

## **A Systematic Literature Review on Strategies and Challenges in Instilling the Values of Religious Moderation at the Junior High School Level**

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Received July 07, 2025; Revised December 25, 2025; Accepted December 26, 2025;  
Available Online December 28, 2025

### **Abstract:**

This study examines the strategies and challenges involved in instilling the values of religious moderation at the junior high school level through a systematic literature review of 20 selected articles published between 2020 and 2024, employing the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) model as an analytical framework. Religious moderation in Indonesia plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and diversity, particularly amid the growing threats of radicalism and intolerance. Core values such as integrity, solidarity, and tolerance are integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and reinforced through extracurricular activities and interschool collaboration. Implementation is carried out comprehensively by engaging the entire school ecosystem to foster students' character development, emphasizing tolerance and love for the nation. However, several challenges persist, including internal resistance, limited evaluation mechanisms, and the influence of broader socio-political dynamics. To address these challenges, the literature highlights solutions such as continuous teacher training, strengthening evaluation systems, collaboration with external stakeholders, and the strategic use of digital media to disseminate messages of tolerance. The findings underscore that the systematic and sustainable cultivation of religious moderation values is essential for developing an inclusive and nationalistic young generation capable of safeguarding national unity within Indonesia's pluralistic social context.

### **Abstrak:**

Penelitian ini menelaah strategi dan tantangan dalam menanamkan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama di tingkat sekolah menengah pertama melalui tinjauan pustaka sistematis terhadap 20 artikel terpilih yang diterbitkan antara tahun 2020 hingga 2024, dengan menggunakan model Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) sebagai kerangka analisis. Moderasi beragama di Indonesia memegang peran penting dalam menjaga harmoni sosial dan keberagaman, khususnya di tengah meningkatnya ancaman radikalisme dan intoleransi. Nilai-nilai inti seperti integritas, solidaritas, dan toleransi diintegrasikan ke dalam kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam dan diperkuat melalui kegiatan ekstrakurikuler serta kolaborasi antar sekolah. Implementasi dilakukan secara komprehensif dengan melibatkan seluruh ekosistem sekolah untuk membentuk karakter siswa yang menekankan sikap toleran dan cinta tanah air. Namun, sejumlah tantangan tetap ada, termasuk resistensi internal, mekanisme evaluasi yang terbatas, dan pengaruh dinamika sosial-politik yang lebih luas. Untuk mengatasi tantangan tersebut, literatur menyoroti solusi seperti pelatihan guru secara berkelanjutan, penguatan sistem evaluasi, kolaborasi dengan pemangku kepentingan eksternal, serta pemanfaatan media digital secara strategis untuk menyebarkan pesan toleransi. Temuan

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penelitian menekankan bahwa penanaman nilai-nilai moderasi beragama secara sistematis dan berkelanjutan sangat penting untuk membentuk generasi muda yang inklusif dan nasionalis, yang mampu menjaga persatuan bangsa di tengah konteks sosial Indonesia yang pluralistik.

**Keywords:**

Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, Junior High School.

**How to Cite:** Hamiid, N. I. A. & Madjid, A. (2025). A Systematic Literature Review on Strategies and Challenges in Instilling the Values of Religious Moderation at the Junior High School Level. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*, 28(2), 466-483. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2025v28n2i12>.

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## Introduction

Religious moderation in Indonesia represents a highly relevant phenomenon in sustaining diversity and harmony among religious communities. As a nation characterized by a wide range of religious beliefs and practices, Indonesia has experienced dynamic developments in regulating and accommodating various religious expressions. Since its independence, Indonesia has upheld the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*, which emphasizes unity within diversity. However, the acceleration of globalization and rapid advances in information and communication technology have rendered the challenges to religious moderation increasingly complex. Within this context, religious moderation extends beyond the maintenance of public order and security to encompass the preservation of pluralism and tolerance as fundamental societal values. Indonesia possesses a long-standing tradition of interreligious tolerance, as reflected in the sustained coexistence of diverse cultures and belief systems. Nevertheless, emerging threats such as religious radicalization and extremism pose significant challenges to social cohesion and national security (Millah, Nurlaili, Fitriana, & Nasution, 2024).

The principle of religious moderation is inherently embedded within religious teachings, particularly through the values of balance and justice. In the Indonesian context, what is subject to moderation is not the religion itself, but rather the manner in which individuals understand, interpret, and practice their religious beliefs. Terminologically, the concept of “moderation” in Arabic is referred to as *al-wasathiyah*, which in the Qur’an denotes a middle path characterized by fairness, equilibrium, and avoidance of extremism.

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةٌ إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضِلَّ إِيْمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَّءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٤٣﴾

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Translation:

"Thus We have made you (Muslims) the middle people so that you may be witnesses of human beings and so that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness of you. We have not established the Qibla (Jerusalem) to which you have been (formerly) Qibla except that We may know (in fact) who follows the Messenger and who turns back. Indeed, it is very heavy, except for those who have been instructed by Allah. Allah will not waste your faith. Indeed, Allah is Merciful and Merciful to mankind (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143).

The term *al-wasathiyah* denotes what is "best" and "most perfect," referring to a balanced position that avoids excess or extremism, whether to the right or the left. In line with this principle, the Director General of Islamic Education, M. Ali Ramdhani, emphasized that the strengthening of religious moderation focuses on three core values: integrity, solidarity, and tolerance. He underscored that education on religious moderation in schools must prioritize these values as a foundation for developing Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam / PAI) that embodies the spirit of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, a source of mercy for all creation (Anggraeni, Abkha, Syifa, Lighoyati, Millatina, & Mufiatun, 2023).

Contemporary realities indicate that religious diversity is often accompanied by tensions arising from group interests, which manifest in various forms of activity, including both physical and verbal violence. Moreover, social media has increasingly become a medium through which intolerance and harmful practices are disseminated (Shofyan, 2022). In response to these challenges, indicators of religious moderation, particularly national commitment, serve as a fundamental element in shaping the understanding and attitudes of Muslims who uphold peace and harmony within Indonesia's pluralistic social life. In the context of PAI learning, the objective of religious moderation is to cultivate students who are tolerant, possess a strong sense of love for the homeland, are capable of living harmoniously amid diversity, and are resilient against radicalism and extremism. Through the systematic integration of moderation values into curricula and educational practices, it is expected that a young generation with strong character, national insight, and a commitment to preserving national unity can be developed (Takdir, 2024).

The implementation of religious moderation is further reinforced by Presidential Regulation Number 58, which affirms that religious moderation is not merely a sectoral initiative but a national policy that must be enacted by all elements of society to maintain harmony, tolerance, and balance in religious life across Indonesia (Adolph, 2023). The significance of this study is grounded in the reality of Indonesia's highly diverse population, characterized by varied religious beliefs and practices, where the principle of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* serves as a foundational pillar for national unity. However, advances in information technology and globalization have intensified challenges to social cohesion, particularly through the emergence of religious radicalization, extremism, and intolerance that threaten national security and social harmony. Within the educational context, these challenges are compounded by incidents of physical and verbal violence in schools and the negative influence of social media. Consequently, strengthening religious moderation,

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especially at the junior high school level, is essential for shaping students who are tolerant, inclusive, and capable of safeguarding national integrity amid Indonesia's pluralistic society.

The term moderation is derived from the concept of *moderatio*, referring to a condition of balance, restraint, and proportionality, neither excessive nor deficient. Linguistically, moderate functions as an adjective denoting self-control and equilibrium, while moderation refers to the practice or state of maintaining such balance. In Indonesian usage, the term has been adopted as *moderasi*, which, according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*/KBBI), denotes the reduction of excess and the avoidance of extremism. John Hughes emphasizes that fostering religious moderation involves promoting interreligious and intercivilizational dialogue, as well as cultivating tolerance and moderation from an early age (Hughes, 2013). Etymologically, the concept of moderation originates from the Latin *moderatio*, meaning calmness, self-restraint, and balance. When combined with the term religion, the concept of religious moderation refers to an attitude and practice of faith that rejects violence and avoids extreme positions in religious belief and behavior. In a democratic country such as Indonesia, differences in perspectives and interests are inevitable, including in religious life. In this context, the state plays a crucial role in ensuring citizens' freedom and security to embrace and practice their religion according to their respective beliefs.

From an Islamic perspective, moderation (*wasatiyah*) constitutes a fundamental principle embedded within religious teachings. Islam is often understood as possessing a universal and comprehensive character that enables it to respond to social and historical changes. This universal nature underpins Islamic teachings that emphasize balance, justice, and adaptability across time and context (Abror, 2020). However, in contemporary discourse, Islamic moderation (*Islam wasatiyah*) has emerged as a prominent and sometimes contested topic. In articulating Islamic teachings, certain groups have adopted extreme interpretations that may lead to intolerant or even violent actions. Although Islam is grounded in primary sources, namely the Qur'an and Hadith, it allows for a diversity of interpretations. Consequently, Muslim communities demonstrate varied religious expressions and practices. This diversity is not merely sociological but is also rooted in theological understanding. Quraish Shihab (2007) argues that diversity is an inherent aspect of life as intended by God, encompassing differences in perspectives, intellectual interpretations, and responses to sacred texts, including their application in daily life.

In religious practice, a tension often exists between *das sollen* (normative or ideal values) and *das sein* (empirical social realities). The intolerance displayed by extremist factions has negatively affected the public perception of Islam, which is traditionally recognized as a religion of mercy (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). Such extreme attitudes obscure the core objectives of Islamic teachings (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*), which aim to protect faith, life, intellect, property, and lineage. In contrast, the life of the Prophet Muhammad, as documented in various Hadith sources, exemplifies moderation, tolerance, and compassion. This is reflected in the following narration:

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السَّخَّةُ الْخَنَفِيَّةُ: قَالَ اللَّهُ؟ إِلَى أَحَبِّ الْأَدْيَانِ أَيُّ: -وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ صَلَّى - اللَّهُ لِرَسُولٍ قِيلَ .

Translation:

The Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) was asked: Which religion is most loved by Allah? He replied: A straight and tolerant religion.” (Ali, 2024).

This prophetic tradition underscores that moderation and tolerance are central to Islamic teachings and serve as a foundational reference for promoting peaceful coexistence within pluralistic societies. The Prophet Muhammad was divinely appointed with the mission of perfecting moral character. Within this normative framework, reference to the Prophet is essential for examining the principle of Islamic moderation (*wasatīyah*). A comprehensive understanding and application of this principle require a careful and systematic examination of the Prophet’s hadiths, through which his conduct and teachings may be understood as embodying universal ethical ideals and noble values. These prophetic exemplars subsequently function as normative guidelines for the Muslim community in carrying out religious beliefs, rituals, and practices (Nurdin, 2021).

### Research Method

This study adopted a systematic literature review (SLR) approach to analyze recent trends in research on religious moderation over the past five years (2020–2024). The research data were retrieved from the Google Scholar database, which served as a widely used and reputable source for scholarly publications. An initial search using the keywords “education” and “religious moderation” and “Islamic religious education” and “in schools” yielded 21,900 articles. The review process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The initial identification stage involved filtering articles based on publication year, document type, publication status (final), source type (journal articles), language (English), and open-access availability. Subsequently, a preliminary screening was conducted by assessing the quality and methodological rigor of the articles in accordance with predefined inclusion criteria. At the eligibility stage, the titles, abstracts, and full texts of the selected articles were carefully reviewed to ensure their relevance to the research focus. Articles that met all inclusion criteria were retained for the final analysis. This systematic screening process resulted in a final sample of 20 articles, which were then analyzed to address the objectives of the study.

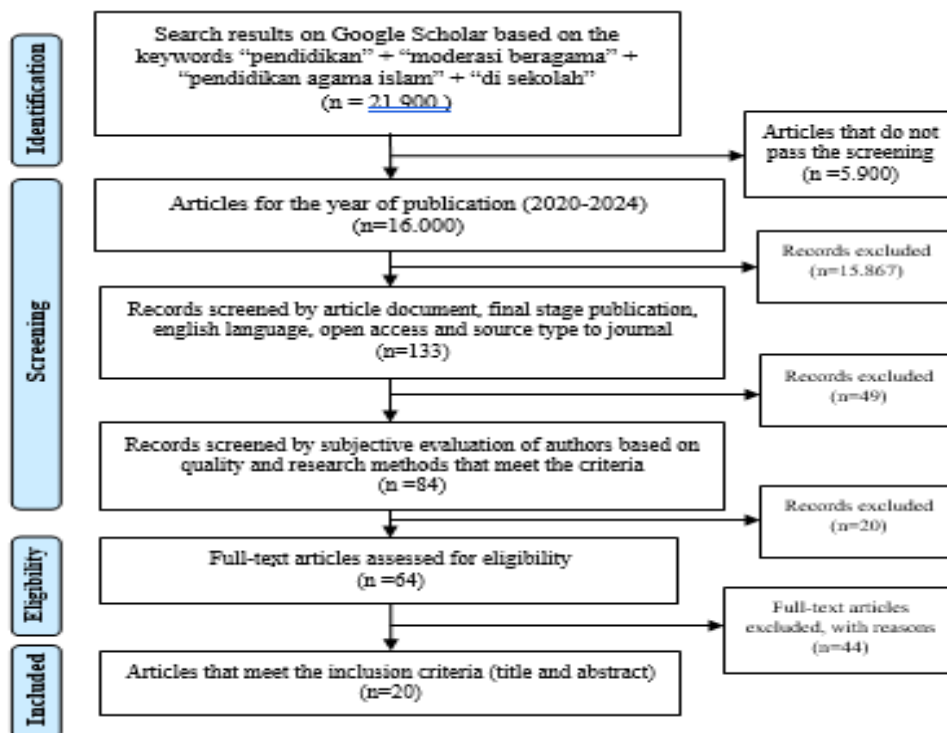


Figure 1. PRISMA Diagram

**Table 1.** Summary of Research Study Review Result

No	Author(s) & Year	Focus of Study	Key Findings	Research Method
1	Sunarsih & Edwar (2023)	Religious moderation in junior high schools	Moderation values should be introduced gradually and contextualized through daily practices	Qualitative, library research
2	Mustafa (2023)	Internalization of moderation values across subjects	Teacher socialization programs help prevent radicalism and build student character	Qualitative case study
3	Hidayat & Rahman (2022)	Moderation values in PAI learning	Understanding moderation is essential for students in a multi-religious society	Mixed methods
4	Akbar, Amin, and Zaenuddin (2024)	Integration of moderation in PAI	Schools play a key role in countering extremism through moderation-based PAI	Qualitative, literature study
5	Mawadda, Anwar, Asrianti, and Septiani (2022)	Moderation in PAI curriculum	PAI curriculum promotes tolerance and peaceful coexistence	Qualitative, textbook analysis

6	Rahmawati & Santoso (2023)	Moderation implementation in students	Pluralist PAI curriculum supports tolerance without compromising faith	Qualitative
7	Hidayat (2021)	Role of Islamic teachers	Teachers are central in instilling tolerant and inclusive Islamic values	Qualitative
8	Sholikah & Sholikah (2022)	Evaluation of moderation attitudes	Moderation values such as tolerance and unity were well implemented	Qualitative descriptive
9	Munir and Sesar (2025)	Teacher strategies to improve moderation	Habituation and direct-indirect learning enhance moderation attitudes	Qualitative
10	Mardiana & Rahman (2021)	Moderation in Islamic institutions	Moderation is implemented through pluralist-multicultural education	Field research, qualitative
11	Mutiah, Revola, Kurniawan, Herlina, and Safitri (2025)	Moderation in PAI learning	Moderation values become part of students' daily behavior	Qualitative descriptive
12	Rofiqi (2025)	Moderation-based character education	Moderation education increases tolerance and interfaith interaction	Qualitative case study
13	Awalita (2024)	Moderation in PAI curriculum	Dialogical and collaborative learning supports moderation	Qualitative, literature review
14	Salsabila (2024)	Moderation in SMP Waskito Ciputat	Moderation integrated through planning, learning, and evaluation	Qualitative descriptive
15	Fatimah (2023)	Strengthening moderation programs	Moderation implemented inside and outside classrooms	Qualitative
16	Nurjannah (2023)	Moderation strategies in schools	Integration of PAI and school culture fosters tolerance	Field research
17	Ainina (2022)	Moderation values in textbooks	PAI textbooks contain core moderation values	Qualitative content analysis
18	Shofiyuddin, Muthi, and Sakiratuka (2023)	Moderation in PAI and character education	School activities strengthen tolerance and nationalism	Qualitative

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19	Azra (2021)	Moderation in multicultural education	Moderation policies counter radicalism and intolerance	Qualitative, policy analysis
20	Anggraeni, Abkha, Syifa, Lighoyati, Millatina, and Mufiatun (2023)	Moderation in multicultural Bali	Religious dialogue and local culture support harmony	Qualitative

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## Result and Discussion

### Result

#### *The Implementation of Islamic Moderation at the Junior High School Level*

The implementation of religious moderation at the junior high school level is primarily achieved through the integration of moderation values into the learning curriculum, particularly within the subject of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Teachers and educators actively inculcate values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and mutual understanding through relevant instructional content. This approach aims to ensure that students not only comprehend religious teachings at a textual level but are also able to internalize and apply the values of moderation in their daily interactions within both the school environment and the wider community. In addition to classroom instruction, schools organize various religious and social extracurricular activities, including short-term Islamic boarding programs (pesantren kilat), congregational prayers, and interfaith spiritual activities.

These activities serve as effective platforms for fostering tolerant attitudes, strengthening interreligious solidarity, and promoting a sense of togetherness among students from diverse religious backgrounds. Through such engagements, students are encouraged to interact, develop mutual respect, and collaborate regardless of differences in belief.

The practice of religious moderation is further reinforced through coordinated intracurricular and extracurricular activities. Teachers and school staff play an active role in designing and implementing inclusive programs, such as flag ceremonies, competitions, and social service initiatives, that involve all students. These collaborative efforts contribute to the internalization of moderation values, habituate students to harmonious coexistence, and reduce tendencies toward exclusivity and intolerance. Moreover, the values of religious moderation are not confined to religious subjects but are disseminated across all areas of learning. Teachers from various disciplines receive guidance and training to integrate messages of tolerance, justice, and social cohesion into their instructional practices. In this way, the entire school ecosystem contributes to shaping students' character toward moderation and inclusivity.

Finally, schools strive to cultivate an inclusive and tolerant environment by providing facilities and infrastructure that accommodate the religious activities of all faith groups and by ensuring the absence of discrimination or unequal treatment based on religion or belief. Periodic monitoring and evaluation are also conducted to assess the



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effectiveness of moderation initiatives and to ensure that these values are genuinely internalized and reflected in students' everyday behavior.

### ***CIPP Analysis***

The following is a CIPP analysis from journals related to religious moderation in learning based on available information:

#### **Context**

The implementation of religious moderation in junior high schools in Indonesia is situated within a complex social, cultural, and political landscape, where the promotion of tolerance and pluralism has become a national priority. Indonesia, as a nation with considerable religious diversity, faces ongoing challenges related to radicalization, intolerance, and religious exclusivism, which have the potential to disrupt social cohesion and national unity. The government has responded to these challenges through a combination of ideological, legal, and educational measures. The foundational philosophy of Pancasila, which enshrines the principles of unity in diversity (*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*), provides a normative framework for promoting moderation, tolerance, and respect across different religious and ethnic communities. Complementing this, Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2016 formally mandates the strengthening of religious moderation as a national policy, positioning education as a key instrument for its realization.

The social context also highlights the contemporary relevance of religious moderation in the age of globalization and digital media. While Indonesia has historically maintained traditions of interreligious tolerance and coexistence, modern challenges, such as the spread of radical ideologies via social media, rising religious polarization, and cultural misunderstandings, necessitate deliberate and structured interventions within educational settings. Junior high schools, as institutions responsible for shaping the moral and social development of adolescents, are therefore considered strategic sites for embedding values of moderation. Within this context, the national education system emphasizes that students must not only acquire textual knowledge of religious teachings but also internalize values such as respect, tolerance, and social responsibility. By fostering these competencies early in life, schools contribute to the formation of a generation capable of upholding peace, harmony, and inclusivity in society.

#### **Input**

The successful implementation of religious moderation relies on a combination of human, material, and institutional inputs. First, competent human resources are essential, particularly teachers of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), who are trained in the principles of *wasathiyah* (Islamic moderation). These teachers are responsible for delivering not only subject knowledge but also the values, attitudes, and behavioral examples necessary to cultivate moderation in students. Teacher training programs, workshops, collaborative forums such as *Musyawah Guru Mata Pelajaran* (MGMP) provide continuous professional development, equipping educators with pedagogical strategies, instructional materials, and reflective tools to integrate moderation into the curriculum effectively.

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Second, the curriculum itself serves as a critical input. PAI learning is designed to include lessons that emphasize ethical conduct, balance in religious practice, respect for diversity, and practical applications of moderation values. Beyond the religious curriculum, moderation is increasingly embedded across subjects, highlighting the interdisciplinary approach that positions values of tolerance, justice, and collaboration as central to the entire educational experience. This integration ensures that students encounter consistent messages about moderation throughout their schooling.

Third, educational infrastructure and material resources are vital components. Inclusive facilities, such as prayer spaces for different faiths, supportive classrooms, and access to diverse learning materials, including textbooks, digital resources, and multimedia content, create an environment that reflects and reinforces the principles being taught. By providing practical experiences of inclusivity and accommodation, schools help students understand and internalize moderation as a lived, actionable principle. Furthermore, support from the wider community, including collaboration with religious leaders, parents, and local institutions, strengthens the foundation for these initiatives by aligning school practices with societal norms and expectations.

### **Process**

The implementation process of religious moderation in junior high schools is comprehensive, combining curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular approaches. In the classroom, PAI learning employs interactive and participatory methods, including discussions, reflective exercises, collaborative projects, and socio-cultural approaches that encourage students to critically engage with religious teachings and their application in daily life. These methods foster cognitive, emotional, and social understanding of moderation values, enabling students to appreciate multiple perspectives and develop a principled approach to religious practice. Then, extracurricular activities play a complementary role by providing experiential learning opportunities. Programs such as short-term Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren kilat*), interfaith congregational prayers, school ceremonies, and social service initiatives allow students to practice moderation in concrete, real-life settings. Participation in these activities strengthens empathy, mutual respect, and collaborative skills, while also reinforcing the ethical and moral principles introduced in classroom learning. Through these experiences, students learn to navigate diversity, manage conflicts, and contribute positively to their communities.

Teachers and school administrators act as role models, demonstrating behaviors that exemplify inclusivity, tolerance, and mutual respect. Their active engagement in designing and facilitating both curricular and extracurricular activities ensures that moderation values are consistently reinforced throughout students' educational experiences. Furthermore, collaboration across school activities, such as integrating moderation messages into competitions, community service projects, and daily routines, creates a holistic ecosystem in which students are constantly exposed to the principles of tolerance and social harmony. However, the process also faces significant challenges. Internal resistance from students or staff who are unfamiliar with or skeptical of moderation concepts can hinder implementation. External socio-political pressures,

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including media narratives and community tensions, may further complicate efforts to sustain consistent practices. Addressing these challenges requires ongoing training, reflective practices, and adaptive strategies to ensure that moderation values are maintained as a central component of school culture.

## **Product**

The outcomes of implementing religious moderation in junior high schools are observed in students' attitudes, behaviors, and broader participation in school and community life. Evidence from surveys, interviews, and observational studies indicates that students who are exposed to systematic moderation education exhibit higher levels of tolerance, respect for diversity, commitment to national unity, and the ability to engage constructively with peers of different religious backgrounds. Reports show a decrease in incidents of discrimination, exclusivist behavior, and intolerance, while engagement in interfaith dialogue, collaborative initiatives, and multicultural school activities increases. These outcomes suggest that religious moderation education not only impacts students' immediate behavior but also contributes to the formation of character and civic competencies that are essential for lifelong social cohesion. Students internalize the values of justice, empathy, inclusivity, and mutual respect, which can influence interactions beyond the school setting. Nonetheless, empirical evidence regarding the long-term sustainability of these outcomes remains limited. Continuous monitoring, evaluation, and refinement of educational programs are necessary to ensure that the benefits of religious moderation education are maintained over time. Despite these limitations, the observed outcomes underscore the potential of a structured, well-resourced, and comprehensive approach to instilling religious moderation as a means of developing socially responsible, tolerant, and ethically grounded citizens.

In summary, applying the CIPP framework to religious moderation in junior high schools highlights the interconnectedness of policy, resources, implementation processes, and outcomes. The context, shaped by national policies and social challenges, provides both the rationale and the imperative for moderation education. Inputs such as trained teachers, inclusive curricula, and supportive infrastructure enable effective implementation. The process combines classroom learning, extracurricular activities, and teacher modeling to reinforce moderation values. Finally, the products are observable in students' behavior, attitudes, and engagement, which collectively contribute to a culture of tolerance, inclusivity, and national commitment. By understanding these components in a holistic manner, educators and policymakers can design more effective programs, anticipate challenges, and develop strategies that sustain the values of religious moderation in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

## **Discussion**

### ***Key Strengths***

The studies analyzed in this review consistently emphasize that the integration of religious moderation values, specifically integrity, solidarity, and tolerance, across

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multiple domains of junior high school education is essential for fostering socially responsible, inclusive, and nationalistic students. Religious moderation is embedded not only in the PAI curriculum but also in co-curricular and extracurricular activities, including interfaith prayers, short-term Islamic boarding programs (*pesantren kilat*), school ceremonies, competitions, and social service projects. This multidimensional approach ensures that students encounter these values both theoretically and experientially, which enhances internalization and practical application. By designing learning experiences that simultaneously address cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, schools function as “laboratories” for pluralism and tolerance, providing students with opportunities to navigate diversity in real-life contexts.

Moreover, these practices align with national policies, such as Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2016, which positions religious moderation as a strategic tool for maintaining harmony in Indonesia’s pluralistic society. The alignment of school practices with national policies ensures coherence between formal education objectives and broader socio-political goals. Teachers and educators play a pivotal role as both facilitators and role models. Using contextualized, reflective, and dialogical teaching methods, teachers guide students to critically engage with religious texts while demonstrating moderation in action. Case studies, such as those conducted in SMPN 1 Parongpong and SMP Negeri 5 Bojonegoro, illustrate the effectiveness of habituation techniques and school-wide activities in shaping students’ moral reasoning, social awareness, and tolerance toward peers of different beliefs (Sunarsih & Edwar, 2023; Takdir, 2024).

The integration of moderation values beyond the PAI curriculum, including cross-subject socialization and collaborative activities, represents another key strength. By embedding messages of justice, inclusivity, and respect in all areas of learning, schools create a consistent educational ecosystem where students repeatedly experience and practice moderation. This comprehensive approach ensures that moderation becomes an integral part of the school culture rather than a discrete or isolated subject, enhancing the likelihood of sustainable behavioral and attitudinal outcomes. Additionally, inclusive school environments, such as those observed in multicultural settings in Bali, provide physical and institutional support for religious activities of all faiths, reinforcing the practical demonstration of moderation values and fostering a sense of belonging among students (Anggraeni, Abkha, Syifa, Lighoyati, Millatina, & Mufiatun, 2023).

### ***Main Challenges***

Despite these strengths, the literature identifies several persistent and multifaceted challenges that hinder the effective implementation of religious moderation in junior high schools. Internally, one of the most significant obstacles is the variation in teacher competence and readiness. Many educators demonstrate limited familiarity with the concept of religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) or possess insufficient pedagogical skills to integrate these values effectively into the curriculum. Some teachers continue to rely on traditional, lecture-based teaching methods rather than interactive, dialogical, or reflective approaches, which are essential for fostering tolerance, inclusivity, and critical thinking among students. This gap in teacher preparedness is compounded by limited professional

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development opportunities focused specifically on moderation education. Research by Shofyan (2022) and Mustafa (2023) further highlights that weak evaluation systems exacerbate these internal challenges. Without systematic tools to measure students' understanding, attitudes, and behaviors related to moderation, schools struggle to monitor progress, identify learning gaps, and make data-driven improvements, leading to inconsistent and sometimes superficial implementation of moderation programs.

Externally, schools operate within broader social, cultural, and technological environments that can either support or undermine the internalization of moderation values. The pervasive influence of social media and digital platforms, for instance, exposes students to extremist, intolerant, or polarized content, which may contradict the principles taught in schools. In contexts where parental oversight of internet use is limited, students are particularly vulnerable to such negative influences. Furthermore, socio-political dynamics, such as local interreligious tensions, community conflicts, or politically motivated rhetoric, can infiltrate school environments, creating additional pressure on both teachers and students. These dynamics may discourage open dialogue about religious differences, reduce opportunities for inclusive activities, and sometimes provoke subtle or overt resistance to moderation initiatives.

Structural and resource-based challenges also play a critical role in limiting the effectiveness of moderation programs. Many schools face inadequate infrastructure, such as a lack of inclusive prayer facilities or spaces for interfaith activities, which prevents students from practicing tolerance in a meaningful, experiential way. Limited access to teaching materials, textbooks, and multimedia resources that highlight pluralism and moderation further constrains learning opportunities. For example, studies conducted in SMP Waskito Ciputat and SMP Negeri 2 Suppa illustrate that the absence of comprehensive educational materials, restricted access to culturally diverse resources, and insufficient collaboration with community leaders hinder the implementation of moderation programs and reduce their potential impact. Low literacy levels among students can further limit engagement with curriculum content that requires reading comprehension, critical thinking, or contextual analysis.

Socio-cultural factors add an additional layer of complexity. In some communities, traditional interpretations of religion or local customs may conflict with moderation principles, making it challenging for students to reconcile school-based learning with societal expectations. Parental and community attitudes may either reinforce or contradict the values taught at school, affecting students' ability to internalize moderation consistently. Variations in cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds among students can also generate unintentional divides that require careful attention from educators to foster an inclusive learning environment.

Taken together, these internal, external, structural, and socio-cultural challenges underscore that religious moderation education in junior high schools is a multi-layered, complex endeavor. Effective implementation requires not only carefully designed pedagogical strategies but also systemic institutional support, robust monitoring and evaluation, community engagement, and proactive responses to broader societal and

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technological influences. Addressing these challenges is critical to ensuring that the cultivation of moderation values translates into lasting attitudinal and behavioral changes among students..

### ***Proposed Solutions***

The reviewed studies propose a multifaceted range of strategies to overcome the challenges identified and strengthen the implementation of religious moderation in junior high schools. First, teacher professional development is pivotal. Continuous training programs that focus on moderation pedagogy, reflective teaching, and context-sensitive instruction equip educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to model and instill moderation effectively. Teachers are encouraged to adopt dialogical, collaborative, and experiential methods, including discussion-based learning, problem-solving activities, and community engagement projects, which facilitate active participation and internalization of moderation values. By engaging students in real-life scenarios, role-playing, and collaborative projects, teachers can help students connect theoretical principles with practical applications. For example, in SMPN 1 Parongpong and SMP Negeri 7 Bontang, teacher-led workshops and in-class simulations allowed students to experience decision-making processes that required compromise, empathy, and respect for diversity ( Hidayat, 2021; Munir & Sesar, 2025).

Second, robust evaluation and monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring the effectiveness of religious moderation programs. Schools should implement systematic tools such as attitude surveys, reflective journals, behavioral observation checklists, and peer assessments to track students' progress in understanding and practicing moderation. Such mechanisms help identify gaps in both teaching and learning processes, enabling timely intervention and program refinement. Evidence from studies in SMP Negeri 5 Bojonegoro and SMPN 1 Sendangagung demonstrates that combining structured evaluations with direct observation of student participation in school and community activities provides a comprehensive picture of both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. This approach ensures that students' engagement with moderation is not only theoretical but also manifested in daily interactions with peers, teachers, and the broader community (Shofiyuddin, Muthi, & Sakiratuka, 2023; Nurjannah, 2023).

Third, collaboration with external stakeholders, including religious leaders, parents, community organizations, and local government bodies, is crucial for reinforcing the social relevance of moderation education. Schools that actively involve these actors create an environment where students observe and practice moderation not only within the school but also in wider societal contexts. Programs in Bali, for example, illustrate how engaging Hindu and Muslim community leaders, interfaith dialogue forums, and cultural preservation initiatives help students see moderation as a lived value, fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and cultural sensitivity (Anggraeni, Abkha, Syifa, Lighoyati, Millatina, & Mufiatun, 2023). Additionally, parent involvement in monitoring students' engagement with online content and supporting school-based moderation activities further strengthens the internalization of these values.

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Fourth, the strategic use of digital media and technology can significantly enhance the impact of religious moderation education. Schools can leverage educational videos, online discussion forums, and social media campaigns to reinforce tolerance and inclusivity, counter extremist narratives, and provide students with opportunities to critically engage with diverse religious and cultural perspectives. Digital platforms also allow for interactive learning experiences, virtual debates, and storytelling exercises that make abstract moderation concepts more relatable and applicable. Studies in SMP Negeri 2 Suppa and SMP Waskito Ciputat show that integrating multimedia resources and online collaborative projects with classroom activities increased students' engagement and understanding of moderation, particularly in contexts where traditional teaching resources were limited (Fatimah, 2023; Salsabila, 2024).

Finally, sustained policy support and the creation of inclusive school environments are essential to ensure long-term success. Comprehensive curricula that embed moderation values across subjects, along with infrastructural provisions such as prayer facilities for multiple faiths, libraries with multicultural resources, and spaces for interfaith activities, reinforce the practical application of moderation in everyday school life. Continuous policy backing, through government regulations, school guidelines, and support from educational authorities, ensures that religious moderation is treated as a priority rather than an optional initiative. In addition, ongoing teacher training programs, structured monitoring systems, and institutionalized collaboration with external stakeholders collectively ensure that moderation values are consistently reinforced across the cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions of students' experiences (Anggraeni, Abkha, Syifa, Lighoyati, Millatina, & Mufiatun, 2023; Rofiqi, 2025).

By combining these strategies, teacher capacity-building, systematic evaluation, stakeholder collaboration, technology integration, and supportive policy and infrastructure, schools can create a holistic educational ecosystem. This ecosystem enables students to internalize religious moderation values deeply, fostering tolerance, inclusivity, national commitment, and the ability to navigate the complexities of a pluralistic society effectively.

## **Conclusion**

Instilling the value of religious moderation at the junior high school level is a strategic and essential step in maintaining the diversity, harmony, and unity of Indonesia's pluralistic society. Religious moderation is not only necessary to address the challenges posed by globalization and advancements in information technology but also serves as a critical safeguard against the threats of radicalism, extremism, and intolerance, which can disrupt social cohesion. Core values of religious moderation, such as integrity, solidarity, and tolerance, must be systematically integrated into the educational curriculum through both intracurricular and extracurricular activities. The implementation of religious moderation in schools is carried out through various approaches, including the integration of moderation values into subjects, the organization of interfaith religious activities, and collaborative social and spiritual initiatives. Teachers and educators play a central role as

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guides and role models, demonstrating tolerance, mutual respect, and a commitment to peace. Additionally, an inclusive and open school environment that embraces diversity is a key factor in ensuring the effective internalization of moderation values among students. Therefore, the cultivation of religious moderation at the junior high school level must be continuously strengthened through the development of relevant curricula, ongoing teacher training, systematic program evaluation, and collaboration with all stakeholders, both within and outside the school environment. These efforts aim to foster a young generation characterized by integrity, tolerance, love for the homeland, and the ability to live harmoniously amid diversity, ultimately preparing them to become pioneers in promoting peace and unity in Indonesia.

### **Ethical Statement**

This study was conducted in accordance with standard ethical research practices. As a systematic literature review, it involved the collection, analysis, and synthesis of publicly available academic articles and secondary sources, without direct interaction with human participants or personal data. The authors ensured that all sources were properly cited and credited to respect intellectual property and academic integrity.

### **CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement**

- **Author 1:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft Preparation.
- **Author 2:** Supervision, Validation, Writing – Review & Editing, Project Administration.

### **Conflict of Interest**

The authors declare that there are no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article.

### **Data Availability**

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available upon reasonable request.

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