

## Community-Based Tolerance Education Model for Urban Societies

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### *Abstrak*

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji bagaimana komunitas Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) menerapkan pendidikan toleransi berbasis pengalaman dalam konteks masyarakat pasca-reformasi yang plural namun terfragmentasi. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa model pendidikan non-formal berbasis komunitas yang diterapkan Sekodi berhasil menumbuhkan empati, kesadaran kritis, dan kohesi sosial melalui ruang belajar yang dialogis dan partisipatif. Model ini menantang keterbatasan pendekatan institusional dari atas ke bawah dengan memposisikan anak muda sebagai pencipta makna dan agen transformasi ideologis. Implikasi dari temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan akar rumput dapat memainkan peran penting dalam mendorong hidup berdampingan secara damai dan memperkuat ketahanan demokrasi di masyarakat yang beragam secara budaya. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengungkap kerentanan struktural akibat ketergantungan pada relawan dan infrastruktur informal yang dapat mengancam keberlanjutan dan replikasi inisiatif serupa. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi orisinal dengan merumuskan pendidikan toleransi pada persilangan antara aksi sosial Weberian dan pembelajaran pengalaman ala Dewey, serta menawarkan model praktis pendidikan damai yang berakar pada konteks lokal.

**Kata Kunci:** Komunitas akar rumput; Indonesia; pembelajaran non-formal; pluralisme; pendidikan toleransi.

### **Abstract**

This study aims to examine how the Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) community implements experiential tolerance education within a pluralistic yet fragmented society in post-reformasi Indonesia. By using a qualitative approach with a case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis. The findings show that Sekodi's model of community-based non-formal education successfully cultivates empathy, critical awareness, and social cohesion through dialogical and participatory learning spaces. This model challenges the limitations of top-down institutional approaches by positioning youth as co-creators of meaning and active agents of ideological transformation. The implications suggest that grassroots education can play a significant role in promoting peaceful coexistence and democratic resilience in culturally diverse societies. However, the study also reveals structural vulnerabilities due to the reliance on volunteers and informal infrastructure, which may threaten the sustainability and scalability of such initiatives. This research contributes original insights by framing tolerance education through the intersection of Weberian social action and Deweyan experiential learning, offering a practical model of peace education grounded in local contexts.

**Keywords:** *Grassroots community; Indonesia; non-formal learning; pluralism; tolerance education.*

### **Introduction**

Indonesia is a country rich in ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity (Wibisono, 2021). However, behind this plurality, interreligious tolerance remains a serious challenge that threatens social cohesion. Data from the Setara Institute (2022) indicates a rise in violations of religious freedom, including the forced dissolution of worship activities and the rejection of permits for constructing houses of worship (Setara Institut, 2022). Cases such as the riots in Poso and Ambon show that religious issues, especially those related to the establishment of places of worship, often trigger recurrent and destructive horizontal tensions. A concrete example is the rejection faced by the HKBP congregation in Soreang, Bandung, in 2023 (Awla, 2023). This phenomenon highlights the low awareness of religious tolerance even within a multicultural urban context such as Bandung. In response to this situation, grassroots initiatives like *Sekolah Damai Indonesia* (Sekodi, Indonesian Peace School) have emerged, aiming to instil values of diversity through non-formal and experience-based education approaches (Japar et al., 2020).

Previous studies on the promotion of religious tolerance can be categorized first into the formal religious community-based approach. This approach emphasizes the role of faith-based institutions and organizations—such as mosques, churches, religious councils, and interfaith networks—in mitigating conflict and fostering social harmony. Anjani and Kosasih (Anjani & Kosasih, 2024) illustrate how Islamic communities contribute to local conflict resolution, while Muslem (Muslem, 2023) highlights the role of ulama in Aceh in promoting tolerance through dakwah and interreligious dialogue. On a global scale, Haynes (Haynes, 2009) documents how religious actors in Mozambique, Nigeria, and Cambodia have functioned as mediators in peacebuilding processes. Williams (Williams, 2023) discusses the work of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), demonstrating the effectiveness of interfaith dialogue in breaking down stereotypes and addressing root causes of conflict. Educational initiatives are also noteworthy; Kruja (2022) and Odey et al. (2024) underscore the role of religious schools and university curricula in advancing interfaith understanding and peace education. Similarly, Mbugua and Ayoub (2023) examine grassroots peacebuilding efforts by the Anglican Diocese of Egypt aimed at countering extremism through youth engagement and interreligious literacy. While these studies offer valuable insights, they predominantly focus on top-down institutional mechanisms and the role of elite religious figures. What remains underexplored is how tolerance is cultivated from the bottom up, particularly through experiential, participatory models led by volunteer-based, non-formal communities. These models, such as those practiced by Sekodi, utilize lived experience, critical reflection, and direct social engagement—especially among urban youth—as tools for internalizing pluralistic values in a more sustainable and transformative way.

The second category centers on the formal education and school curriculum approach, which highlights the role of national education institutions—especially primary and secondary schools—in embedding values of tolerance through various subject matters and institutional practices. Scholars such as Lestari (Lestari, 2023) and Ruslana (Ruslana, 2022) have emphasized the role of civic education (PPKn) in teaching principles of democracy, justice, and equality as foundations for tolerance. Beyond these, recent studies offer a broader view: Atamturk (2018) identifies English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes as effective spaces for tolerance

education; and Harmanto et al. (2018) describe how Indonesia's civic education curriculum develops civic responsibility and moral unity. Character education programs also contribute significantly to cultivating empathy and multicultural awareness, while Raihani (Raihani, 2011) and Safina & Abdurakhmanov (2016) advocate for a whole-school approach, integrating tolerance values into institutional policies, leadership, teaching, and community engagement. Furthermore, technology-based learning during COVID-19 has shown promising results in enhancing tolerance among young students (Sakalli et al., 2021). Despite these advances, most studies remain focused on structured, curriculum-based learning environments and target students within formal schooling systems. There is limited exploration of experiential, informal, and socially embedded learning—especially among urban youth outside traditional educational settings—highlighting a critical gap that this study seeks to address through the case of Sekodi's volunteer-driven, dialogical education model.

The third category focuses on the cultural approach and local leadership, emphasizing how local wisdom, community traditions, and cultural-religious leadership contribute to sustaining harmony in diverse societies. Various studies demonstrate that local traditions embed values of cooperation, respect, and unity in daily social practices. For instance, Aarsal et al. (Aarsal et al., 2023) highlight how Central Javanese rituals such as *sedekah bumi* and *selamatan malam 1 Suro* promote intergenerational transmission of peace values and reinforce social cohesion. Similarly, the *Tepung Tawar* ceremony in South Sumatra, as analyzed by Alfitri and Hambali (Alfitri & Hambali, 2013), serves as a traditional mechanism for conflict resolution and reinforces community justice and reconciliation. Community-based traditions also play a vital role in managing diversity. The *Dalihan Na Tolu* system in North Sumatra, discussed by Muda and Suharyanto (2020), regulates social behavior through kinship principles, fostering interreligious harmony in multiethnic settings. In agricultural communities in Buton Utara, the *Mecula Haroano Laa* tradition promotes ecological care while reinforcing social solidarity (Syahrin et al., 2024).

Beyond customs, cultural-religious leaders act as trusted moral figures who mediate tensions and guide inclusive community interactions. Warwer (2024) examines the *Ondofolo* leadership in Papua, which upholds values of peace, brotherhood, and mutual respect within Christian and broader

community life. In Malang, Indonesia, interfaith cooperation among Muslim, Hindu, and Christian leaders during local festivals has also been shown to enhance interreligious communication and understanding (Gede Agung et al., 2024). These leadership practices underscore how indigenous authority structures and shared cultural capital serve as informal institutions for preserving harmony. While these studies provide rich ethnographic insights into local harmony, they tend to be descriptive and focus on relatively stable traditional communities. As a result, they often overlook the challenges of managing religious diversity in urban, pluralistic environments, where demographic complexity, ideological contestation, and social mobility demand new models of tolerance education. Moreover, non-formal, youth-driven initiatives—such as Sekodi—that adopt participatory and experiential approaches remain largely absent from the existing literature.

Building upon the three categories above, it becomes evident that while previous research has significantly contributed to understanding religious tolerance from institutional, educational, and cultural angles, a notable gap persists in the exploration of non-formal, youth-led, and experiential models of tolerance education—particularly within urban, multicultural contexts. Existing studies largely concentrate on structured institutions such as religious organizations, schools, or traditional communities, often overlooking how grassroots initiatives operate beyond these frameworks to address emerging challenges in dynamic urban settings. Furthermore, few studies critically examine how values of pluralism are internalized not merely through instruction or tradition, but through direct interreligious encounters, dialogue-based learning, and reflective practices. As a result, there is a lack of empirical evidence on how volunteer-driven communities like Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) mobilize alternative pedagogies to shape inclusive attitudes, foster empathetic youth engagement, and respond to socio-religious frictions in contemporary cities. This study seeks to fill that gap by analyzing the strategies, impacts, and challenges of Sekodi as a model of bottom-up, experience-based tolerance education, offering insights that complement and extend the dominant narratives in current tolerance education scholarship.

This study argues that Sekodi's experiential and dialogical approach to tolerance education offers a transformative model for fostering inclusive awareness and interreligious understanding, particularly among urban youth

who are often excluded from traditional educational and religious institutions. Unlike top-down or norm-based methods, Sekodi emphasizes direct engagement, critical reflection, and lived experience as pathways to cultivate empathy, break down stereotypes, and internalize pluralistic values. This argument is supported by Max Weber's theory of social action, which posits that human behavior is shaped by the subjective meanings individuals attach to their interactions—making experience-based learning a powerful medium for shaping attitudes and social conduct (Weber, 1978). In addition, John Dewey's experiential learning theory reinforces the idea that meaningful education emerges from active participation and reflective thought, rather than passive reception of information (Dewey, 1938). By facilitating interfaith encounters, inclusive discussions, and context-sensitive learning spaces, Sekodi provides an educational process that aligns with both theoretical models, offering a compelling alternative to formal curricula in promoting tolerance in complex urban societies.

The unit of analysis in this research is the Bandung chapter of *Sekolah Damai Indonesia* (Sekodi), which comprises facilitators, active participants, and organisers (Maspaitella & Rahakbauwi, 2014). This community is a non-formal, volunteer-based organisation focusing on tolerance education through dialogical and participatory approaches. The study adopts a qualitative approach with a sociological perspective. This design was chosen as it is well-suited for exploring the subjective meanings and complex social processes involved in shaping tolerance values through social interaction and experiential learning.

Data sources consist of both primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with ten informants, including facilitators, regular participants, and community observers. Secondary data were drawn from internal documentation, training materials, community social media content, and news articles related to Sekodi's activities (Jaya, 2020). Data collection techniques included semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Siti & Silvia Senja Junista, 2025). Interviews were conducted on-site during community activities, guided by a semi-structured interview protocol. Observations were participatory in nature while maintaining objectivity, and documentation was used to complement and validate field findings.

Triangulation was applied to enhance data validity. Data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which comprises three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by filtering and selecting relevant information from interviews, observations, and documents in accordance with the research focus. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to reveal emerging patterns and themes. Finally, conclusions were drawn by linking the field findings to Max Weber's theory of social action and John Locke's concept of tolerance, in order to understand the extent to which the Sekodi community fosters collective awareness and social transformation in the domain of religious tolerance (Webber, 2001). Throughout the research process, ethical principles were strictly observed, including informed consent and the confidentiality of participants' identities (Locke, 1991; Webber, 2001).

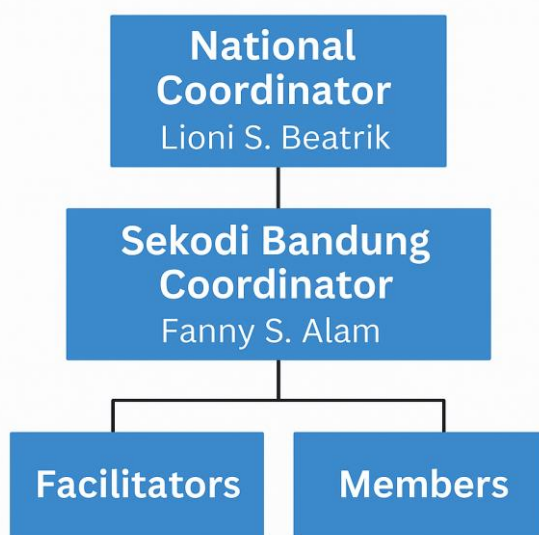
## **Results and Discussion**

### **1. Community Profile of Sekolah Damai Indonesia in Promoting Religious Tolerance**

Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) is a youth community that focuses on interfaith harmony and diversity. The community was established de facto on May 26, 2016 and obtained official legality on August 22, 2016. Sekodi began as a discussion among alumni of the School of Peace, an interfaith program organized by the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) since 2006 in various Asian countries. The alumni of this program are committed to practicing the values of peace in their respective environments, so in Indonesia, they began holding regular discussions since 2012. These discussions were initially small-scale and unsystematic until they developed into a community called "Mini Sekolah Damai Indonesia," which was later changed to Sekodi. In an effort to expand the community's reach, in 2018, Sekodi began to be active in Bandung under the leadership of Fanny Syariful Alam. In Bandung, Sekodi organizes weekly classes every Saturday with a main focus on conflict and conflict resolution. The community carries the mission "Moving from tolerance to accepting differences in diversity and moving together," with the hope of creating an inclusive learning space and encouraging a deeper understanding of peace and diversity.



Figure 1 illustrates the organizational structure of Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi), highlighting its decentralized and flexible management model. At the national level, the community is led by a National Coordinator, currently held by Lioni S. Beatrik, who oversees general strategic directions and supports regional development. Each regional chapter operates semi-independently under the guidance of a Regional Coordinator; in Bandung, this role is held by Fanny S. Alam. The coordinator supervises two main components: Facilitators and Members. Facilitators are responsible for curriculum design, organizing events, preparing learning materials, and identifying speakers. Meanwhile, members are categorized into regular participants of weekly classes and those managing Sekodi's digital platforms. This structure reflects Sekodi's commitment to participatory and inclusive governance, enabling flexibility, openness, and shared responsibility in promoting interfaith tolerance and social harmony.



**Figure 1. Organisation structure of Sekodi**

Sekodi's organizational structure is flexible, not following a formal organizational model. The community is led by a national coordinator who oversees the community as a whole and guides regional coordinators in different regions. Regional coordinators are responsible for the management of community activities in each city. In Bandung, the leadership is held by Fanny Syariful Alam, who coordinates the facilitators and members.



Facilitators play an important role in running various programs, from compiling the annual curriculum, preparing learning materials, running events, to finding relevant resource persons. Currently, Sekodi Bandung has around 10-15 active facilitators. In addition, the community has two categories of members: social media members who manage the community's official accounts and regular members who regularly attend weekly classes. The membership system in Sekodi is voluntary and non-binding for a certain period of time, allowing flexibility for members to contribute according to their time and capacity. The community emphasizes the value of being safe, comfortable, and open, where every individual is accepted without discrimination based on cultural background, religion, gender, or sexual orientation.

"...The Sekodi community does not have an organizational structure like other communities where there is a chairperson, treasurer or secretary of all kinds. The Sekodi community itself is open to the public, whether it's teenagers, school children, or even mothers or fathers who are interested in our community are allowed to join our community. The Sekodi community always opens recruitment every year and shares it on Instagram..." (Interview, February 26, 2025).



**Figure 2. Open Recruitment**

**Source:** Sekodi Community Instagram

Figure 2 showcases the open recruitment announcement for Sekodi Bandung Batch #5, which is scheduled from 1st to 31st July 2024. This visually engaging poster is designed to invite diverse participants to join Sekodi, a youth-led interfaith peace community. The poster highlights the

inclusive nature of the organization, stating that the recruitment is open to all genders and age groups, especially those who are interested in issues of peace, tolerance, and pluralism. The central message encourages youth residing in Bandung City to take part in this initiative. It includes a QR code linked to the registration form and a short URL for easy access. The visual elements—such as interfaith and peace symbols, and a group of young people in dialogue—emphasize the spirit of openness, diversity, and constructive dialogue that defines Sekodi’s mission.

The recruitment process for Sekodi members is conducted annually through social media, especially Instagram. Open recruitment is usually opened in July or August, as confirmed by members of the Sekodi community:

“...Before classes start in August, prospective members are usually asked to fill out an interest form first. Besides being a participant, there are also opportunities to become a facilitator. They help manage the class and keep the discussion going. Facilitators are chosen from members who are active, already understand the material, and have participated in training as well. Some were previously active in other organizations, so they can bring a new perspective. As long as they are still enthusiastic and willing to contribute, they can continue to be facilitators. So, as the community grows, the number of facilitators also increases...” (Interview, February 26, 2025).

To better illustrate how Sekodi operates on an organizational level, Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of the key positions within the community. It outlines the number of individuals in each role and their respective responsibilities, all of which are essential for supporting the community’s mission and ensuring effective coordination in program implementation.

**Table 1. Sekodi Organizational Structure and Its Duties**

Position		Number of people	Main Duties
National Coordinator		1	Oversees all regional branches
Bandung Coordinator	Regional	1	Manages the community in Bandung
Facilitator		10-15	Designs and implements programs

<b>Reguler Member</b>	40	Participates regularly every Saturday
<b>Sosial Media Member</b>	5	Manages Sekodi's social media accounts

According to Table 1, Sekodi's current organizational structure consists of several levels of positions with different but mutually supportive roles and responsibilities. At the highest level, there is a one-person National Coordinator. His main task is to oversee all of Sekodi's regional branches so that they remain aligned with the vision and mission of the organization as a whole. Below that, there is the Bandung Regional Coordinator, also one person, who is responsible for managing the Sekodi community based in Bandung, including ensuring activities run smoothly in the region. Facilitators, numbering between 10 to 15 people, play an important role in designing and running community programs, ranging from trainings to weekly discussions. They are the main drivers of field activities. Meanwhile, regular members, numbering around 40, regularly participate in community activities, especially those held every Saturday. Their presence is a strong foundation for the sustainability of this community. In addition, there are also social media members consisting of 5 people. They have specific responsibilities to manage Sekodi's social media accounts, disseminate information, and build a positive image of the community in the digital space. Attendance at each class session is flexible and not always full. Sekodi opens its classes to the public, so anyone interested in the topics discussed can participate in the learning. As a token of appreciation, regular members get early access to class information and the opportunity to represent Sekodi in discussions, seminars, or events from other organizations. With a volunteer-based, inclusive, and flexible approach, Sekodi continues to strive to be a platform for young people to learn and understand the values of diversity and peace in society (Hardiyanto, 2022).

Sekodi is committed to the principles of safety, comfort, and openness, and upholds the value of inclusivity without discrimination on the basis of religion, gender, culture, or sexual orientation. The learning space is designed so that every individual can feel accepted and free to express their opinions. Activities such as the Religious Encounter Class, Gender and Sexuality Class, and Politics and Democracy Class demonstrate the community's focus on building interfaith awareness and democratic values. From the results of field

observations and in-depth interviews with members and facilitators, several consistent patterns were found to describe the internal dynamics of the Indonesian Peace School Community (Sekodi). First, the flexible and volunteer-based organizational structure is the main strength of this community. This flexibility provides a comfortable and inclusive participation space for anyone without bureaucratic pressure, allowing for more organic and voluntary involvement. Second, the active participation of the younger generation is very prominent, as evidenced by their enthusiasm for participating in weekly classes and public discussion activities. These classes are not one-way instructive, but rather dialogic and participatory, allowing participants to learn from each other, exchange experiences, and build understanding across differences reflectively. Third, the educational methods used by Sekodi encourage the internalization of tolerance values naturally through the process of dialogue, experience, and cross-identity interaction. Fourth, the use of social media has proven to be an effective strategy to expand the reach of messages of peace and diversity carried by the community. Social media is not only a promotional tool, but also a place to build alternative narratives that emphasize the importance of living together in diversity. These patterns reflect Sekodi's success in forming an inclusive and transformative social learning space in the midst of a multicultural urban society like Bandung.

This finding shows that the non-formal community-based tolerance education model such as the Indonesian Peace School (Sekodi) has high effectiveness in forming awareness of diversity in the younger generation organically and sustainably. This shows that participatory education strategies that prioritize dialogue, direct experience, and critical reflection have a real contribution to internalizing tolerance values. This finding is in line with Max Weber's theory of social action which emphasizes that meaningful social action occurs when individuals act based on subjective understanding of social reality in this context, the act of learning together across faiths and experiences of diversity (Webber, 2001).

## **2. Indonesian Peace School Activity Program for the Young Generation**

Sekodi has developed a structured main curriculum comprising routine class activities designed not merely to instill tolerance, but to cultivate a deeper acceptance of differences and diversity. The ultimate goal is to foster

empathy and social sensitivity, enabling participants to engage in inclusive interaction without discrimination across religious, cultural, or social backgrounds. The core components of this curriculum are described as follows:

a) Interfaith Encounter Class

Understanding religious and cultural diversity requires more than theoretical knowledge; it demands direct and meaningful experience. This foundational principle guides the Interfaith Encounter Class, in which participants engage with the spiritual lives of diverse communities through visits to places of worship and open dialogue sessions. As illustrated in Figure 3, participants visited the Eden Church, where they observed Christian worship practices firsthand and engaged in meaningful discussions with church members.

The class seeks to dismantle the imagined boundaries between “us” and “them” by facilitating direct conversations and reflective encounters. One such moment occurred when an Ustadz from the Ahmadiyya community explained that Ahmadiyah shares essential Islamic practices, including prayers and scriptures, with other Muslim groups. This helped clarify misconceptions and highlighted the shared foundations of different faith expressions. These moments of engagement often lead to questions about the meaning of religious symbols—such as the cross, as seen during the church visit—and critical discussions on why certain communities, like Ahmadiyah or minority Christian groups, face rejection in some places but acceptance in others.

Figure 5 shows participants engaged in a religious encounter meditation session, where the focus shifted from intellectual understanding to experiential spiritual reflection. Meanwhile, Figure 6 captures the City Tour Religious Encounter, where participants explored various houses of worship across Bandung, providing them with a broader perspective on religious coexistence in urban contexts.





**Figure 3.** Religious encounter class at Eden Church

**Source:** Personal Document



**Figure 4.** Religious meeting class at Ahmadiyah Mosque

**Source:** Personal Document



**Figure 5.** Religious Encounter Meditation Class

**Source:** Community Media



**Figure 6.** City Tour Religious Encounter Class

**Source:** Community Document

A participant reflected on the experience by stating:

“...In this class I learned that religious differences should not be a source of conflict, but rather an opportunity for mutual understanding and respect. Discussions with friends of different beliefs made me realize the importance of empathy and equal dialogue. I also became more aware that tolerance is not enough to just be silent, but must be actively involved in building a shared space...” (Interview, November 16, 2024)

This class involves many parties, from religious leaders, managers of places of worship, to local communities that open up dialogue spaces for

participants. The facilitator from Sekodi acts as a liaison between the resource person and the participants, the Sekodi facilitator is also not only a moderator but also a companion who handles questions from members who are sensitive so that they remain comfortable to discuss and the facilitator is also tasked with ensuring that the discussion remains inclusive and comfortable. Participants come from very diverse backgrounds, students, interfaith youth, social workers, to the general public who are interested in learning directly about tolerance.

In addition, minority religious communities such as Ahmadiyah, believers, and Christian communities are specifically invited to share their experiences as groups that often receive social stigma. This program is usually run in November for four consecutive weeks, every Saturday, with a schedule that is arranged well in advance so that participants can prepare themselves. The location of the class moves according to the community visited, starting from churches, temples, community mosques, to believers' *paswakan*. Each session lasts about 2-3 hours and is divided into two main parts, an introduction and observation session for places of worship, then a reflective discussion, participants or community members are given time to ask questions and discuss issues raised in the theme. Usually the class starts at 10 am to 1 pm, but after the class is finished, participants and the facilitators, the religious leaders who are present always discuss and the discussion sometimes exceeds the specified time because the open community school makes it easy for someone to tell or discuss sensitive matters.

From this presentation, it can be concluded that the Interfaith Encounter Class is an effective space in breaking down distances and prejudices between religious communities. The direct experience-based approach through visits to places of worship and open dialogue provides participants with a deep understanding, not only of the teachings of other religions, but also the social realities faced by minority communities. In general, this class shows that real interaction and reflective dialogue can foster empathy and form an attitude of tolerance organically among the younger generation.

#### b) Gender and Sexuality Class

The Gender and Sexuality Class was held at the LBH Bandung location where the Sekolah Damai Indonesia community collaborated with LBH



Bandung. The materials discussed included an introduction to SOGIESC Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics, sexuality, women's issues, and various forms of violence and discrimination. Although this class looks like a seminar, the Gender and Sexuality Class is designed with an atmosphere that is far from formal. This activity begins with a presentation of material from a resource person, usually an academic or Gender activist, who explains basic concepts about gender, sexuality, and related legal issues, such as the protection of constitutional rights based on the 1945 Constitution. However, after the initial presentation session, the atmosphere becomes more interactive. Participants are invited to discuss in small groups, dissecting articles in the constitution related to the right to feel safe, protection from discrimination, and the right to live as a citizen. Some groups discuss the real experiences of sexual minority groups who are often overlooked in the legal system, while other groups analyze how gender narratives are shaped by the media and education. These Q&A sessions and group discussions transform the classroom into more than just a learning space; it becomes a place to exchange perspectives, listen to each other, and uncover deeply held prejudices.

Gender Class offers a learning space that aims to raise participants' critical awareness of social constructions related to gender identity, power relations, and structural injustice. In this class, participants are invited to reflect on their daily life experiences, unravel biases that may not be realized, and understand the struggle for equality that is still ongoing today. Through discussions, case studies, and exchange of experiences, this class not only touches on the academic realm, but also inspires the personal. This was emphasized by one of the participants who attended the Gender class

“...I learned that gender issues are not just about women, but also about all people, men, women, and other identities. This class made me aware of structural injustices that are often invisible, especially in culture and tradition. I also learned to recognize the privileges I have and how to use them to support equality...” (Interview, February 22, 2025)

The Gender and Sexuality Class is facilitated by individuals from diverse and complementary backgrounds. The primary facilitator comes from within the Sekodi community and is responsible for maintaining a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. To enrich the sessions, Sekodi collaborates with external speakers—including academics specialising in

gender studies and law, as well as advocates for survivors of gender-based violence. In the context of this study, resource persons were drawn from various organisations such as WSC UIN Bandung, Serikandi Pasundan, and LBH Bandung. Participants include both general members of the public and individuals affiliated with gender and human rights advocacy groups.

This class is designed to address gender and sexuality issues in a broad and intersectional manner. It responds to the reality that definitions of gender and sexuality are frequently misrepresented—sometimes strategically—for political or ideological agendas. Such distortions contribute to intolerance and the marginalisation of individuals with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Accordingly, the class seeks to challenge these misconceptions and dismantle harmful prejudices by fostering critical understanding and empathy through open dialogue.

As shown in Figure 8, the Gender and Sexuality Class typically takes place in informal, inclusive spaces such as cafes, public parks, or community venues. It is conducted over four consecutive Saturdays in January, with each session lasting approximately three hours (10:00–13:00). The choice of venue is intentional, aiming to promote comfort and openness for participants to engage in meaningful conversation.



**Figure 7.** Gender and Sexuality Class

**Source:** Personal Documentation



**Figure 8.** Gender and Sexuality Class

**Source:** Personal Documentation

Through group discussions, case studies, and personal reflection, the class goes beyond academic theory to cultivate critical awareness of social justice and human rights issues. The program has proven effective in creating a safe and inclusive space for dialogue, allowing participants to confront bias and build solidarity across different identities and experiences. Overall, Figure 8 illustrates not only the participatory nature of this class but also the inclusive atmosphere that characterises Sekodi's broader approach to peace and tolerance education.

c) Political Class and Democracy

The Political Class and Democracy program invites participants to critically examine the relationship between the state and its citizens through the lenses of civil rights, political participation, and the democratic process in Indonesia. The course begins with foundational materials on the structure of the state and the concept of substantial democracy, then transitions into discussions on pressing political issues such as the criminalisation of activists, elitist electoral systems, and the lack of legal protection for vulnerable groups.

As shown in Figure 9, one of the class sessions featured a dialogue with a Deputy of the Bandung City DPRD (Regional People's Representative Council), where participants directly engaged with a policymaker on the realities of local governance. The interactive format of this class allows participants to not only analyse constitutional articles that are frequently violated in practice but also to dissect case studies of human rights abuses from a policy and legal perspective.

In this class, participants do more than learn theory—they engage in advocacy simulations, construct public arguments, and conduct mock parliamentary debates. These activities are designed to empower participants as active citizens who understand their democratic rights and responsibilities. The transformative nature of this program is reinforced by participant testimonials, such as one who stated:

“The most interesting thing is how politics is not only about power, but also about narrative, identity, and how public policy is formed. This class helped me see the relationship between ideology, power, and everyday

life practices. I also became more critical of political information on social media...” (Interview, February 26, 2025).

Figure 10 captures another session of the Political Class in progress, depicting the dynamic and participatory atmosphere that characterises the Sekodi learning model. These sessions are conducted in collaboration with legal experts, democracy activists, members of the DPRD, and academics with expertise in constitutional law and civic engagement. In one session, for instance, DPRD expert staff explained the legislative drafting process, which was followed by discussions highlighting representation disparities in the Indonesian parliament.

Classes are held every Saturday throughout February, with four consecutive sessions. Each session lasts approximately three hours and is structured into three segments: presentation, open discussion, and advocacy or reflection activities. Venues for these sessions vary between LBH Bandung, community discussion halls, and other civil society partner spaces, all chosen to foster openness and accessibility.



**Figure 9.** Political Class with Bandung City DPRD Deputy  
**Source:** Community Document



**Figure 10.** Political Class  
**Source:** Community Document

This class serves as a strategic space for strengthening democratic awareness among youth. Through the study of constitutional frameworks, human rights discourse, and participatory exercises, participants are equipped not only with theoretical understanding but also with practical skills in ethical political engagement. Ultimately, the Political Class and Democracy program demonstrates how civic education—when conducted in

inclusive and dialogic settings—can effectively cultivate critical, empowered, and socially responsible young citizens.

d) Additional Classes

Additional programs are designed to complement Sekodi's main classes, with themes that are more flexible and responsive to emerging social issues. The material raised can change every year, depending on the needs of the community and social dynamics. Topics that have been discussed include media literacy, narratives of violence in the news, strengthening marginalized communities, social ecology, and non-violent communication practices. The goal is to broaden participants' awareness of issues that are often overlooked in formal education spaces. This activity not only offers new knowledge, but also exploratory experiences such as book discussions, city history tours, watching documentaries together, and direct reflections from the field. The format is not rigid and is very contextual, making each meeting unique and always connected to the daily lives of participants.

The Insertion Program is held from March to April, usually twice a month on Saturday or Sunday afternoons. The duration of each activity is between two and four hours, depending on the form of the activity. Book or film discussions are usually held in community spaces or public libraries, while history tours or field reflections are carried out directly at points in the city that are relevant to the theme. The activity schedule is distributed via Sekodi's social media, and is open to the public without strict selection. Flexibility is the keyword of this program both in terms of place, theme, and delivery method. Precisely because it is not tied to a fixed curriculum, this program becomes the most fluid and surprising learning space among all Sekodi activities.

This class is an additional program that discusses social issues that are currently being discussed, such as media literacy, communication, marginalized groups, and other social topics. This class aims to enrich participants' insights with new perspectives and sharpen their understanding of the main curriculum. The learning methods in this class are more diverse and flexible, such as city tours, museum visits, discussions in parks, events in libraries, book discussions, and other interactive methods. The speakers in this class are academics, practitioners, and activists who are relevant to the topics discussed. The participants who attended were the



general public, students, and members of SEKODI Bandung. In general, the Insert Program proves the importance of non-formal learning spaces that are fluid and responsive to social dynamics. The flexibility of themes and learning methods makes this program not only a complement to the main curriculum, but also a catalyst for expanding participants' critical awareness. From this presentation, it can be concluded that contextual learning through direct experience and open discussion can strengthen participants' understanding of social issues in depth and reflectively.

Each class held by SEKODI Bandung follows a systematic and interactive format to ensure participants get the optimal learning experience. The activity begins with an opening, guided by a facilitator or regional coordinator to provide an overview of the objectives and agenda of the class. After that, introductions are made between participants and speakers, creating a more intimate and inclusive atmosphere. Next, the presentation session becomes the main part where the resource person shares insight and in-depth perspectives according to the class theme. Participants are then given the opportunity to participate in a question and answer session, where they can clarify their understanding, dig deeper for information, and discuss issues relevant to the material presented. To enrich the learning experience, the activity ends with an interactive discussion, which is more relaxed and allows participants to express their views and share experiences openly. With this inclusive and dynamic format, SEKODI classes are not only a means of education but also a space for dialogue that encourages a deep understanding of diversity, inclusivity, and democratic values in social life.

“This class really opened my eyes to religious diversity and the realities faced by other religious communities. Through the discussions and materials provided, I increasingly understood the importance of mutual respect and appreciation for differences. I felt more open to seeing different religious perspectives, and more concerned about the issues faced by minority religious groups. This experience taught me to be more tolerant and inclusive in my daily life, so that I can contribute to creating a more harmonious and understanding society.” (Interview, January 25, 2025).

Sekodi holds weekly classes aimed at increasing the understanding and empathy of the younger generation towards gender and sexuality issues, as well as politics and democracy and religious issues. Sekodi has various

excellent programs, such as the Religious Encounter Class which allows participants to understand the teachings of other religions through visits to places of worship and interactive discussions, the Gender and Sexuality Class which aims to break down stigma and discrimination against groups with diverse gender identities, and the Politics and Democracy Class which provides an in-depth understanding of human rights and the dynamics of Indonesian politics. In addition, there is the Insert Program which discusses current social issues, such as media literacy and city tours to understand social conflicts directly. With a volunteer-based membership system, Sekodi creates a safe, comfortable, and inclusive environment without discrimination based on religious, cultural, or gender background. Through a flexible and collaborative approach, Sekodi seeks to build awareness and tolerance among young people in order to create a harmonious and peaceful society. The implementation of this program shows various interesting tendencies in participant responses. Activities based on direct interaction, such as visits to places of worship and interfaith dialogues, received high appreciation because they provided real experiences in understanding diversity. Participants feel more emotionally and intellectually connected when they can have direct dialogue with communities from different backgrounds, so that their understanding of pluralism deepens. In addition, classes that discuss sensitive issues, especially those related to gender and sexuality, are one of the main attractions. Many participants are interested in exploring this topic more deeply because there are still many prejudices and misunderstandings in society. By presenting academics, practitioners, and activists as speakers, this class provides broader insights and opens up space for critical and constructive discussions.

The Insertion Program also has a significant impact in responding to developing social issues. With its flexible and thematic nature, this program can adapt to the needs of the community and present discussions that are relevant to current social dynamics. Various learning methods, such as city tours, book discussions, and museum visits, make this program more interesting and not monotonous for participants. Flexibility in implementing the program is one of the main factors that makes participants more enthusiastic and actively involved. By not limiting activities in a format that is too formal, participants feel more comfortable in discussing and sharing perspectives. Inclusive learning spaces, such as cafes, parks, or libraries, also



contribute to creating a more relaxed and interactive atmosphere. The combination of in-depth delivery of material, active participation, and a dynamic learning environment make this program effective in building social awareness, strengthening inclusive attitudes, and encouraging participants' involvement in various community issues.

To further illustrate the scope, structure, and inclusivity of Sekodi's educational programs, Table 2 provides a clear summary of the main activities conducted by the Indonesian Peace School Community in Bandung. The table outlines the frequency, location, and target participants of each program—ranging from interfaith dialogues and gender discussions to political literacy and flexible additional classes. This overview highlights the intentional diversity in both content and setting, underscoring Sekodi's commitment to making education accessible, responsive, and grounded in the lived realities of its participants.

**Table 2. Indonesian Peace School Community Program Bandung**

<b>Activity Name</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Participants</b>
<b>Interfaith Encounters</b>	Weekly, 4 times	Place of Workshop	General Public
<b>Gender and Sexuality</b>	Weekly, 4 times	Cafes, Parks	Academics, University Students
<b>Politics and Democracy</b>	Weekly, 4 times	Bandung Legal Aid Office (LBH)	Students, Activists
<b>Additional Classes</b>	Flexible / Incidental	Public Spaces	Members of Sekodi Community

As illustrated in Table 2, Sekodi organizes a variety of thematic classes in diverse public and community spaces, targeting different segments of society—from students and academics to activists and the general public. These programs, including the Interfaith Encounter, Gender and Sexuality, Politics and Democracy, and Additional Classes, demonstrate Sekodi's flexible and inclusive approach to non-formal education. The frequency and location of these classes reflect not only logistical accessibility but also a deliberate pedagogical strategy to embed learning within the lived environments of

participants. By holding sessions in places such as cafes, parks, legal aid offices, and public libraries, Sekodi ensures that the learning process remains grounded, relatable, and socially embedded. The variety and responsiveness of these programs highlight Sekodi's commitment to creating contextual learning spaces that are aligned with the realities and needs of a multicultural urban society.

These findings indicate that an approach to tolerance education based on direct experience and interaction between individuals is more effective than one-way methods such as lectures. The participatory strategy implemented by Sekodi is in line with Max Weber's theory of social action, where individual actions are influenced by social meanings formed through interaction (Webber, 2001). In addition, this approach also reflects the spirit of dialogical education as developed by Paulo Freire, which emphasizes the importance of critical involvement of participants in the learning process. In line with Wahyu Purwaningsih's research (Purwaningsih, 2025). The existence of interfaith communities such as Sekodi is able to create a safe space to discuss sensitive and complex issues. Sekodi programs have proven to have a significant impact on changing the attitudes of participants, especially the younger generation, in building more inclusive social relations. Thus, Sekodi can be a model of tolerance education that can be replicated in other regions. However, challenges remain, such as limited participation from less representative groups and minimal support from formal institutions. Therefore, collaboration with educational institutions and policy makers needs to be strengthened so that the sustainability of the program can be maintained and expanded.

### **3. Impacts and Challenges Faced by the Indonesian Peace School Community in Promoting Religious Tolerance**

Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) programs have had a real impact on changing the attitudes of the younger generation in understanding tolerance and diversity. Activities such as interfaith dialog classes, gender and sexuality discussions, and democracy education, have successfully created an inclusive learning space. One of the participants stated:

"...In my opinion, the Sekodi Program really helps to increase tolerance. I used to be really awkward when I had to talk or discuss with people of different religions, afraid of saying the wrong thing or not connecting. But

after participating in a few sessions, I got used to it and now I feel really comfortable. I became more open to hearing other people's perspectives without immediately judging. The friends in this community are also cool, they respect each other's differences, so the discussion is more enjoyable and less heated..." (Interview, February 15, 2025)

From the organizer's side, the challenges are admittedly quite complex, one of the facilitators mentioned:

"Our community definitely faces some complex challenges, one of which is the different views of diverse cultural backgrounds that sometimes trigger social misunderstandings. In addition, Sekodi Community suffers from a lack of resources, both in terms of funding and volunteer labor. We are a community that focuses on social issues, despite our humble origins. It can be said that Komunitas Sekodi is a 'poor community' that is committed to continuing to organize studies, regardless of whether there is funding or not. This community is purely engaged in literacy, with the aim of building public awareness regarding issues of religious freedom. However, our focus is not limited to these issues. We also discuss various other topics, such as politics, law, culture, and other social aspects. Apart from these challenges, the biggest challenge we face is also the consistency of the team, because it is often difficult for these voluntary members to remain active." (Interview, February 22, 2025).

**Table 3. Thematic Findings on the Impact and Challenges of the Secretariat in Promoting Religious Tolerance**

Aspect	Key Findings
<b>Participant Attitude Shift</b>	Greater openness; participants overcome anxiety in interfaith dialogue.
<b>Internal Challenges</b>	Limited funding, inconsistent volunteerism, and cultural misalignment.
<b>Learning Spaces</b>	Non-formal venues such as cafés, parks, and <i>LBH</i> (legal aid offices) foster inclusive and comfortable dialogue.
<b>Communication Medium</b>	Social media is a powerful tool for narrative-building and community outreach.

Table 3 Confirm that Sekodi's strategy of combining experiential learning with a participatory atmosphere plays a critical role in reducing social distance and transforming youth perceptions of religious 'others'. Non-formal

learning environments offer a level of psychological safety that encourages participants to speak freely, engage critically, and build empathy—elements often missing in formal education.

The Sekodi program encourages changes in participants' attitudes towards diversity, especially in terms of religion, gender, and the role of citizens in democracy. However, the program also faces major challenges such as limited funding, inconsistent volunteers, and uneven community participation, especially from minority groups. This requires Sekodi to develop a more strategic and collaborative approach so that its impact can be widespread.

From observations and interviews, it appears that experiential approaches such as house of worship visits are very effective in shaping participants' empathy and understanding. Discussions on sensitive issues such as gender and politics also trigger active engagement as there have not been many safe spaces to discuss them. In addition, non-formal learning spaces such as parks or cafes make participants feel more free to express their opinions. Meanwhile, social media became an important tool to reach out to new participants and spread the peaceful narrative widely. These patterns show that participatory, fluid and reflective learning methods are preferred by the younger generation over formal approaches.

The Sekodi community faces significant challenges, including limited funds, cultural differences, and lack of community participation. The issue of limited funds limits Sekodi's ability to develop sustainable programs and expand to a wider area. On the other hand, differences in cultural and religious views can lead to misunderstandings that hinder collaboration and dialog among its members. Lack of community participation, especially from the younger generation, is also an obstacle to building a strong network and creating a more meaningful impact in the community. To overcome these challenges, Sekodi seeks to establish partnerships with donor agencies, the government, and the private sector to secure more stable sources of funding. In addition, establishing an inclusive and open dialog is essential to diffuse differences in views. Educational programs and leadership training are also expected to increase the involvement of the younger generation as agents of change. With the right approach, Sekodi has the potential to continue to grow

as a platform that brings together individuals from diverse backgrounds, while creating a safe, inclusive and empowering space for all.

The findings support Max Weber's social action theory that individuals act based on subjective meanings and values that they consider important. Sekodi participants engage in activities not out of obligation, but out of a sense of personal values towards tolerance and social justice (rational-value-oriented action). Sekodi activities also reflect affective action, when participants are emotionally connected to the experiences of other groups. In addition, John Locke's concept of tolerance regarding the protection of religious freedom is also evident in the safe and open discussion space. These findings enrich the understanding that non-formal volunteer communities such as Sekodi have great potential in building a tolerant society through alternative education methods that are more dialogic and based on direct experience.

### **Discussion: Experiential and Dialogical Learning as a Foundation for Tolerance**

This study investigates the role of Sekolah Damai Indonesia (Sekodi) Bandung in promoting religious tolerance through non-formal, volunteer-based education that emphasizes direct experience and participatory dialogue. By analyzing Sekodi's flagship programs—such as the Interfaith Encounter Class, Gender and Sexuality Class, and Political and Democracy Class—the research finds that these initiatives have significantly influenced the attitudes and awareness of participants, particularly youth, in embracing diversity, breaking down prejudice, and fostering inclusive social interactions.

The findings show that Sekodi's flexible structure, inclusive learning environments, and contextual learning methods have contributed to creating a safe space for discussion on sensitive social issues. Participants reported increased empathy, openness to other perspectives, and deeper critical understanding of pluralism. Additionally, the use of informal public spaces and digital platforms has expanded the reach and accessibility of the programs. Despite challenges such as limited funding and inconsistent volunteer participation, Sekodi proves to be an effective model for grassroots tolerance education in multicultural urban settings like Bandung.

The effectiveness of Sekodi's educational programs in fostering tolerance and inclusivity can be explained by the way the community integrates experiential learning with meaningful social interaction. Participants do not merely receive information passively; they engage directly with people of different faiths, identities, and perspectives through structured encounters and open dialogues. This process allows them to attach personal meaning to the experiences they undergo—whether by visiting places of worship, discussing gender injustice, or engaging in political debate—which strengthens their internalization of tolerance values. This dynamic is in line with Max Weber's theory of social action, which posits that human behavior is shaped not only by external norms but by subjective meanings that individuals construct through social engagement (Weber, 1978). In the context of Sekodi, participants' actions—such as actively listening to minority voices or confronting their own biases—are driven by these self-constructed values, resulting in more authentic, sustained attitudinal change.

Moreover, the structure and methods used by Sekodi align with John Dewey's theory of experiential learning, which emphasizes that true education occurs when learners actively engage with their environment, reflect on their experiences, and apply insights to real-life contexts (Dewey, 1938). Sekodi's informal learning spaces—parks, libraries, cafés—serve as accessible environments where participants can learn by doing, interactively and reflexively. This creates a learning process that is democratic, non-hierarchical, and deeply connected to participants' everyday realities. Dewey argued that such learning fosters critical thinking, social awareness, and moral growth, all of which are evident in Sekodi's impact on its participants. Thus, the research findings can be explained by the interplay between subjective meaning-making (Weber) and experiential reflection (Dewey)—two frameworks that together illuminate why Sekodi's approach successfully cultivates tolerance and empathy among urban youth.

The findings of this study both affirm and expand upon previous research on the promotion of religious tolerance, particularly when compared to the three dominant approaches in the literature: (1) the formal religious community-based approach, (2) the formal education and curriculum-based approach, and (3) the cultural and local leadership-based approach. Each of these categories has offered valuable insights, yet each also leaves

unaddressed the growing need for more grassroots, experiential, and youth-centered models, particularly in complex urban settings.

In the first category, studies by Anjani and Kosasih (Anjani & Kosasih, 2024), Muslem (Muslem, 2023), and Williams (Williams, 2023) emphasize the top-down role of religious elites and formal institutions in managing religious conflict and fostering harmony. These efforts include interfaith councils, dakwah campaigns, and mediation by religious figures. While such interventions are undoubtedly important, they often operate within rigid institutional frameworks that limit organic engagement with pluralism—especially among youth. In contrast, Sekodi operates from the bottom up, relying on volunteers and peer-to-peer interaction, allowing for more personalized and affective learning experiences. This distinction marks a significant departure from the dominant reliance on elite leadership, offering a model where the promotion of tolerance is decentralized, participatory, and sustained through lived experience rather than institutional authority.

The second body of literature—focusing on schools and curriculum—has largely highlighted the role of civic education (Lestari, 2023; Ruslana, 2022), and language instruction (Atamturk, 2018) in instilling democratic and tolerant values. However, as many of these studies note, formal education environments tend to be structured, normative, and limited to classroom settings, often unable to address the real-world complexities of religious diversity and social conflict. Sekodi addresses this gap by engaging youth outside the classroom, using public and informal spaces such as parks, places of worship, cafés, and libraries to facilitate interactive learning. The novelty lies in Sekodi’s ability to mobilize critical consciousness through dialogue and real-time experiences—something rarely achieved within curriculum-bound frameworks.

Third, studies in the cultural and local leadership approach—such as those by Aarsal et al. (Aarsal et al., 2023), Alfitri and Hambali (Alfitri & Hambali, 2013), and Muda and Suharyanto (2020)—demonstrate how traditional rituals, community norms, and indigenous leadership structures help preserve harmony in rural and homogenous societies. While rich in cultural wisdom, these models often remain bound to local customs and may not fully address the diversity, social mobility, and ideological tensions of urban youth communities. Sekodi, by contrast, operates in a multicultural, pluralistic



urban environment where identities are fluid and ideological contestation is more intense. The community's approach, grounded in interfaith encounters, gender discourse, and political education, introduces a more intersectional and contemporary engagement with diversity, while still honoring cultural context.

This research contributes a novel hybrid model that integrates the strengths of existing approaches—namely, the authority of religious actors, the structure of educational systems, and the wisdom of local traditions—into a flexible, youth-led, dialogical, and experience-based format. The originality of the Sekodi model lies in its capacity to translate tolerance from abstract values into embodied practices, engaging the heart and mind of participants in everyday social contexts. This is a critical innovation in contemporary peace education, especially in societies like Indonesia where religious and cultural plurality intersects with political fragmentation and social inequality.

In the context of this study, the development of religious tolerance through Sekodi's educational approach reveals significant social implications: namely, that tolerance grows most effectively through direct experience and dialogic social relations embedded in safe, inclusive community environments. Rather than relying solely on didactic instruction, Sekodi creates interactive spaces—such as parks, cafés, and public libraries—where young people encounter difference not as abstract concepts, but as lived realities. This reflects broader findings that inclusive, multifunctional public spaces play a crucial role in facilitating intergroup encounters, reducing social segregation, and fostering a sense of belonging and mutual respect (Alfarizi et al., 2023; Francis et al., 2012). Through regular, open-ended dialogue sessions, Sekodi operationalizes what Onken et al. (2021) conceptualize as the Dialogue-Awareness-Tolerance (DAT) model, in which mutual recognition and discomfort are processed as part of critical engagement with difference. Additionally, Sekodi's model resonates with the dialogic philosophy of Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel, who emphasize the ethical imperative of openness to the "Other" as a foundation for genuine tolerance (Shypunov & Kovalchuk, 2021). In practice, Sekodi's emphasis on voluntary participation, empathetic storytelling, and mutual listening generates a participatory form of social learning where values of tolerance are not just taught, but actively co-constructed. This affirms the idea that socially situated, experiential learning in community-based settings is not

only feasible but essential for cultivating authentic, sustainable pluralism among youth in urban multicultural societies.

The ideological implications of this study underscore that deep transformation in individuals' belief systems—especially regarding tolerance and pluralism—is not primarily driven by formal doctrines or institutional indoctrination, but rather emerges through personal and reflective engagement with real-life diversity. Sekodi's approach exemplifies this process: by facilitating direct encounters with difference—whether in interfaith dialogue, gender discourse, or political discussions—participants are encouraged to critically reflect on their own assumptions and values. Such transformation aligns with findings from Bíró (2019) and Smith & Glenn (2016), who emphasize that non-formal learning environments and reflective practices lead to more enduring ideological shifts. Longitudinal research (Bowman et al., 2011; Castellanos & Cole, 2015) further supports this by showing that diversity experiences during youth have a long-term effect on civic engagement and social awareness. Ideological change, then, is rooted in the affective, dialogic, and experiential—highlighting that inclusive ideologies are best cultivated not through top-down teaching, but through bottom-up, lived encounters with human complexity. Sekodi's model thus contributes to a broader understanding of ideological formation as a dynamic, socially situated, and deeply human process.

The findings of this study carry significant historical implications, as they reflect a major shift in how young people in post-Reformasi Indonesia engage with civil society—moving away from formal institutions toward non-institutional and non-hierarchical spaces to explore identity, justice, and coexistence. This marks an evolution in civic participation where youth are actively creating and claiming alternative public, digital, and community-based spaces as platforms for expression and collective meaning-making. Prior research highlights that such spaces empower young people to challenge dominant narratives (Walker & Pennington, 2024), construct social identity through local contexts (Landolt, 2013), and foster a sense of belonging and cross-cultural solidarity (Habib & Ward, 2019). In this light, the Sekodi model is not merely a local initiative—it represents a broader historical trend in youth-led civic innovation. Its core contribution lies in demonstrating that democratization and social reconciliation are not solely

driven by state institutions or formal doctrines, but can be meaningfully cultivated from the ground up through inclusive, grassroots engagement.

The findings of this study affirm that community-based non-formal education, such as that practiced by Sekodi, can effectively complement—and even rival—traditional institutional approaches in fostering empathy, critical awareness, and social cohesion. Unlike conventional classroom settings, Sekodi’s learning model engages participants through direct experience, peer interaction, and reflective dialogue in accessible public spaces. This aligns with the principles of community-based learning (Brown, 2024) and service-learning (Losada et al., 2019), both of which emphasize the value of experiential engagement in building civic responsibility and social empathy. Moreover, initiatives like Sekodi reflect broader trends in collaborative education programs that enhance diversity and inclusion (O’Connor, 2012), while strengthening local networks and promoting social unity (Olayinka & Deniran, 2024). By operating outside rigid institutional hierarchies and embracing equity-based frameworks (Cress & Stokamer, 2022), community-driven educational spaces enable youth to co-create meaning, challenge systemic inequities, and cultivate a sense of belonging. These outcomes not only advance the goals of sustainable development (Kurawa, 2021) but also suggest that grassroots educational models offer a vital alternative for shaping inclusive democratic societies.

Despite its innovative and inclusive approach, Sekodi’s strong reliance on volunteers and informal infrastructure presents significant structural weaknesses that may hinder the program’s long-term sustainability and scalability. Without institutional backing or stable funding, such grassroots initiatives are vulnerable to high volunteer attrition, limited organizational continuity, and restricted reach—especially in areas lacking strong civic networks. Research shows that the absence of clear frameworks and centralized structures can weaken program cohesion, as observed in cases like the Master Gardener Program and food assistance networks (Chalker-Scott & Tinnemore, 2009). Furthermore, studies on community health programs have consistently documented attrition rates of up to 53% among volunteers due to poor support and lack of incentives (Rajaa & Palanisamy, 2022). While community ownership and informality can encourage innovation and flexibility, sustainable impact ultimately requires structured training, financial planning, and integration into broader policy frameworks.

(Bremer & Bhuiyan, 2014; Willness et al., 2023). Thus, Sekodi's model, though effective in the short term, risks stagnation without strategic institutional partnerships and long-term investment.

To ensure the long-term sustainability and broader impact of community-based educational models like Sekodi, several strategic actions are necessary. First, policymakers and educational institutions should formally recognize and support non-formal, community-driven learning spaces as legitimate and complementary forms of civic education. This recognition can be operationalized through policy frameworks that allocate resources—both financial and infrastructural—to support such grassroots initiatives. Second, capacity-building programs should be developed to equip volunteers and facilitators with essential pedagogical and organizational skills, reducing dependence on informal and inconsistent training. Third, strategic partnerships between community groups, local governments, and academic institutions can be fostered to provide mentorship, evaluation mechanisms, and access to wider networks of support. These collaborations would enable grassroots models to maintain their participatory and flexible nature while benefiting from institutional stability. Fourth, governments and funding bodies should establish grant schemes specifically targeting youth-led and volunteer-based initiatives that promote interreligious dialogue, social cohesion, and democratic participation. Finally, it is crucial to embed monitoring and accountability structures to evaluate the long-term social impact of such models, ensuring that they continue to serve as inclusive, dynamic, and transformative spaces for civic learning. By integrating these policy measures, community-based programs like Sekodi can move from being isolated experiments to scalable models of democratic education and peacebuilding.

## **Conclusion**

The central finding of this study is that tolerance and pluralism are most effectively nurtured not through top-down directives or institutional curricula, but through community-based, experiential learning that is rooted in everyday social interactions. The Sekodi model demonstrates that when young people are given safe, dialogical, and inclusive spaces to engage directly with religious and ideological difference, they begin to internalize values of empathy, mutual respect, and critical awareness. This underscores

a key lesson: peace education must move beyond normative messaging toward participatory and affective practices that empower individuals to learn through experience and reflection. The significance of this finding lies in its affirmation that ideological transformation is not simply taught—it is lived.

This research contributes to the scientific discourse by offering an empirical case study that bridges the gap between theories of social action and educational practice in plural societies. Conceptually, it introduces a hybrid framework that integrates Max Weber’s theory of social action with John Dewey’s experiential learning model to explain how youth-driven community initiatives like Sekodi can foster deep ideological transformation. The study enriches existing literature by proposing “experiential pluralism” as a working concept—referring to the process by which pluralist values are cultivated through lived, reflective, and voluntary engagement with difference. Methodologically, the research expands the study of peace education beyond institutional contexts, highlighting the role of informal, non-hierarchical, and affective spaces in shaping democratic civic culture. It also raises new questions about the sustainability of volunteer-based models and the future of grassroots movements in polarized societies.

Despite its contributions, this study is not without limitations. It focuses primarily on a single case study, which may not fully represent the diversity of community-based educational initiatives across Indonesia or other pluralistic societies. The qualitative nature of the research also limits the generalizability of its findings, as it draws from a relatively small sample of participants and is shaped by contextual dynamics specific to the Bandung region. Furthermore, the study does not quantitatively measure long-term ideological changes or behavioral outcomes among participants—factors that could provide deeper insights into the model’s overall impact. Future research should consider conducting comparative analyses across various community education models, employing longitudinal designs to assess sustained effects, and exploring how such models can be integrated into broader institutional and policy frameworks to improve scalability and sustainability.

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