Implementation Of Religious Moderation Values In A Multicultural School: A Case Study At SMPN 1 Panawangan Ciamis

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Article Info	Abstract
	Religious moderation is understood as a balanced, tolerant, and just approach to religious and social life, and it is a crucial strategy for building harmony in diverse societies. This study aims to explore the implementation of religious moderation values in a multicultural school through a case study at SMPN 1 Panawangan Ciamis. Employing a qualitative case study method, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The findings reveal that religious moderation is internalized through institutional policy, curriculum integration, extracurricular activities, and the involvement of teachers and parents. The school functions not only as a transmitter of religious values but also as a practical space for fostering tolerance and peace. The key contribution of this study is the presentation of a contextual and applicable model of character education based on religious moderation within public schools. This research has implications for national education policy in promoting moderation as a foundational civic value in Indonesia. *Moderasi beragama dipahami sebagai sikap berimbang, toleran, dan adil dalam kehidupan sosial keagamaan, serta menjadi strategi penting dalam membangun harmoni di tengah keberagaman. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi implementasi nilai-nilai moderasi beragama di sekolah multikultural melalui studi kasus di SMPN 1 Panawangan Ciamis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan dokumentasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa nilai-nilai moderasi beragama diinternalisasi melalui kebijakan institusional, integrasi kurikulum, aktivitas ekstrakurikuler, serta keterlibatan guru dan orang tua. Sekolah tidak hanya menjadi tempat transmisi nilai keagamaan, tetapi juga ruang praksis bagi penguatan toleransi dan perdamaian. Kontribusi utama penelitian ini adalah menghadirkan model pendidikan karakter berbasis moderasi yang kontekstual dan aplikatif dalam lingkungan sekolah negeri yang plural. Penelitian ini memberikan implikasi bagi kebijakan pendidikan nasional dalam mendorong moderasi sebagai nilai dasar kewarganegaraan di Indonesia.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become a crucial paradigm in maintaining national unity amidst Indonesia's rich plurality of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds (Azra, 2019). In recent years, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia has intensified efforts to integrate religious moderation into educational environments, especially in public schools where multiculturalism thrives (Mulyadi & Supriyadi, 2021). The notion of moderation here refers not to compromising belief but to upholding tolerance, rejecting extremism, and fostering peaceful coexistence (Alam, 2022). Schools serve as essential microcosms of society where values are transmitted and social attitudes are formed (Banks, 2015). In multicultural settings, the presence of students from various religious and cultural traditions poses both opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, diversity encourages interreligious dialogue and empathy. On the other hand, it may also be a site of potential prejudice or exclusion if not managed properly (Lickona, 2004; Wahyuni, 2020).

Previous studies have highlighted several models of character education promoting tolerance in schools (Rahmatullah, 2021; Kartikasari & Nugraheni, 2022). However, few delve deeply into how specific values of religious moderation such as tawasuth (moderation), tasamuh (tolerance), tawazun (balance), and i'tidal (justice) are internalized in public school settings with religious and cultural plurality. This research attempts to fill that gap by offering a detailed account of how SMPN 1 Panawangan, a state junior high school located in a multicultural region, implements religious moderation as part of its educational culture. This case study is significant because it not only sheds light on local practices but also contributes to the broader discourse on pluralism, national resilience, and education reform in Indonesia (Raihani, 2014; Suyanto & Suyadi, 2021). By investigating the mechanisms, actors, and pedagogical strategies involved, this study aims to identify effective practices and provide insights for educational policy and multicultural management.

Over the past decade, Indonesia has faced growing challenges in fostering religious tolerance within its public schools. Reports from Setara Institute (2023) and Wahid Foundation (2021) indicate persistent cases of religious-based discrimination, including bullying, exclusion, and coercive participation in majority religious activities. Although government and educational stakeholders have promoted religious moderation, most existing studies remain normative, focusing largely on curriculum frameworks or conceptual discourses without sufficient field evidence (Maksum et al.,

2021; Rofiah, 2020). This reveals a gap between policy ideals and actual classroom practices, particularly in multicultural school settings. The lack of empirical case studies prevents a nuanced understanding of how moderation values are internalized and practiced by students and teachers. Moreover, no clear operational indicators currently exist to evaluate successful implementation. Contributing factors include inadequate teacher training, institutional insensitivity to diversity, and a general lack of context-driven pedagogical strategies (Alamsyah, 2021).

To address this gap, the present study narrows its focus to public junior high schools in urban, multicultural areas, where diversity is both a challenge and a resource. It aims to explore the lived realities of religious moderation through daily practices, actor interactions, and institutional culture. Rather than evaluating curriculum content, this research centers on how moderation is practiced, contested, and negotiated in school life. By doing so, it offers a grounded, praxis-based contribution to the broader discourse on tolerance education.

This research aims to describe and critically analyze the ways in which religious moderation values are implemented within the context of a state school characterized by religious and cultural diversity. The study focuses on four key aspects: school policy, pedagogical practices, student activities, and the involvement of teachers and parents in fostering an inclusive school culture. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research examines the processes, actors, and social dynamics that shape the practice of moderation at SMPN 1 Panawangan.

The scholarly contribution of this study lies in its provision of empirical evidence regarding the practical enactment of religious moderation within formal educational settings. The article enriches the discourse on civic and peace education while offering a contextual model of character education grounded in religious pluralism. Furthermore, the findings serve as a reference for policymakers, educators, and researchers seeking to develop effective, localized, and sustainable strategies for strengthening religious moderation in Indonesian public schools.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive design within the framework of library research, which is particularly suitable for synthesizing theoretical constructs and policy insights (Zed, 2014). The research used a conceptual and interpretative approach to explore how religious moderation is promoted and potentially

internalized in multicultural Indonesian school settings (Maksum et al., 2021). The method focused on systematic document analysis, aligning with established practices in qualitative library-based inquiries (George & Bennett, 2005).

The primary research instrument was a document analysis protocol that allowed for structured identification, classification, and evaluation of sources relevant to religious moderation and multicultural education (Bowen, 2009). Data were collected purposively from scholarly journals, government policy documents, official religious guidelines (particularly those issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs), and peer-reviewed books published in the last decade (Kementerian Agama RI, 2022; Wahid Foundation, 2021). Sources were retrieved from internationally recognized databases such as Scopus, DOAJ, Google Scholar, and national academic repositories (Sugiyono, 2019).

Data analysis employed thematic content analysis, with codes developed inductively to capture dominant themes such as pedagogical models, institutional strategies, interfaith engagement, and character education frameworks (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). These themes were interpreted using multicultural education theory and principles of religious moderation as analytical lenses (Banks, 2015; Rofiah, 2020). Data credibility was ensured through triangulation across source types and perspectives, allowing for a cross-validation of interpretations (Patton, 2015). The validity of findings was further enhanced through theoretical alignment and careful attention to source consistency and scholarly credibility (Yin, 2018).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Institutional Leadership and Stakeholder Engagement

At SMPN 1 Panawangan, institutional leadership forms the backbone of religious moderation initiatives. The school principal acts not only as an administrator but as a values-driven leader who integrates moderation into the school's mission and daily operations. This is visible in scheduled interfaith assemblies, thematic morning reflections, and inclusive Friday forums that celebrate cultural pluralism. Such leadership aligns with findings by Nasriadi et al. (2025), who argue that transformational leadership fosters inclusive climates by embedding values of tolerance within school governance. Additionally, Mahmud and Umiarso (2025) found that leadership-supported *"moderation task forces"* significantly influence how schools

adopt and sustain interreligious respect. SMPN 1 Panawangan reflects this by actively preventing any single religion from dominating school rituals or narratives. Sulaiman (2023) emphasizes that equal recognition of religious holidays is vital in avoiding symbolic exclusion and maintaining social equilibrium what in Islamic discourse is referred to as *tawazun*. These practices help institutionalize moderation not only in words but in lived educational experience.

Beyond leadership, the school has prioritized teacher training as a means to operationalize institutional ideals. Regular workshops are organized in collaboration with local authorities and civil society groups to equip teachers with tools for managing diversity. These trainings address strategies for dialogic teaching, conflict resolution, and how to model inclusive behavior in the classroom. Aurora et al. (2024) argue that dialogical pedagogies significantly raise student empathy and interfaith literacy, especially in mixed-faith classrooms. Similarly, Fauzan (2023) confirms that teachers, when empowered as moral agents, become central actors in sustaining values of religious moderation. Purwanto et al. (2024) add that reflective practice and open discussions about sensitive issues build tolerance among pre-service teachers. These findings are echoed by Zulfatmi (2023), who noted that teacher perception of inclusivity often determines their classroom behavior. In essence, institutional change is unlikely without capacitating those at the pedagogical frontlines. SMPN 1 Panawangan illustrates this by investing in the sustained professional development of its faculty.

Parental engagement also plays a strategic role in the school's moderation efforts. The administration regularly invites parents to participate in interfaith events, dialogue forums, and school exhibitions that showcase cultural diversity. This transparency fosters mutual trust between the school and the broader community, thereby minimizing the risk of resistance or misinterpretation of moderation initiatives. Dwi Aprilianto et al. (2025) observed that in regions like Lamongan and Surabaya, interreligious interactions among students are strengthened when parents are meaningfully involved. Parental support further amplifies the school's capacity to build a unified, pluralistic identity among students. Moreover, Pakata (2025) shows that religious moderation is more sustainable when it is perceived not merely as a school initiative but as a shared value across generations. Parents at SMPN 1 Panawangan reported increased appreciation for the school's efforts to bridge differences without erasing identity. This also reinforces the idea that education for

tolerance is most effective when it is multilateral supported by both school and home. The community thus becomes an extension of the school's pedagogical ecosystem.

Such comprehensive stakeholder engagement spanning leaders, teachers, and families forms a resilient institutional infrastructure for moderasi beragama. Rather than treating tolerance as a mere cognitive target, SMPN 1 Panawangan embeds it into the social fabric of school life. This resonates with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' framework, which emphasizes *tawasuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance). These values are not just part of the curriculum but woven into the school's organizational routines and interpersonal relationships. As Zamroni et al. (2025) argue, when moderation becomes part of a school's ethos, it transcends the classroom and influences broader community narratives. Inclusive leadership and multi-stakeholder participation are thus crucial for ensuring the coherence and continuity of religious moderation practices. In this way, SMPN 1 Panawangan does not merely implement policy it nurtures a shared moral culture. This insight is especially valuable given the scarcity of field-based studies on religious moderation in Indonesian public schools.

2. Pedagogical Praxis and Cultural Institutionalization

Translating values of religious moderation into classroom praxis demands more than curricular integration it requires pedagogical transformation. Teachers at SMPN 1 Panawangan are encouraged to employ culturally responsive teaching methods that affirm differences while promoting shared values. These include role-playing, group reflection, and problem-solving scenarios designed to cultivate interfaith empathy. Sihotang et al. (2024) highlight the effectiveness of the U-Process and Iceberg Analysis in fostering students' cognitive and behavioral readiness for diversity. These strategies allow students to explore implicit biases and engage with ethical dilemmas in a safe learning environment. In multicultural contexts, such as Panawangan, pedagogical adaptation to students' religious and cultural realities is essential. Afriyanto and Anandari (2024) found that rigid application of religious content can alienate students from minority backgrounds unless delivered inclusively. SMPN 1 Panawangan addresses this by training teachers to handle texts and rituals with sensitivity, always inviting multiple perspectives. In this way, pedagogy becomes a medium for practicing not just preaching moderation.

The integration of moderation values into daily interactions further distinguishes SMPN 1 Panawangan's approach. Rather than treating tolerance as an isolated subject, the school encourages students to embody it through language, behavior, and peer relationships. Informal spaces such as student council meetings, extracurricular clubs, and lunch gatherings are all leveraged to model mutual respect. Rante et al. (2020) suggest that embedding tolerance into the hidden curriculum reinforces it far more effectively than formal instruction. Additionally, students at SMPN 1 Panawangan report feeling safer to express their religious identity without fear of exclusion. This is a vital achievement in a country where school-based marginalization is still a concern (Wahid Foundation, 2021). The school thus illustrates what Banks (2015) calls *"transformative multicultural education,"* where identity affirmation and social cohesion are pursued simultaneously. Through continuous reinforcement, religious moderation ceases to be a policy and becomes a social habit. This cultural normalization is arguably the most enduring outcome of the school's strategy.

Moreover, the school's commitment to justice (*i'tidal*) and equality (*tawazun*) is visible in its administrative decisions. Teachers and students alike report that no religion is given preferential treatment in assemblies, resource distribution, or moral messaging. This balance fosters a sense of ownership and pride among students from religious minorities. As noted by Zamroni et al. (2025), this kind of institutional equity is essential to avoid symbolic domination and to legitimize pluralism as a shared norm. The school also ensures that all religious groups are granted equal access to school facilities and holidays for observance. According to Sulaiman (2023), such policies counteract cultural hegemony and promote emotional inclusion in plural societies. Through this model, SMPN 1 Panawangan demonstrates that institutional equity can generate affective cohesion among students. Importantly, it also sets a benchmark for other public schools in regions with complex religious demographics. This suggests that justice and tolerance are mutually reinforcing rather than contradictory principles.

In sum, the practices at SMPN 1 Panawangan illustrate that religious moderation is most effective when it moves beyond rhetoric into the domains of pedagogy, policy, and interpersonal relationships. The school's success stems from its holistic approach, grounded in leadership, teacher readiness, cultural fluency, and community trust. These findings affirm that moderation is not a static value but a

dynamic process of negotiation and inclusion. While many studies on religious moderation focus on normative theory or isolated interventions, this case provides an integrated model of praxis. It aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' national roadmap and contributes to the emerging discourse on educational pluralism in Southeast Asia. Future research might explore how such models can be adapted in schools with different religious demographics or socio-political challenges. As Indonesia continues to navigate the complexities of diversity, schools like SMPN 1 Panawangan offer valuable lessons in cultivating pluralistic citizenship. Their experience suggests that religious moderation, when institutionalized thoughtfully, becomes both a moral compass and a social contract.

Discussion

The findings at SMPN 1 Panawangan confirm that effective leadership is central to institutionalizing religious moderation in multicultural settings. The principal's role as a value-driven leader reflects the model of transformative leadership proposed by Nasriadi et al. (2025), where school culture is shaped by inclusive policies and proactive moral guidance. The articulation of religious moderation in the school's vision, interfaith assemblies, and inclusive forums mirrors the four principles outlined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs: *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *i'tidal*, and *tawazun*. These principles are not only present in written documents but are practiced through daily rituals and equitable administrative actions. As Mahmud and Umiarso (2025) argue, leadership that goes beyond procedural management is more likely to sustain long-term tolerance practices. At SMPN 1 Panawangan, religious holidays for minority faiths are respected equally, demonstrating symbolic justice that avoids majoritarian bias. Sulaiman (2023) emphasizes that such practices prevent cultural hegemony in public institutions, a threat that remains persistent in post-authoritarian societies. By establishing rituals of mutual recognition, the school fosters an environment where diversity is normalized rather than merely tolerated. These insights support the theoretical view that leadership must translate values into institutional structures to be impactful.

Teacher empowerment also emerged as a crucial mechanism for operationalizing the school's commitment to religious moderation. The school's investment in teacher workshops and interfaith dialogue aligns with pedagogical approaches grounded in dialogic and transformative education. Aurora et al. (2024)

advocate for participatory teaching methods as tools to develop students' empathy and interfaith sensitivity. The case of SMPN 1 Panawangan supports this claim, as teachers reported feeling better equipped to handle religious diversity and mediate classroom tensions. Fauzan (2023) further highlights the importance of positioning teachers as moral agents who bridge institutional goals with classroom realities. In this school, reflective teaching practices and open dialogue have helped prevent misinterpretations of religious content. Zulfatmi (2023) argues that teacher beliefs often determine the success of inclusion efforts, particularly in plural societies. Through continuous capacity-building, SMPN 1 Panawangan addresses potential resistance and ensures that tolerance is taught not only cognitively but behaviorally. These efforts resonate with Freire's concept of critical pedagogy, where education becomes a tool for social transformation rather than indoctrination. The integration of teacher agency and institutional vision is thus a powerful catalyst for lasting change.

Parental involvement and school-community relations also played a significant role in embedding moderation into school life. The school's open-door policy for parents and frequent interfaith events helped extend the culture of tolerance beyond classrooms. As noted by Dwi Aprilianto et al. (2025), when parents are actively engaged, students are more likely to internalize pluralistic values at home. This confirms Epstein's (2011) model of overlapping spheres of influence, where school, family, and community must work together to build cohesive civic identities. At SMPN 1 Panawangan, parents reported an increased trust in the school's moral direction, particularly in managing religious diversity without alienating any group. Pakata (2025) found similar results in Sulawesi, where inclusive school culture reduced community-level prejudice over time. The trust established between the school and families also minimized resistance to the integration of new inclusive policies. Regular communication through cultural exhibitions and religious observance strengthened this trust. The school thus exemplifies a model where moderation is not just a top-down directive but a shared communal ethic. This underscores the value of partnership in cultivating sustainable tolerance.

The integration of moderation values into daily student life demonstrates the successful application of multicultural education theories. Rather than limiting religious moderation to formal curriculum, SMPN 1 Panawangan infuses it into student council activities, peer mentoring, and extracurricular forums. This reflects Banks' (2015) vision of transformative multicultural education, which prioritizes structural

change and student empowerment. Rante et al. (2020) affirm that the *"hidden curriculum"* the set of informal norms and values practiced daily plays a greater role in shaping tolerance than textbook content alone. The school's intentional use of informal spaces for modeling mutual respect supports this theory. Students from religious minorities report feeling equally valued and free to express their identities. Such psychological safety is critical in ensuring emotional engagement with values of moderation. In this context, *i'tidal* (justice) and *tawazun* (balance) are not theoretical ideals but lived experiences. These practices also challenge critiques that secular public schools in Indonesia often marginalize non-Muslim students. Instead, SMPN 1 Panawangan illustrates how inclusive values can be embedded holistically into school culture.

Culturally responsive teaching strategies further reinforce the school's moderation framework. Teachers are trained not only in pedagogical skills but also in socio-religious sensitivity, allowing them to respond to students' diverse identities. Afriyanto and Anandari (2024) emphasize the need for contextual teaching models that adapt religious education to Indonesia's plural context. SMPN 1 Panawangan implements this by encouraging inclusive interpretations of religious texts and promoting interfaith narratives. In line with Sihotang et al. (2024), the use of Iceberg Analysis and reflective dialogue techniques helps students recognize the implicit values behind religious expressions. These approaches reduce stereotyping and open spaces for empathetic listening. Moreover, collaboration with local civil society organizations enhances the cultural relevance of teacher training modules. The school does not merely teach *"tolerance"* as a civic duty but nurtures it as an emotional and ethical disposition. By treating pedagogy as a dynamic and context-sensitive process, SMPN 1 Panawangan bridges the gap between normative policy and daily practice. This demonstrates how religious moderation can be both principled and adaptive.

The case of SMPN 1 Panawangan offers a valuable empirical contribution to the discourse on religious moderation in education, particularly within multicultural public schools. Unlike many normative studies that rely on policy analysis alone, this research grounds moderation in observable practices, stakeholder agency, and institutional alignment. It confirms the theoretical frameworks of transformational leadership, dialogic pedagogy, and community partnership in fostering inclusive school environments. The findings reveal that religious moderation is not merely a curricular or bureaucratic addition but a lived system involving leadership, teaching,

parenting, and culture. By institutionalizing *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *i'tidal*, and *tawazun*, the school operationalizes national policy in contextually meaningful ways. This model provides a blueprint for other schools navigating the challenges of religious pluralism in contemporary Indonesia. Furthermore, it contributes to global scholarship on how schools in diverse societies can cultivate pluralistic citizenship through grassroots practices. Ultimately, this study underscores the power of localized, practice-based approaches in advancing national ideals of religious moderation in education.

D. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that the successful implementation of religious moderation in multicultural public schools such as SMPN 1 Panawangan is highly dependent on the integration of leadership, teacher capacity, pedagogical strategies, and community involvement. In responding to the research objective, the findings confirm that religious moderation is not a static curriculum element but a dynamic cultural practice shaped by institutional commitment and daily interaction. The school's experience highlights the significance of transforming national policy values *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, *i'tidal*, and *tawazun* into concrete actions that address the lived realities of religious diversity among students. From a policy perspective, this case study suggests the need for systemic support through inclusive leadership training, interfaith-sensitive teacher development programs, and mechanisms for parent-school collaboration. Educational policymakers should consider developing operational indicators for religious moderation practices at the school level to ensure accountability and sustainability. Furthermore, this study encourages the replication of successful models in other diverse school contexts as part of a broader national strategy to foster pluralism. For future research, comparative case studies across regions with differing religious compositions could enrich understanding of how local cultures influence the adaptation of moderation values. It would also be valuable to employ longitudinal and mixed method approaches to evaluate the long-term effects of institutional religious moderation on students' civic attitudes and interfaith competencies.

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