values in civic engagement provides deeper spiritual meaning and a stronger sense of responsibility toward the state.

These findings are supported by researcher observations: UNJA students tend to utilize social media for environmental and educational advocacy, while UIN Siber students are active in producing content on nationalistic preaching and pluralistic Islamic reflection rooted in moderation narratives

These findings are consistent with recent research by Yusuf and Hidayat (2023), which indicates that civic engagement approaches in faith-based universities tend to prioritize the

transformation of religious values into civic practices. Conversely, public universities develop civic engagement with a stronger emphasis on political participation and community-based social action. A study by Sasmita et al. (2024) also found that hybridizing religious and civic values is essential in today's Citizenship Education curriculum—particularly in addressing challenges such as intolerance, political apathy, and social fragmentation among youth.

Thus, the differences in approach between Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon reflect their respective institutional contexts and ideological orientations, yet they share a common goal: to cultivate students with inclusive national identity, religious awareness, and active social participation. The potential for integrating a hybrid model from both approaches offers a promising direction for developing a contextual, reflective, and transformative curriculum, as proposed by Mubarak & Lestari (2022) in their framework for multicultural-responsive Citizenship Education design.

Furthermore, students' involvement in civic engagement also fosters reflective awareness of their roles as citizens who embody both religious and national identities. A student from UNJA shared during an interview, *"Through the 'Interfaith Student Patriotism' program, I learned that nationalism must be manifested in real actions, not just symbolic enthusiasm."* Meanwhile, a student from UIN Siber remarked that experiences of inter-madhab dialogue and community service helped them internalize love of country as part of their faith.

These field findings are in line with research by Chen & Abdullah (2023), which shows that student involvement in civic initiatives supports the development of a balanced civil-religious identity. Kavakli & Sari (2023) emphasize that interfaith dialogue on campus enhances social empathy and reduces sectarian prejudice. Bukhari & Yoon (2025) conclude that the synergy of spiritual and civic values in civic engagement fosters an inclusive and humanistic national identity. This sequence of findings illustrates that civic engagement is a practical and transformational space where students can synthesize religious and civic values through direct experience, not merely cognitive processes.

The analysis of differences and similarities in civic engagement approaches within the Citizenship Education curriculum at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon reveals two complementary models. An interview with the Head of UIN Siber's Religious Moderation House stated, *"We design service-learning activities based on moderate religious values such as wasathiyah and ukhuwah wathaniyah, so that students understand that religiosity and nationalism can mutually reinforce one another."* On the other hand, a PKn lecturer at UNJA explained, *"At UNJA, the civic engagement approach is more contextual and bottom-up—students identify real social issues in society and design practical solutions."* Students from both

institutions reported that their experiences in social projects significantly contributed to their understanding of inclusive democracy and tolerance.

Research by Sakban et al. (2025) shows that civic education in Indonesia is undergoing a transformation toward more contextual and transformative models. Meanwhile, Mukhibat et al. (2024) report that evaluating religious moderation curricula has proven effective in enhancing tolerant civic understanding. Ali and Zulaikha (2018) emphasize the importance of integrating religious and civic values into civic engagement to reinforce citizenship consciousness in multicultural societies. Irawan and Harahap (2024) stress that project-based learning can enhance students' reflection on national values.

Screening of documentaries critical of socio-political issues also proved effective in sparking students' civic engagement. As shown in the study by Fatmawati and Habibah (2021), the screening of *Sexy Killers* shaped students' political perspectives. This finding is relevant for understanding how civic engagement-based Citizenship Education can strengthen youth political awareness and national identity in higher education.

In a global context, Lake et al. (2024) demonstrate that civic engagement-based learning is effective in building inclusive national identity. Yusuf and Latifah (2023) add that religious institutions can play a vital role in shaping civic identity through moderate religious approaches. This view is reinforced by Nurhasanah et al. (2023), who argue that multicultural and religious diversity-based Citizenship Education encourages students to participate in social peacebuilding.

Research by Kaur and Puspitasari (2024) suggests that religious moderation significantly contributes to students' loyalty to the nation, while Fitriyani and Ramdani (2023) recommend strengthening institutional support for religious moderation in higher education to bridge the narrative gap between religiosity and civic consciousness. Finally, Handayani and Susilo (2025) highlight the effectiveness of a hybrid model that combines the top-down structural approach at UIN with the participatory bottom-up approach at UNJA in supporting contextual and inclusive civic education.

In conclusion, both UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon and Universitas Jambi possess distinctive approaches that complement one another. These differences, rather than being contradictory, present opportunities for designing an integrative Citizenship Education curriculum—one that strengthens national identity while simultaneously internalizing the values of moderate religiosity.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that civic engagement-based citizenship education at Universitas Jambi and UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon effectively strengthens students' understanding of national identity and religious moderation. Despite applying different approaches—Universitas Jambi emphasizing a contextual and practical model through GMBBN, and UIN Siber adopting a religious-ideological framework through the Rumah Moderasi Beragama—both institutions successfully internalize the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and nationalism through participatory and reflective student activities. Civic engagement has proven to be an effective medium for fostering a balanced sense of national awareness and moderate religious attitudes, serving as a vital foundation for shaping students' character as active, peaceful, and socially responsible citizens committed to the common good.

REFERENCES

- Adnan, S., Siregar, M., & Wahyuni, L. (2024). Moderasi beragama dan identitas kebangsaan di kalangan mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15(1), 55–72.
- Ahmed, R., & Fatimah, S. (2022). Civic engagement and religious pluralism in Islamic higher education. *Journal of Interfaith Studies*, 6(2), 134–147.
- Ali, H., & Zulaikha, N. (2018). Integrasi nilai religius dan sipil dalam pendidikan kewarganegaraan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Nasional*, 1, 88–102.
- An-Na'im, A. A. (2008). *Islam and the secular state: Negotiating the future of Shari'a*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Astuti, W. S., & Wibawa, S. (2024). Implementation of PJBL to instill values of tolerance and cultural diversity in elementary school students. *JED: Jurnal Etika Demokrasi*, 9(4), 141–151. <https://doi.org/10.26618/jed.v10i1.17199>
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2022). Statistik pendidikan di Indonesia tahun 2022. Bps.go.id.
- Badillo, R., Lee, C., & Hamid, A. (2024). Civic action in higher education: Global perspectives. *Education and Society*, 12(3), 211–227.
- BNPT. (2023). Laporan tahunan pencegahan paham radikal di kalangan mahasiswa. Jakarta: Badan Nasional Penanggulangan Terorisme.
- Bukhari, M., & Yoon, J. (2025). Synthesizing spiritual and civic values in youth education. *Asian Civic Education Journal*, 9(1), 31–46.
- Chen, S., & Abdullah, R. (2023). Community-based civic engagement and tolerance among students. *International Journal of Multicultural Education*, 25(2), 201–218.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). California: SAGE Publications.
- Fatmawati, & Habibah, S. M. (2021). Construction of student's political rights about Sexy Killers showing. *JED: Jurnal Etika Demokrasi*, 6(2), 171–180. <https://doi.org/10.26618/jed.v6i2.3137>

- FITK. (2024). Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon dorong pemahaman moderasi beragama di kalangan mahasiswa. *Fakultas Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan UINSSC*.
- Fitriyani, D., & Ramdani, R. (2023). Moderasi beragama dalam pendidikan tinggi: Strategi dan tantangan. *Jurnal Keislaman Kontemporer*, 11(2), 97–112.
- Handayani, R., & Susilo, T. (2025). Hybrid model for civic education in multicultural societies. *Jurnal Pendidikan Sosial*, 7(1), 19–33.
- Hanifah, R., & Chandra, Y. (2023). Reflektifitas digital dalam pendidikan kewarganegaraan: Vlog dan jurnal daring sebagai media penguatan identitas kebangsaan. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan Karakter*, 6(2), 88–104.
- Irawan, B., & Harahap, S. (2024). Project-based learning dalam penguatan nilai kebangsaan mahasiswa. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan*, 16(1), 72–85.
- Ismail, F., Nur, M., & Astuti, Y. (2023). Transformative pedagogy for civic and religious moderation. *Journal of Educational Methodologies*, 8(3), 143–158.
- Israpil, & Suardi. (2021). The innovation and creativity of religious moderation learning through sociology learning and Pancasila and citizenship education in public schools and madrasas Gorontalo City. *JED: Jurnal Etika Demokrasi*, 6(2), 232–242. <https://doi.org/10.26618/jed.v6i2.5527>
- Kaur, K. N., & Puspitasari, A. (2024). Religious moderation and national loyalty among Indonesian students. *Southeast Asia Citizenship Review*, 5(2), 65–79.
- Kavakli, Y., & Sari, E. (2023). Interreligious dialogue and social empathy among university students. *Journal of Peace Education*, 19(2), 178–193.
- Lake, J., Kim, H., & Setiawan, D. (2024). National identity through civic engagement: A global perspective. *Comparative Civic Studies*, 6(1), 101–120.
- Lestari, M., Gunawan, A., & Dewi, R. (2024). Pembelajaran lintas budaya untuk penguatan identitas nasional mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Interkultural*, 11(1), 55–70.
- Lickona, T. (1992). *Educating for character: How our schools can teach respect and responsibility*. New York: Bantam Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. California: SAGE Publications.
- Martinez, L., & Rojas, F. (2024). Interfaith civic projects and youth engagement. *Global Citizenship Education Review*, 4(1), 76–90.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *An expanded sourcebook: Qualitative data analysis* (2nd ed.). California: SAGE Publications.
- Mubarak, A., & Lestari, E. (2022). Desain pendidikan kewarganegaraan responsif multikultural di era disruptsi. *Jurnal Civics: Media Kajian Kewarganegaraan*, 19(1), 78–91.
- Mukhibat, M., Effendi, M., Setyawan, W. H., & Sutoyo, M. (2024). Development and evaluation of religious moderation education curriculum at higher education in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>
- Muliawan, I. W. (2017). Moderasi beragama dalam perspektif pendidikan Islam di Indonesia. *Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 5(2), 201–216.
- Nasution, A., & Zulkarnain, T. (2023). Pembentukan identitas kebangsaan melalui pendidikan karakter di perguruan tinggi. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 13(1), 45–58.

- Nugroho, A., & Iswandi, R. (2023). Literasi kewarganegaraan digital dan nasionalisme generasi Z. *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Kewarganegaraan Digital*, 5(1), 14–30.
- Nurchotimah, A. S. I., Sapriya, Nurbayani, S., & Fitriyari, S. (2023). The urgency of anti-sexual violence education for higher education students. *EPHELs: The Eurasia Proceedings of Health, Environment and Life Sciences*, 12, 71–75. <https://doi.org/10.55549/ephels.97>
- Nurhasanah, D., Sugiarto, R., & Manurung, E. (2023). Pendidikan kewarganegaraan berbasis multikulturalisme. *Jurnal Pendidikan Toleransi*, 6(2), 104–121.
- Prasetyo, W., & Azzahra, L. (2024). Sinkronisasi nilai spiritual dan sipil dalam pendidikan karakter mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Humanis*, 9(1), 59–74.
- Purwaningsih, E., Sulistyarini, Nando, R. K., Dewantara, J. A., & Afandi. (2022). Implementation of Pancasila values in teaching learning activities in forming multicultural characters on students. *JED: Jurnal Etika Demokrasi*, 7(4), 387–399. <https://doi.org/10.26618/jed.v>
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.
- Rakhmat, M., & Qamar, N. (2025). Internalisasi nilai hubbul wathan melalui pengabdian masyarakat mahasiswa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam dan Kebangsaan*, 4(2), 112–126.
- Saifuddin, Y. (2018). Moderasi beragama sebagai strategi deradikalisasi di Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman*, 16(2), 221–240.
- Sakban, A., Rahman, T., & Sari, R. (2025). Civic education dalam konteks sosial budaya lokal. *Jurnal Pendidikan Progresif*, 10(1), 33–48.
- Sasmita, N., Wibowo, H., & Lestari, A. (2024). Hybridisasi nilai religius dan sipil dalam kurikulum pendidikan kewarganegaraan. *Jurnal Pendidikan Multikultural*, 9(2), 99–114.
- Setara Institute. (2023). Laporan tahunan: Kondisi toleransi kebebasan beragama dan berkeyakinan di Indonesia tahun 2023. *Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace*.
- Singh, R., & Andayani, M. (2023). Institutional support and civic initiative among students. *Journal of Youth Engagement Studies*, 7(1), 61–75.
- Suryani, F., & Fathoni, A. (2022). Pengaruh dialog antar-iman terhadap sikap toleransi mahasiswa. *Jurnal Studi Keberagaman*, 8(2), 89–102.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1986). *Political psychology: The social identity theory of intergroup behavior*. Chicago: Hall Publishers.
- Umayah, Maimun, M., Nurkholidah, & Munawaroh, M. (2023). Pendampingan penguatan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama melalui pemahaman Al-Qur'an terhadap guru-guru TPQ Kota Cirebon. *Naskah Akademik Hasil Pengabdian: IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon*.
- Usman, H., Mardhatillah, A., & Syafitri, D. (2025). Polarisasi identitas dan eksklusivisme di kalangan mahasiswa kampus negeri. *Jurnal Politik dan Masyarakat*, 11(1), 1–16.
- Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). London: SAGE Publications.
- Yusuf, A., & Hidayat, M. (2023). Civic engagement berbasis religiusitas di perguruan tinggi Islam. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Politik Islam*, 4(2), 112–128.
- Yusuf, L., & Latifah, N. (2023). Peran lembaga keagamaan dalam membentuk civic identity. *Jurnal Sosial Religius*, 7(1), 91–108.

Zhang, X., & Hidayat, T. (2025). Cultural contextualization of civic learning in Southeast Asia. *Asian Journal of Citizenship Education*, 3(1), 22–39.