

# Harmony Family Time and Guided Me Time for Religious Moderation Internalization in Early Childhood: A Qualitative Case Study in East Java, Indonesia

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – To analyze the synergy of harmony family time and guided me time for the insertion of religious moderation values in children aged 3-6 years in the era of digital disruption.

**Methods/Design/Approach** – A descriptive qualitative case study in East Java involving 15 parents (purposive). Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation; analyzed thematically with source triangulation and limited member checking.

**Findings** – 90 percent of parents provide family time at least three times per week as a space for role modeling and dialogue about respect for differences. A total of 70 percent of parents stated that children have me time for playing or reading that often repeats tolerance messages from family time. Me time remains risky because of exposure to digital content that is not age-appropriate. For this reason, 75 percent of parents curate educational content, limit duration, and conduct brief conversations after media access. Synergy appears when values from family time are reprocessed by children during me time through symbolic play or guided media.

**Originality/Value** – This article offers a framework of family interaction rhythms that connects togetherness as a provider of value narratives and a sense of security with personal space as reflective appropriation, going beyond approaches that only focus on screen control.

**Practical Implications** – Routine family time based on children's daily experiences, bridges to reflective activities during me time, and active digital assistance through curation, duration limits, and brief dialogue are recommended. The alignment of tolerance messages at home and early childhood education (PAUD), as well as strengthening parents' digital literacy, is recommended.

**Keywords** religious moderation, early childhood, family time, me time, parents' digital literacy.

**Paper type** Research paper

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## 1. Introduction

The acceleration of digital disruption has changed the landscape of family life and the patterns of early childhood growth and development, including in terms of spiritual and moral formation. Easy access to technology from a very young age makes children face flows of information that are not always aligned with moderate and inclusive religious values (Salbiah, 2018; Suryanti et al., 2022). In the context of a plural society, children's ability to interpret differences and manage diversity becomes an increasingly important

civic competence. The state also responds to this urgency through policies to strengthen religious moderation, which is positioned as a strategic national agenda (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2020; Republik Indonesia, 2021). Thus, the formation of religious moderation in early childhood in the digital era is not only a family interest, but also a social and public policy interest.

Within the family, daily interaction between parents and children is the main space for the formation of religious, moral, and spiritual personality from an early age. Research shows that practices of role modeling, habituation of worship, and warm communication contribute importantly to internalizing religious values in children (Andhika, 2021; Antoni, 2025; Johnson, 2015). Parental involvement in assisting religious and moral activities strengthens the sense of security and value orientation that become the foundation for moderate attitudes in the future (Qailani et al., 2024; Zuhriyah, 2025). In addition, emotional support, consistency of rules, and dialogue about values of right and wrong help children understand the relationship between religious teachings and social responsibility (Sukemi & Amin, 2024). This places the family as the main locus of religious moderation education before children encounter broader environmental influences.

The use of technology in daily family life simultaneously enriches and disrupts the quality of this interaction. Various studies show that excessive dependence on digital devices can reduce the frequency of meaningful conversations between parents and children and weaken the practice of direct role modeling at home (Faisal, 2020; Junaidi, 2023). This situation has an impact on the declining intensity of dialogue about diversity, empathy, and respect for differences, whereas such conversational spaces are highly crucial for the internalization of religious moderation (Dasopang et al., 2022; Khaeriyah et al., 2025). On the other hand, exposure to religious information from the internet without assistance risks encouraging narrow and intolerant perspectives among some children and adolescents (Nisak et al., 2022; Oktavia & Madya, 2021). This condition affirms the need for family strategies that not only limit technology, but manage it reflectively and dialogically.

Amid these dynamics, the concept of religious moderation offers a value framework that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity as an important orientation of early childhood education. Religious moderation requires the ability to position oneself proportionally between textuality and social context, between commitment to one's belief and respect for the beliefs of others (Hasibuan, 2023; Muhammad & Muryono, 2021). For early childhood, the value of religious moderation appears in the attitude of being willing to share, respecting friends from different backgrounds, and not easily judging those who have different religious practices (Hafni et al., 2025; Sumadi et al., 2019). A number of studies affirm that positive early experiences of diversity have a long-term influence on how children interpret differences when they become adults (Magos & Kalopita, 2020; Purnomo & Sumiarti, 2023). Therefore, the integration of religious moderation into family life needs to be designed from the earliest stage consistently and contextually.

The contribution of schools, the social environment, and educational media also strengthens or weakens family efforts in instilling religious moderation. Culture-based learning activities, collaborative practices, and the habituation of prosocial behavior in early childhood education (PAUD) institutions have been proven to support the emergence of multicultural, empathic, and inclusive personalities in children (Filasofa et al., 2021; Puspitasari & Soraya, 2024; Rizal, 2024). Educationally designed digital media, such as interactive multimedia and illustrated storybooks with religious moderation themes, have been proven to improve children's understanding and tolerant attitudes toward differences (Nisak et al., 2022; Purwani, 2024). Teachers and peers in this context serve as role model figures who enrich children's experiences of how moderation values are brought to life in daily practice (Mahrus & Afandi, 2024; Permana et al., 2022). At the same time, the success of school interventions greatly depends on the continuity of values and practices that take place in the family environment. This indicates the importance of building a strong bridge among home, school, and children's digital ecosystem.

On the other hand, children's personal experiences in managing time, space, and personal interests have begun to receive attention in studies of character development in

the digital era. A number of studies note that children's freedom to explore their own interests, both through play activities and media consumption, contributes to the formation of autonomy, a sense of responsibility, and reflective capacity (Institute et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2023). However, this dimension of children's personal time or me time has not been widely studied specifically as a medium for internalizing the values of religious moderation and tolerance in the context of a plural society (Izzatunnisa & Mutiawati, 2024; Sumadi et al., 2019). Studies that connect freedom to choose activities with the formation of sensitivity toward differences focus more on general social-emotional aspects, not on an explicit religious moderation framework (Aziz, 2024; Khaeriyah et al., 2025). In addition, the discourse on managing children's digital time is still dominated by the theme of screen control and limitation, not the development of creative synergy between time with family and children's independent time (Institute et al., 2022; Permana et al., 2022). This situation shows the existence of a conceptual and empirical gap that needs to be bridged.

In this context, there are not many studies that explicitly examine how harmony family time and me time can be synergized as a strategy for inserting religious moderation values in early childhood in the era of digital disruption. Existing research tends to focus attention on one dimension, namely family interaction or the utilization of digital media, without elaborating the dynamic relationship between the two in the formation of moderation (Khaeriyah et al., 2025; Subandi et al., 2023). Discussions on parenting also more dominantly highlight boundaries and supervision, so that the space of children's creativity in me time is less positioned as a pedagogical opportunity for strengthening inclusive religious values (Azizah, 2022; Pribadi, 2023). In fact, the balance between family emotional closeness and children's personal space has the potential to become an important foundation for mature and moderate spiritual development (Antoni, 2025; Sari et al., 2023). These conceptual and empirical limitations drive the need for a deeper and more contextual study.

Responding to this gap, this study aims to analyze how the synergy between harmony family time and me time can be utilized to insert religious moderation values in early childhood in the era of digital disruption. The focus of the analysis is directed toward interaction patterns, parenting practices, and the management of digital and non-digital activities that enable the internalization of the values of tolerance, balance, and respect for diversity in children's daily lives (Salimah et al., 2023; Zuhriyah, 2025). Theoretically, this study contributes by linking the conceptual apparatus of religious moderation, family education, and children's personal experiences into one integrated framework. Practically, the research findings are expected to provide reflective guidance for parents and educators in designing parenting strategies that are more responsive to the challenges and opportunities of digital technology (Puspitasari & Soraya, 2024; Rizal, 2024). Thus, this article is expected to enrich the discourse on religious moderation education in early childhood and offer a new perspective on how families can play a strategic role in building a generation that is religious, inclusive, and adaptive to changing times.

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Research Design and Approach

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design to understand the process of inserting religious moderation values in the synergy of family time and me time in early childhood. The focus of the study was directed at the dynamics of parenting and family interaction that occur naturally in daily life, so this approach enabled the researcher to examine the phenomenon deeply and contextually. The case study was selected because it provides space for comprehensive analysis of the experiences of parents who interact in a plural social environment. Through this design, the study seeks to capture the practices, meanings, and strategies used by families in shaping children's moderate character. The entire process was positioned within an interpretive framework to understand the subjective views of the informants.

## *2.2. Location, Subjects, and Informant Selection Technique*

The study was conducted in East Java Province among families living in social environments with strong religious diversity. A total of fifteen parents who had children aged 3–6 years were designated as informants using a purposive sampling technique based on the criterion of involvement in interreligious interaction around their place of residence. Informant selection was carried out selectively to ensure that they had real experiences related to parenting associated with the issue of religious moderation. The diversity of family characteristics was taken into account to enrich the variation of the data obtained. All informants gave consent to participate and were guaranteed the confidentiality of their identities.

## *2.3. Data Collection Techniques*

Data collection was carried out through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation analysis as an effort to understand parenting practices comprehensively. In-depth interviews were used to explore parents' views, experiences, and strategies in integrating religious moderation values into children's lives. Participatory observation enabled the researcher to capture real interactions during family time and me time, including the way parents directed the use of digital devices. Documentation analysis included the examination of activity photos, family activity notes, children's viewing histories, and digital materials used in the parenting process. These three techniques were combined to produce a rich, valid, and contextual data description.

## *2.4. Data Analysis Techniques and Validity of Findings*

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques, which included the processes of transcription, initial coding, code grouping, and identification of main themes related to family time, me time, and the insertion of religious moderation. The analysis was conducted repeatedly and reflectively to ensure that the resulting themes reflected the informants' experiences authentically. The validity of the findings was maintained through triangulation of sources, namely comparing the suitability of data from interviews, observations, and documentation, as well as limited member checking to confirm the meanings intended by the informants. The interpretation process was carried out carefully in order to remain grounded in empirical data and not neglect the complexity of the family context. All procedures followed research ethics principles by maintaining the confidentiality and comfort of the informants.

# **3. Results**

## *3.1 Harmony Family Time as a Space for Instilling Religious Moderation*

Family time emerged as the main space for parents to conduct meaningful interaction with children in early childhood, although the rhythm of digital life often reduces the quality of togetherness. The majority of informants (90 percent) stated that they allocated family time at least three times a week, both through simple activities such as eating together, telling stories before bedtime, and recreational activities. This regular togetherness time became an initial foundation for the insertion of values of diversity and mutual respect. One informant explained, "We usually have family time every night before bedtime to talk and tell stories about today's activities" (P1).

Activities during family time not only function as a means of play or relaxation, but also become a strategic opportunity for parents to instill religious moderation values. Many parents told stories about religious differences, the importance of mutual respect, and concrete examples of tolerance in everyday life. One informant stated, "I often tell stories about friends who have different religions so that the child understands that everyone must

be respected" (P4). Other activities, such as introducing the major holidays of various religions, inviting children to visit neighbors' places of worship, and having light discussions about diversity, were also carried out to broaden children's perspectives. Another informant added, "When passing a place of worship of another religion, I explain that it is their house of worship and we must respect it" (P7).

The emotional interaction created during family time strengthens children's acceptance of the values of diversity that are taught. Several informants described that children became more comfortable and open when discussing religious and cultural differences. One parent stated, "My child has become brave enough to ask about religious differences because he feels safe talking with us" (P5). In addition, direct experiences, such as playing with peers of different religions or attending inclusive community activities, further enrich children's understanding of the importance of living side by side. This is reflected in the statement of another informant, "After often playing with neighbors of different religions, the child increasingly understands that all friends are the same" (P9).

Family time is not only a recreational space, but also a highly effective arena for value education to shape moderate character in children in early childhood. Through warm interaction, emotional involvement, and the natural delivery of values, children have the opportunity to learn to balance personal beliefs with respect for differences. One informant summarized this well, "The important thing is that we always teach that being different is normal and we must respect each other" (P12). Such harmonious family time serves as a spiritual and social foundation that helps children grow as individuals who are tolerant, inclusive, and ready to live in a plural society.

### *3.2 Me Time as a Space for Self-Exploration and Value Reflection*

Me time emerged as one important aspect in early childhood development, especially as a personal space that enables children to explore interests and reflect on their social experiences. Most informants (70 percent) stated that their children had personal time used for playing alone, drawing, reading books, or observing the surrounding environment. This time gives children an opportunity to process the information they receive from previous family interactions. One informant described, "My child likes to play alone while telling stories about his friends who have different religions" (P6). Me time becomes an initial medium for children to form an independent understanding of diversity.

Nevertheless, in the era of digital disruption, me time is often colored by exposure to digital content that is not always in line with religious moderation values. Several informants revealed that children tended to spend time watching videos or using digital applications without supervision. One informant stated, "Sometimes he watches videos that I feel are less appropriate, but he knows them from his friends" (P2). Exposure to this kind of content can present the risk of the entry of intolerant values or imitative behavior that is not appropriate for the child's age. This is reinforced by another informant who mentioned, "He once imitated an utterance he saw in a video, even though it was not in accordance with the values we teach" (P8). This finding shows that me time has the potential to become a risky space if it is not directed appropriately.

To address these challenges, parents applied various me time management strategies, especially through digital content supervision and regulation of device use duration. Several parents chose to provide educational applications that present messages of tolerance, moral stories, or moderate religious education. One informant explained, "I select educational applications that introduce tolerance stories so that he still learns something while playing with a gadget" (P14). In addition, non-digital activities such as reading religious storybooks, drawing moral values, or doing enjoyable physical activities were also chosen to maintain the balance of children's development. This is also reflected in the statement of another informant, "When he has held the gadget for too long, I invite him to draw about the values of goodness" (P15).

Guided me time makes an important contribution to the formation of children's understanding of moderation values, because it enables them to process family

experiences independently. Children can reflect on interactions with peers and their social environment, so that the concepts of tolerance and respect for differences become more internalized. One parent stated, "When he plays alone, he often repeats the tolerance stories that we conveyed during family time" (P11). This finding affirms that productive me time, with adequate assistance and supervision, becomes a crucial element in helping children understand diversity more deeply and consistently.

### *3.3 The Synergy of Family Time and Me Time in the Formation of Religious Moderation*

The synergy between family time and me time becomes an important mechanism in the process of internalizing religious moderation values in children in early childhood. Family time provides a value framework through direct interaction and warm dialogue between parents and children, while me time provides space to process, reflect on, and reinterpret these values independently. Many informants revealed that children often repeated, imitated, or reprocessed stories and tolerance messages that had previously been conveyed during family time. This is reflected in the statement of one informant, "Sometimes when playing alone, he repeats stories about respecting friends who have different religions" (P4). This mechanism shows that the value of moderation is not only understood cognitively, but also begins to be internalized through children's reflective experiences.

The integration between social experiences during family time and personal exploration during me time is also strengthened through the use of digital technology that is positively directed. A total of 75 percent of parents used digital media such as educational videos, tolerance animations, or child-friendly religious learning applications as a complement to the learning of moderation values. In practice, this technology helps children obtain a broader picture of diversity. One informant stated, "We often watch videos about the celebrations of major holidays of different religions so that the child knows that everyone has their own beliefs" (P10). Another informant added, "Educational applications about culture and religion are very helpful in explaining things that are sometimes difficult to explain orally" (P13). Such use of technology facilitates the delivery of tolerance values in a way that is attractive and easy for children to understand.

The research results also show that the synergy of these two time spaces plays a role in building a continuous pattern of value learning. Values instilled through family time tend to be stronger when children have the opportunity to internalize them through me time, either through symbolic play, environmental observation, or the use of guided digital content. One informant revealed, "The child understands more quickly because what we explain during family time, he thinks about again when playing alone" (P12). This reinforcement mechanism makes children not only memorize the concept of tolerance, but also interpret it through repeated reflective experiences.

This synergy ultimately creates a productive interaction pattern in the formation of moderate character in children in early childhood. When family time provides a foundation of values and direct examples, while me time strengthens personal reflection, children grow with a deeper understanding of diversity and the importance of respecting differences. Parental supervision of technology use ensures that the entire process takes place within a safe and educational value ecosystem. One informant concluded, "As long as family time and time alone run in balance, the child more easily understands that everyone can be different but must still be respected" (P1). Thus, the synergy between these two time spaces becomes a strategic key in supporting the formation of religious moderation amid the challenges of the era of digital disruption.

## 4. Discussion

Referring to the objective of this study, analyzing how the synergy of harmonious family time and guided me time is utilized to insert religious moderation values in early childhood in the era of digital disruption, the findings affirm that the family remains the main arena for forming tolerance orientation when digital information flows have the potential to present religion simplistically or with bias (Salbiah, 2018; Suryanti et al., 2022; Faisal, 2020). Its relevance is strengthened in the context of strengthening religious moderation as a policy agenda, so that daily parenting practices can be understood as a micro contribution to the culture of tolerance (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2020; Republik Indonesia, 2021; Muhammad & Muryono, 2021).

The findings show that family time works as a space for providing a value framework through role modeling, habituation, and warm dialogue. This pattern is consistent with the literature that positions parent-child relations as an effective pathway for internalizing moral-spiritual values from an early age, especially when communication takes place safely and responsively (Andhika, 2021; Antoni, 2025; Sukemi & Amin, 2024). In a plural environment, emotional security during interaction helps children dare to ask questions and clarify the meaning of difference, so that tolerance is not merely normative but becomes an experience that children can understand (Magos & Kalopita, 2020; Pribadi, 2023). This finding is also in line with studies that emphasize the importance of inclusive social experiences to enrich the way children interpret diversity (Filasofa et al., 2021; Puspitasari & Soraya, 2024; Rizal, 2024).

On the other hand, me time appears as a space for personal processing when children repeat, rearrange, and strengthen family messages through independent activities. This complements studies that often emphasize parenting control, by stressing that children's autonomy, which remains guided, can become a reflective medium for deepening values (Institute et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2023). However, the findings also confirm the vulnerability of me time in the digital era: exposure to content that is not age-appropriate can give rise to imitation and biased frames of thinking when without assistance (Faisal, 2020; Nisak et al., 2022; Oktavia & Madya, 2021). Therefore, the key contribution of this study is to affirm that religious moderation is more likely to be stable when rhythmic synergy occurs: values are received through togetherness, then reinterpreted personally, not only through screen limitation, but through the management of experience and intentional content curation (Dasopang et al., 2022; Khaeriyah et al., 2025; Subandi et al., 2023).

Theoretically, the findings propose an integrative framework based on the rhythm of family interaction: family time serves as a space for providing value narratives and a sense of security, while me time serves as a space for value appropriation through reflection, symbolic repetition, and the affirmation of meaning. This framework helps explain "how" the internalization of religious moderation takes place gradually in early childhood through social relations and opportunities for reflection, not as an instant result (Johnson, 2015; Sumadi et al., 2019; Sari et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this mechanism has boundary conditions: the effectiveness of synergy is very likely influenced by parents' digital literacy, time availability, socioeconomic pressures, and the character of the diversity ecosystem around children, so the findings need to be read contextually (Dasopang et al., 2022; Hasibuan, 2023; Khaeriyah et al., 2025).

These findings point to the need for parenting that does not dichotomize time together and time alone, but instead manages them as one sequence of value learning. In practice, parents can make family time a brief but planned session for meaningful conversations about empathy, respect, and difference linked to children's daily experiences, so that moderation values are present as habits, not lectures (Andhika, 2021; Pribadi, 2023). Messages from family time are then bridged to me time with age-appropriate reflective activities, for example role-playing, drawing, or retelling, so that children have space to process meaning personally (Institute et al., 2022; Sumadi et al., 2019). At the same time, digital management should emphasize active assistance: parents curate content and conduct brief dialogue after children access media to clarify meaning, prevent mistaken

imitation, and reconnect content to the values embraced by the family (Faisal, 2020; Nisak et al., 2022; Oktavia & Madya, 2021). At the ecosystem level, continuity among home, school, and environment needs to be strengthened through routine communication and alignment of tolerance themes so that children receive consistent messages across spaces (Filasofa et al., 2021; Puspitasari & Soraya, 2024; Rizal, 2024). From a policy perspective, religious moderation programs will be more operational if accompanied by parenting and digital literacy training that equips parents with strategies for content curation and family time and me time rhythm management (Presiden Republik Indonesia, 2020; Republik Indonesia, 2021; Mahrus & Afandi, 2024).

The interpretation of the findings is limited by the qualitative case study design and purposive sampling, which limit generalization, as well as the scope of context, which may limit the representation of variations in parenting patterns. Dependence on parents' narratives has the potential to generate social desirability bias, while participatory observation can present an observer effect. In addition, the perspectives of children and/or teachers have not been addressed equally, so the understanding of the synergy mechanism is still dominant from the parents' point of view, although source triangulation has been attempted.

Future research can sharpen the findings through multicontext studies, with variations in environmental plurality, SES, and digital literacy, longitudinal studies to assess the stability of value internalization, as well as the development and testing of structured interventions that bridge family time and me time and improve parents' digital literacy. Research also needs to include children's and teachers' perspectives more systematically to enrich actor triangulation and validate the proposed mechanism (Subandi et al., 2023; Khaeriyah et al., 2025; Puspitasari & Soraya, 2024).

## 5. Conclusion

This study concludes that the insertion of religious moderation values in early childhood in the era of digital disruption becomes more effective when families build synergy between harmony family time and me time. Family time provides a value foundation through role modeling, habituation, and warm dialogue that makes children feel safe to understand differences. Me time functions as a space for personal processing, where children repeat, interpret, and affirm tolerance messages through independent activities and guided media. However, me time is also vulnerable to exposure to digital content that is not age-appropriate, so active parental assistance through content curation, duration regulation, and brief dialogue after media access becomes an important prerequisite so that the meanings formed remain aligned with inclusive values.

Practically, these findings can be applied by designing consistent and meaningful family time, then bridging it to me time through age-appropriate reflective activities such as role-playing, drawing, or retelling, accompanied by the selection of moderate educational media. The limitations of this study include a qualitative case study design, purposive sampling, potential bias in parents' narratives, and the unequal inclusion of children's and teachers' perspectives. Further research needs to be conducted across contexts, be longitudinal in nature, test structured family time and me time interventions, and include children's and teachers' perspectives to validate the proposed mechanism.

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## Declarations

### Author contribution statement

**Yuli Salis Hijriyani:** Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Writing - Original Draft.

**M. Fathurahman:** Formal analysis; Validation; Visualization; Data Curation; Writing - Review & Editing.

**Yasothai Paramasivam:** Supervision; Project administration; Resources; Writing - Review & Editing.

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### Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

### Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted Technologie

The author(s) declare that no generative AI tools were used to generate, draft, analyze, interpret, or substantially revise the scholarly content of this article. The author(s) take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, and integrity of the article.

### Ethical Approval and Informed Consent

Ethical approval was obtained from UIN Kiai Ageng Muhammad Besari Ponorogo (Approval No. 014/EC/2025). Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Data were collected and analysed anonymously.

### Declaration of interest statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### Additional information

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