

STRENGTHENING STUDENT TOLERANCE THROUGH INTERNALIZING THE VALUES OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract : Religious moderation is a priority of Indonesian education policy because of the intolerance and likely social conflict over numerous religious identities. In addition to knowledge transfer, schools also teach pupils tolerance, openness, and respect for differences. This study will discuss the absorption of the ideas of religious moderation to increase tolerance in the classroom and develop religion-based character education. The design of this qualitative study was a case study. Observation and documentation supplemented semi-structured interviews with five teachers and ten pupils. Data reduction, presentation and conclusion were made by interactive theme analysis approach. The results indicated that classroom instruction, teacher role models, inclusive school culture, and character-building activities such as Anti-Violence Ambassadors could assist kids to internalize religious moderation. The results indicate that children comprehend religious moderation and can apply it in social interactions at school. Therefore, religious moderation in school learning and culture provides a tolerant, harmonious, and inclusive educational atmosphere and enhances the character education model that can be duplicated in other Indonesian schools.

Keywords : Religious Moderation; Student Tolerance; Character Education.

Abstrak : Moderasi beragama merupakan prioritas kebijakan pendidikan Indonesia karena adanya intoleransi dan kemungkinan konflik sosial terkait berbagai identitas agama. Selain transfer pengetahuan, sekolah juga mengajarkan toleransi, keterbukaan, dan rasa hormat terhadap perbedaan kepada para siswa. Studi ini akan membahas penyerapan gagasan moderasi beragama untuk meningkatkan toleransi di kelas dan mengembangkan pendidikan karakter berbasis agama. Desain studi kualitatif ini adalah studi kasus. Observasi dan dokumentasi dilengkapi dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur dengan lima guru dan sepuluh siswa. Reduksi data, penyajian, dan kesimpulan dilakukan dengan pendekatan analisis tema interaktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran di kelas, teladan guru, budaya sekolah inklusif, dan kegiatan pembentukan karakter seperti Duta Anti Kekerasan dapat membantu anak-anak untuk menginternalisasi moderasi beragama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa anak-anak memahami moderasi beragama dan mampu menerapkannya dalam interaksi sosial di sekolah. Oleh karena itu, moderasi beragama dalam pembelajaran dan budaya sekolah memberikan suasana pendidikan yang toleran, harmonis, dan inklusif serta meningkatkan model pendidikan karakter yang dapat ditiru di sekolah-sekolah lain di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci : Moderasi beragama; Toleransi Siswa; Pendidikan Karakter.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country of great religious, ethnic, cultural and linguistic variety. This variety is an important foundation for developing an inclusive society and a challenge to preserving social cohesion in the presence of differences in identity (Baharun et al., 2023; Gawo & Tafesse, 2024). In recent years, different manifestations of intolerance have been identified in social life, including among the younger generation (Frazer et al., 2022; Marciano et al., 2024). There are many sorts of intolerance such as stereotyping of other groups, tendencies towards social exclusivism, and low acceptance of variety (Mughni et al., 2025). This shows that the need for improving tolerance is still vital. This issue deserves considerable attention because tolerance is one of the major criteria for the realization of a peaceful, harmonious society that can actively manage difference in a multicultural society.

In facing these challenges, education plays a strategic role as a means of character formation and the development of social values. Education is not only oriented towards mastering academic knowledge and skills, but also aims to shape students with moral awareness, social responsibility, and the ability to live side by side with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Schools serve as social spaces that bring together students from diverse family backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs, providing them with opportunities to learn to understand and appreciate differences (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Nguyen et al., 2023). Through an appropriate educational process, students can develop empathy, openness, and respect for diversity as part of the social competencies needed in a pluralistic society (Burmansah et al., 2020).

One emerging approach to strengthening tolerance in educational settings is religious moderation. In the Indonesian context, religious moderation is understood as a perspective, attitude, and religious practice that emphasizes the principles of balance, justice, respect for humanity, and acceptance of diversity (Afifah et al., 2025; Karnoto & Syafi'i, 2025). This concept emerged as a response to various forms of extremism and intolerance that have the potential to threaten social harmony. Religious moderation is not intended to diminish an individual's commitment to their religious teachings, but rather to encourage religious practices that respect the rights of other groups in communal life (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Zulkifli et al., 2023). Therefore, religious moderation is seen as a relevant approach to building a culture of tolerance while strengthening national character in a pluralistic society (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Implementing religious moderation in education is not simply about delivering learning materials; it requires a continuous process of internalizing values. Internalization refers to the process by which a value is not only cognitively understood but also accepted, believed in, and embodied in daily behavior (Bovey et al., 2025). In a school environment, this process can occur through classroom learning, teacher role models, social interactions

between students, co-curricular activities, and a school culture that supports respect for diversity. Therefore, the success of religious moderation is determined not only by the existence of school programs or policies, but also by the extent to which these values become part of students' ways of thinking and acting in their daily lives.

Various previous studies have shown that religious moderation has a positive relationship with strengthening students' attitudes of tolerance. Mukhibat et al., (2024) found that integrating religious moderation values into learning can increase students' inclusive attitudes and appreciation for religious diversity. Research by Whitburn et al., (2023) shows that character education based on religious moderation contributes to the creation of more harmonious social relationships in the school environment. Other research also explains that an inclusive school culture can help students develop the ability to accept differences and reduce the tendency towards intolerant behavior. These findings indicate that religious moderation has significant potential to support the formation of tolerant character in students.

Nevertheless, most past studies have emphasized features of program execution, curriculum integration, or policy connected to religious moderation in education. Past research has focused identified the types of activities schools undertake and their broad impact on student character development. On the other hand, research particularly on the internalization of religious moderation ideals in the daily school life is quite few. But the internalization process is a major factor in the success of translating values into tangible conduct. These limitations emphasize the necessity of a better understanding of the mechanisms by which religious moderation turns into an innate attitude of tolerance in pupils.

This gap is the basis of the innovation of this research that is in its focus, namely not only studying the implementation of religious moderation as an educational program, but also revealing the process of internalizing the ideals of religious moderation in school life. This research considers tolerance not only as an outcome of policy or formal learning, but as an outcome of interactions that occur through teacher role models, school culture, social experiences, and relationships amongst students. In this way, this research provides a broader perspective of the process of tolerance development through the internalization of the norms of religious moderation. It is intended that this perspective would complement the study of character education and provide empirical knowledge on how schools may create inclusive and harmonious settings.

Referring to the description above, this study intends to investigate the process of internalizing the value of religious moderation in the school environment, and to analyze its contribution to improving the attitude of tolerance of students. This study seeks to

describe how the concepts of religious moderation are instilled, comprehended, and practiced by students in everyday school life so that they can form the behavior of respecting variety and supporting the realization of peaceful social interactions.

METHOD

This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of internalizing religious moderation values within the school environment and its contribution to strengthening student tolerance. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed researchers to explore the experiences, perceptions, and meanings constructed by participants within a natural social context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Furthermore, a case study design was used because the research focused on an in-depth examination of phenomena within a specific setting, allowing researchers to understand the interactions between values, school culture, and educational practices that shape students' tolerant behavior (Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted at SMP Negeri 1 Kemang, Bogor Regency. The location was selected purposively, considering the school's characteristics, which encompass diverse student backgrounds and the development of various character education programs that support strengthening tolerance and preventing violent behavior. The research participants consisted of fifteen informants: five teachers and ten students. The teachers involved were from the fields of Islamic Religious Education, guidance and counseling, and student activity supervisors. Students were selected based on their involvement in various school activities and their experience interacting with peers from diverse religious backgrounds. Informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique because they were deemed to have experience and knowledge relevant to the research focus.

Gathering data through documentation studies, observations, and in-depth interviews. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore the participants' experiences, viewpoints and interpretations on the practice of religious moderation and tolerance in school life. The observations were used to directly comprehend the patterns of social interaction, student conduct, and other school activities that represent the adoption of religious moderation ideals. In addition, documentation studies were carried out on other school papers such as character education programs, school regulations, student activity reports, and other documents linked to the strengthening of tolerance. The application of different strategies of data collecting assisted researchers to have a wider grasp of the phenomenon under study.

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously throughout the research process using the interactive analysis model of Miles et al., (2014), which includes data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. During the data reduction stage, researchers

selected, grouped, and focused data relevant to the research objectives. Next, the organized data was presented in themes and categories to facilitate interpretation. To deepen understanding of the data, this study also employed thematic analysis to identify patterns of meaning emerging from interviews, observations, and documentation, resulting in a systematic interpretation of the process of internalizing religious moderation values and strengthening student tolerance.

The data was validated using source and method triangulation techniques. Source triangulation was applied by comparing the information from teachers and students, while method triangulation was applied by cross-checking the outcomes of interviews, observations, and documentation. This method was utilized to enhance the credibility and consistency of the research findings. In addition, the whole research process was conducted in accordance with the principles of research ethics, such as providing information regarding the research objectives to the participants, voluntary consent to participation (informed consent), and the protection of the confidentiality of informant identities and data to ensure the rights and privacy of all participants involved in the research.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

The analysis generated four major themes that explain how religious moderation is internalized and practiced within the school setting. These themes encompass the integration of religious moderation values into classroom learning, the exemplary role of teachers, the cultivation of an inclusive school culture, and the implementation of character-strengthening programs. Collectively, these findings illustrate the multidimensional process through which students develop tolerance, openness, and respect for religious and cultural differences. Furthermore, the findings highlight the strategic role of schools in transforming the concept of religious moderation from a policy discourse into a lived educational experience that supports character development and social cohesion.

a) Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation through Learning, Role Modeling, and School Culture

The research results show that the internalization of religious moderation values at SMP Negeri 1 Kemang occurs as a systematic and ongoing educational process. These values are not only conveyed through formal learning but also developed through the social experiences students encounter in their daily school life. The research findings indicate that the school strives to create an educational environment that enables students to understand, internalize, and apply the values of

tolerance in various academic and non-academic activities. Through this process, religious moderation develops from a normative concept into a value that shapes the ways of thinking, behaving, and interacting among students from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, the research found that the internalization of religious moderation values occurs through various interrelated mechanisms. These values are instilled through the integration of learning materials that emphasize respect for diversity, teacher role models in building inclusive relationships, a school culture that encourages togetherness without discrimination, and social practices that enable students to experience a tolerant lifestyle first-hand. These four aspects form a values education system that not only develops students' cognitive understanding of religious moderation but also fosters affective awareness and social behaviour that reflects an attitude of respect for differences. These findings are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Internalization of Religious Moderation Values

Interview/Observation Data	Description	Code
"In our lessons, we always link religious material with the importance of respecting followers of other religions and living side by side peacefully."	Integration of religious moderation values in the learning process	Moderate Learning
"Teachers must be examples of how to respect differences so that students can emulate them."	Teacher role models as a means of internalizing values	Exemplary behavior
Observation results show that students from various backgrounds are involved together in school activities without discrimination.	A school culture that supports inclusivity and togetherness	Inclusive Culture
"We are used to working together with all friends regardless of their religion or background."	Practice of tolerance in daily social interactions	Harmonious Interaction
Documentation of school activities shows the existence of character strengthening and violence prevention programs.	Strengthening religious moderation through character activities	Character Strengthening

Table 1 shows that the internalization of the value of religious moderation does not take place instantly, but rather through a continuous educational process in various aspects of school life. Research data indicates that there are four main dimensions that shape the internalization process.

First, integrating the value of religious moderation in learning. The research results show that teachers not only convey religious material in a cognitive aspect, but also connect it with the values of tolerance, respect for diversity, and the importance of peaceful coexistence. Learning becomes the initial means for students to understand that differences are not a threat but are part of social reality that must be accepted. Through this process, the value of religious moderation begins to be instilled as a framework of thinking that shapes students' perspective on diversity.

Second, the teacher's example as an agent of value internalization. Research findings show that teachers have an important role in transforming the value of religious moderation into real behaviour. Teachers not only function as transmitters of material, but also as social models who demonstrate respect for differences, be fair, and build inclusive communication. Teachers' consistent behaviour in respecting diversity provides concrete examples for students of how the value of religious moderation is applied in everyday life.

Third, a school culture that is inclusive and supports diversity. Observation results show that the school develops an environment that encourages positive interactions between students regardless of religious or social background. Various school activities are designed to strengthen a sense of togetherness, cooperation, and mutual respect. This inclusive school culture functions as a social space that allows students to directly experience the practice of coexisting in diversity so that the value of religious moderation is not only understood conceptually, but also felt in their social experiences.

Fourth, practice religious moderation in daily school life. Research finds that students begin to apply the values they learn through concrete behaviour such as working together with friends of different religions, respecting other people's views, avoiding discriminatory actions, and resolving differences through good communication. This practice shows that the value of religious moderation has moved from the understanding stage to the appreciation and implementation stage in social life. In other words, internalization of values does not stop at the knowledge aspect but develops into behaviour that is reflected in students' daily interactions.

Thus, the research findings show that internalizing the values of religious moderation is a process that takes place multidimensionally through learning, example, school culture and students' social experiences. These four dimensions complement each other in forming understanding, attitudes and behaviour that respect diversity. The results of this research confirm that the success of religious moderation education is not only determined by the formal curriculum, but also by a

school environment that consistently provides real experiences for students to practice the values of tolerance in everyday life.

b) Strengthening Students' Attitudes of Tolerance through Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation

The research results show that internalizing the values of religious moderation significantly contributes to strengthening students' tolerance at SMP Negeri 1 Kemang. The values instilled through learning, teacher role models, school culture, and various character-building activities not only enhance students' understanding of the importance of respecting differences but also foster more inclusive social behavior in daily school life. This internalization process helps students view diversity as a natural part of social life, encouraging them to build positive relationships with peers from diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, the research found that strengthening students' tolerance is reflected in four main aspects: increased appreciation for religious diversity, the development of empathy and social openness, the creation of harmonious interactions among students, and the development of tolerant behavior in daily life. These four aspects demonstrate that internalizing religious moderation not only produces a conceptual understanding of tolerance but also results in tangible changes in attitudes and behavior within the school environment.

Table 2: Strengthening Students' Attitudes of Tolerance through Internalization of Religious Moderation Values

Interview/Observation Data	Description	Code
"We are taught to respect friends who have different beliefs and not to force our religious opinions on others."	Respect for diversity of religions and beliefs	Diversity Award
"Students begin to better understand the feelings and points of view of friends from different backgrounds."	The development of empathy and social openness	Social Empathy
Observation results show that students from various groups interact and work together regardless of religious differences.	Harmonious social relationships between students	Harmonious Interaction
"When there are differences of opinion, we prefer to discuss rather than mock or blame each other."	Tolerant behavior in resolving differences	Tolerant Behavior
Documentation of school activities shows the involvement of all students in joint activities without discrimination.	Implementation of tolerance in school activities	Inclusive Participation

Table 2 shows that internalization of the value of religious moderation contributes to the formation of various attitudes and behaviors that support the creation of a harmonious school environment. Research data indicates the existence of four main dimensions that reflect the strengthening of students' tolerance as a result of the internalization process.

First, respect for religious diversity. The results showed that students had a better understanding of the importance of respecting other people's religious beliefs and practices. They realize that religious differences are part of social reality that must be accepted and respected. This understanding is reflected in the attitude of students who do not discriminate, do not impose their beliefs on others, and show respect for the right of every individual to practice their religious teachings. These findings indicate that the internalization of religious moderation has helped students build awareness regarding the importance of peaceful coexistence in a diverse society.

Second, developing empathy and social openness. Research finds that students become better able to understand the feelings, experiences and perspectives of their peers who come from different backgrounds. This developing empathy encourages mutual respect and reduces the tendency to give negative judgments towards other groups. In addition, students show greater openness in interacting, dialogue and collaborating with friends who have different beliefs and views. This condition shows that religious moderation not only strengthens the cognitive aspects of tolerance, but also forms social sensitivity that supports positive interpersonal relationships.

Third, harmonious interaction between students. Observation results show that students are able to build good social relationships without making religious differences a barrier to interaction. They are involved in various group activities, discussions and school activities together. This harmonious relationship is reflected in the high level of cooperation, mutual trust, and the ability to communicate positively between students. These findings indicate that internalizing the value of religious moderation has contributed to creating a school social climate that is inclusive and conducive to the development of student character.

Fourth, the formation of tolerant behavior in everyday life. Research finds that tolerance is not only understood as a concept learned in class, but has been realized in students' real actions. They tend to resolve differences through dialogue, respect other people's opinions, avoid discriminatory actions, and show an attitude of helping each other regardless of religious background. This behavior shows that the values of

religious moderation have been internalized into students' daily life practices. Thus, tolerance develops into a part of character that influences the way they interact and build social relationships in the school environment.

Thus, the research results confirm that internalization of the concepts of religious moderation provides a genuine contribution to enhancing students' tolerance. This process enhances students' understanding of the value of respecting variety, builds empathy, strengthens harmonious social ties, and results in tolerant behaviour in everyday life. These results support the strategic significance of religious moderation in the construction of an inclusive and peaceful educational environment that can teach pupils to live in a multicultural society.

2. Discussion

This study aims to analyse the process of internalizing religious moderation values within the school environment and examine its contribution to strengthening student tolerance. The results indicate that internalization of religious moderation values occurs through learning, teacher role models, an inclusive school culture, and daily social interactions (Hamidy et al., 2022; Mukhibat et al., 2024). This process not only shapes students' understanding of the importance of respecting diversity but also results in changes in attitudes and behaviours reflected in increased appreciation for differences, the development of social empathy, the creation of harmonious relationships, and the emergence of tolerant behaviour in school life (Fawaid & Astutik, 2023). These findings demonstrate that religious moderation does not function solely as a normative concept, but rather as an educational mechanism that enables the transformation of values into concrete character and social practices.

The first finding indicates that internalization of religious moderation values is a multidimensional process that simultaneously involves cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects. Moderation values are not only conveyed through formal learning but are also reinforced through students' social experiences within the school environment. These findings align with Kyrpychenko et al. (2021) perspective, which asserts that internalization of values is a process whereby a value is not only understood intellectually but also accepted and embodied in everyday actions. In the context of this research, learning serves as an initial means of introducing the values of tolerance and respect for diversity, while social experiences serve as a medium through which students can internalize these values in real-life practice (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Munawwar, 2020). Thus, internalization of the value of religious moderation can be understood as a transformational process that connects moral knowledge with social action.

The results also indicate that teacher role models play a central role in the internalization of the value of religious moderation. Teachers serve not only as transmitters of learning materials but also as figures who provide concrete examples of how to respect differences, build inclusive communication, and resolve conflicts peacefully (Ediyanto et al., 2021; Safuan et al., 2024). These findings support Chahine et al. (2020) social learning theory, which explains that individuals learn through observing and imitating the behaviour of important figures. When students witness the practice of tolerance demonstrated by teachers in school life, they gain concrete references for applying the value of religious moderation in social interactions. Therefore, the success of internalizing values does not only depend on the quality of the curriculum, but also on the consistency of the behaviour of educators as social models in the school environment.

In addition to teacher role models, an inclusive school culture has been shown to be a crucial factor in strengthening the internalization of religious moderation values. Observations indicate that a school environment that fosters cooperation, participation, and respect for diversity allows students to directly experience living side by side with individuals from diverse backgrounds (Burmansah et al., 2020; Graham et al., 2024; Stahlmann et al., 2024). This finding supports research by Ingaldi et al. (2023), which asserts that school culture is one of the most effective tools for character formation because values embedded in the social environment tend to be more easily internalized than those taught solely verbally. In this study, school culture serves as a habituation space that allows students to develop tolerant behaviour through repeated interactions, allowing religious moderation values to become part of their social habits.

A second finding indicates that internalization of religious moderation values significantly contributes to strengthening student tolerance. This contribution is reflected in increased respect for religious diversity, the development of social empathy, the creation of harmonious relationships, and the emergence of tolerant behaviour in daily life. These findings reinforce UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, (2021) definition of tolerance as an attitude of respect, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity as the foundation of a peaceful life. In this study, tolerance emerged not merely as a passive acceptance of differences, but rather developed into an active ability to build positive social relationships with individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

The development of social empathy found in this study indicates that religious moderation contributes to the development of students' social sensitivity. Students became better able to understand others' perspectives, appreciate diverse experiences, and reduce the tendency to negatively judge other groups. This finding can be explained

through the Self-Determination Theory proposed by Lee & Lee (2024), which states that a value will more easily become part of an individual's identity when it is understood as personally meaningful. In this study, students did not exhibit tolerant behaviour solely because of school rules, but because they had understood tolerance as an important principle in building healthy social relationships. This process indicates that the internalization of the value of religious moderation has progressed from the stage of understanding to the stage of personal appreciation and commitment.

Furthermore, the research results indicate that internalizing the values of religious moderation contributes to the creation of harmonious social relationships within the school environment. Students demonstrate the ability to cooperate, engage in dialogue, and resolve differences constructively without using religious differences as a source of conflict (Fauziyah & Hidayati, 2023; Ismail et al., 2024). Religious moderation education can strengthen inclusive social relationships and reduce the tendency towards intolerant behaviour. However, this research demonstrates that this relationship is not direct (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Subair et al., 2024; Takdir, 2025). Tolerance develops through an internalization process that allows students to experience, understand, and practice the values of religious moderation in their daily lives. In other words, internalization of values is the primary mechanism linking religious moderation education to the development of tolerant behaviour.

The main contribution of this research lies in its ability to explain the mechanism by which students develop tolerance through the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation. Unlike most previous research that focuses on the implementation of curricula, school programs, or religious moderation policies, this study demonstrates that the success of religious moderation is determined not only by the existence of formal programs, but also by the process by which these values are instilled, interpreted, and experienced by students in everyday school life. The research findings identify four main interconnected mechanisms: learning, teacher role models, school culture, and social interaction. These four mechanisms form an internalization process that transforms the values of religious moderation from mere knowledge into concrete social behavior. Thus, this study offers a new perspective that positions value internalization as a conceptual bridge between religious moderation education and strengthening student tolerance.

Theoretically, this study expands the study of religious moderation and character education by demonstrating that the formation of tolerance cannot be explained solely through a cognitive approach oriented toward knowledge transfer (Li et al., 2022; Munawwaroh, 2024). Tolerance develops through engagement with social experiences that enable students to connect learned values with everyday life practices (Aini et al., 2025; Mundiri et al., 2025). These findings reinforce the importance of the value

internalization approach in character education and provide a new conceptual framework explaining the relationship between religious moderation, social experiences, and the formation of tolerant behaviour in students.

The results of this study in practice show that it is not enough just to increase the tolerance of schools by integrating religious moderation content into the curriculum. Schools need to develop an educational ecosystem that helps instil values through an inclusive school atmosphere, teacher role models, collaborative activities, and positive social interactions between students. So that the responsibility of increasing tolerance is the responsibility of the whole school community and is interwoven into numerous educational activities, not only the responsibility of religious teachers. This strategy allows students to have experience to practice the ideals of religious moderation in the actual world so that the values can be developed into the character traits in their life. Overall, this study proves that the internalization of the ideals of religious moderation is an important basis for creating an inclusive and harmonious educational environment to equip students to live in a heterogeneous society.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the internalization of religious moderation ideals is an important process in increasing student tolerance in the school setting. This is done through the integration of curriculum, teacher role models, an inclusive school atmosphere, and everyday social interactions so that students do not only comprehend religious moderation values cognitively but also absorb and implement them in school life. The results of this study demonstrate that the effectiveness of religious moderation education is not only influenced by the delivery of learning materials, but also the construction of an educational atmosphere that consistently promotes the formation of students' values and character.

The results suggest that internalization of the ideals of religious moderation has the role of developing respect for difference, increasing social empathy, creating harmonious relationships, and developing tolerant behaviour in everyday life. Tolerance is not derived from conceptual knowledge but is formed via social experiences that allow pupils to connect, cooperate and create healthy communication with others from different backgrounds. Thus, religious moderation is a foundation for character development of inclusive, open, and able to live in harmony in a pluralistic society.

The contribution of this research is to explain the internalization of values as a mechanism for associating religious moderation instruction with the formation of student tolerance. Unlike prior studies that examined programs and policies, this study reveals that learning, teacher role models, school culture and social interactions are interrelated

elements in the process of translating values into tangible social conduct. These findings contribute to the literature on religious moderation and character education and have practical implications in that improving tolerance requires a whole-school strategy that cuts across all parts of school life, not just the official curriculum.

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