

Religious moderation as pedagogical habitus in Islamic religious education: A case study of internalization and character formation

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ABSTRACT

Background: Religious moderation has become a strategic issue in education amid rising signs of intolerance and radicalism among adolescents, particularly at the secondary school level, which is a crucial phase in identity formation. Although the value of moderation has been integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum, its implementation remains largely normative and has not yet fostered a deep internalization process within learning practices.

Purpose: This study aims to analyse how the values of religious moderation are constructed and internalized in Islamic Religious Education learning and how they contribute to the formation of students' attitudes.

Method: This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design, conducted at a high school in Indonesia. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and were analysed using inductive thematic analysis.

Findings: The results indicate that religious moderation is not merely taught as a value but is formed as a pedagogical habitus through the interaction between the curriculum structure, teacher role modelling, and repeated social practices. The internalization process occurs through the mechanisms of role modelling, reflective dialogue, and habituation, resulting in social empathy, self-control, and harmony in diversity. These findings offer a new conceptual contribution by positioning religious moderation as a pedagogical habitus in education.

Article History

Received: 30 April 2026

Revised: 16 May 2026

Accepted: 20 May 2026

Keyword

Religious Moderation;
Pedagogical Habitus;
Islamic Religious
Education; Internalization
of Values; Social Learning.

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How to cite:

Hanafie, I., Khojir, K., Shafa, S., Taufikin, T., & Fakhlaei, M. T. Religious moderation as pedagogical habitus in Islamic religious education: A case study of internalization and character formation. *Bulletin of Educational Management and Innovation*, 4(1). 111-134. <https://doi.org/10.56587/bemi.v4i1.134>

INTRODUCTION

Global developments in the 21st century include rapid digitalization, more human mobility, and more fluid intercultural relations (Blyznyuk et al., 2025; Steriu & Stănescu, 2023; Vanoy, 2023). Religion now operates actively in a digitized, transnational public sphere, not just as a private entity (Ahmed et al., 2025; Casanova, 2019; Zhorabek et al., 2025). This shift creates a paradox. Religion can foster social harmony, but it can also legitimize conflict, intolerance, and radicalism (Basedau & Koos, 2015; Lundy et al., 2018; Schliesser, 2020). Digital platforms can spread extremist ideologies (Sharif et al., 2019; UI Rehman et al., 2020). In education, this tension is clear. Schools are strategic places that shape young people's religious orientations as they seek identity (Harjatanaya, 2025; Priatna, 2020; Taufikin et al., 2025). Thus, religious moderation is not just a normative discourse but an urgent need that demands deeper conceptual and pedagogical action.

In recent years, studies on religious moderation in education have advanced. Research shows Islamic religious education teaches tolerance, non-violence, and respect for diversity (Fahmi et al., 2025; Muhajir et al., 2025; Supriyatno & Ubabuddin, 2019). Other studies show that including religious moderation in the curriculum builds students' inclusive character (Fauyan et al., 2026; Kosim et al., 2024; Muhlisin et al., 2023). Pedagogical approaches that use dialogue and teacher modelling also help shape moderate attitudes (Irayanti, 2025; Saepudin et al., 2023). Studies on multiculturalism emphasize that recognizing diversity is a foundation for humanistic religious education (Mensah, 2015; Munjiat et al., 2023; Qadir & Islam, 2023). However, most studies only describe values and strategies. They focus less on deeper internalization mechanisms.

Theoretically, religious moderation is examined from several key interdisciplinary perspectives: religion as a socially constructed phenomenon (Berger, 2014), values internalized through social practices (Bourdieu, 1986; Mohseni, 2022), behaviour learned by observing significant figures (Bandura, 1977), and education as inseparable from power relations and discourse (Foucault, 1995). Thus, religious moderation results from the interplay of social structure, teaching, and power dynamics, not merely from normative values.

While studies on religious moderation in education are indeed on the rise, significant empirical and conceptual gaps remain. Previous research has generally treated religious moderation as a normative outcome of education rather than as a dynamic socio-pedagogical process. Saepudin et al. (2023), for example, demonstrate that Islamic education can foster moderate attitudes through character education practices, while Muhajir et al. (2025) found that integrating multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education contributes to the development of tolerance and inclusivity among students. Other studies place greater emphasis on curricular and institutional dimensions. Kosim et al.

(2024) focus on the development of curriculum modules based on religious moderation, while Muhlisin et al. (2023) examine how government policies shape the discourse on moderation in Islamic higher education institutions. Similarly, Supriyatno and Ubabuddin (2019) emphasize the importance of multicultural values in Islamic learning environments. However, these studies still primarily focus on curriculum strategies, institutional policies, and normative discourse. At the same time, attention to how the value of moderation is internalized through daily pedagogical interactions and students' life experiences remains very limited.

Several studies have also explored dialogic pedagogy and teacher role modelling as key elements in fostering inclusive religious attitudes. Irayanti (2025) demonstrates that dialogic and reflective pedagogy has the potential to foster critical religious understanding, although its implementation often faces structural barriers within educational settings. Similarly, Fahmi et al. (2025) emphasize multicultural Islamic education as a strategy to strengthen social cohesion in Islamic schools. However, these studies still tend to view teachers merely as instructional actors, rather than as social agents who continuously reproduce values through symbolic interactions, discourses, and repeated pedagogical practices. Furthermore, previous research rarely integrates sociological, psychological, and critical perspectives simultaneously. Existing studies remain fragmented because they focus only on the curriculum, behavioural outcomes, or institutional discourse separately. In contrast, the influence of school culture, peer interactions, the hidden curriculum, and digital exposure on the internalization of the value of moderation remains largely unexplored.

Given these limitations, there remains a significant gap in understanding how religious moderation is socially constructed and transformed into students' life dispositions within Islamic Religious Education. Previous research generally addresses moderation at the level of curriculum design, ideological discourse, or behavioural outcomes. Still, it has not provided adequate explanations regarding the socio-cognitive and pedagogical mechanisms linking classroom interactions, habituation, social practices, and value formation. Consequently, religious moderation is often understood as a static moral ideal, rather than as a dynamic process embedded in everyday educational experiences. This situation has led to fragmented studies on religious moderation that have not sufficiently explained how moderation is negotiated, reproduced, and maintained in actual educational practice.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to examine how the value of religious moderation is constructed and internalized through Islamic Religious Education practices in secondary schools. To provide a clearer direction for practices, this study poses three main questions: (1) how are the values of religious moderation constructed in Islamic Religious Education instruction?; (2) how does the process of internalization occur through teacher-student

interactions and daily pedagogical practices?; and (3) how does this internalization influence the formation of students' religious attitudes and social behaviour? Through these questions, this study seeks to understand religious moderation not merely as a doctrinal value, but as a living educational process embedded within social interactions and school culture.

The primary novelty of this study lies in conceptualizing religious moderation as a pedagogical habitus. Unlike previous studies that have largely focused on curriculum content, policy discourse, or the transmission of normative values, this study develops an integrative analytical framework that combines social learning theory, habitus theory, and a critical perspective on power relations to explain how religious moderation manifests in students' daily practices and dispositions. Thus, this study makes a theoretical contribution by expanding the study of value internalization in Islamic Religious Education toward a socio-pedagogical perspective that connects structure, agency, and social practice. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of more reflective and transformative Islamic Religious Education strategies in preventing intolerance and strengthening social harmony in multicultural educational environments.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative, in-depth case study design to explore how values of religious moderation are internalized in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) (Creswell & Creswell, 2022; de Vries, 2020). This approach allows researchers to understand social reality contextually, holistically, and in depth, especially when studying pedagogical dynamics that cannot be reduced to quantitative variables (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The case study fits the research because it focuses on phenomena, mechanisms, meanings, and practices forming within the school setting. This design aligns with the aim of revealing how the values of religious moderation are constructed, negotiated, and internalized in real teacher-student interactions.

This study was conducted at a public high school in East Kutai Regency, Indonesia. The school reflects diversity in society at a micro level. Its multicultural student body comprises students from diverse ethnicities, religions, and languages. This setting is complex for observing religious moderation practices. The school was chosen for its high level of cross-identity interaction, which may support social harmony or friction. The institution also upholds religious and cultural values, allowing space for moderation in daily educational practices.

The main data sources were key informants chosen for their relevance. Participants included Islamic Religious Education teachers, school leaders, homeroom teachers, and students. Criteria for inclusion were direct involvement in IRE teaching or knowledge of

religious moderation in schools. There were 12 participants: 4 teachers, 3 administrators, and 5 students aged 15–18.

In addition to primary data, this study used secondary data from institutional documents. These include the school vision and mission, lesson plans (RPP), syllabi, and teaching materials used in Islamic Education (PAI). These were chosen for their relevance in showing the values and practices of religious moderation in formal education.

Table 1.

Characteristics of Informants

No	Code	Role	Description
1	G1	Islamic Education Teacher	Class Advisor for Grades 10–12
2	G2	Islamic Education Teacher	Curriculum Developer
3	KS	Principal	Policy-maker
4	WK1	Curriculum Coordinator	Academic Administrator
5	WK2	Deputy Head of Student Affairs	Student Guidance
6	Grades 1–5	Students	Grades 11–12

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection used three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Knott et al., 2022; Morgan, 2022; Walsh, 2020). Observations captured PAI teaching practices, teacher-student interactions, expressions of tolerance, and classroom dynamics. In-depth semi-structured interviews explored participants' perceptions, experiences, and reflections on religious moderation. Document analysis examined how moderation values appear in learning materials.

This study lasted three months. Field visits were adjusted to the school's academic schedule. The primary instrument was the researcher, supported by an interview guide and an observation sheet.

Data analysis used a thematic approach with clear stages: data reduction, open coding, categorization, and interpretation of meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006) (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The process began by transcribing interviews and observation notes. The researcher then identified initial codes as units of meaning. These codes were grouped into main themes that reflected patterns in how students internalize religious moderation.

Analysis was conducted iteratively, always considering the social context and interactions in the data. The researcher also used a reflexive approach to stay sensitive to meanings emerging from participants' perspectives.

To ensure data validity, this study applies the criteria of trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Denzin & Lincoln, 2026).

Credibility is achieved through triangulation of sources and techniques, as well as member checking with informants (Marlina et al., 2024; Santos et al., 2020). Transferability is maintained through detailed contextual descriptions. Dependability is ensured through an audit trail, while confirmability is maintained by basing findings on empirical data rather than researcher bias.

Table 2.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Techniques	Instrument	Purpose
Observation	Observation sheet	Observing teaching practices
Interview	Semi-structured guide	Exploring perceptions and experiences
Documentation	Lesson plans, syllabi, teaching materials	Examining formal values

This study upholds the principles of research ethics by ensuring informed consent from all participants prior to data collection (Hamilton et al., 2024). Participant identities are protected using anonymous codes to ensure confidentiality. All data collected is used solely for academic purposes and is stored securely. The research process also takes into account local social and cultural norms to avoid potential bias or negative impacts on participants.

This study is limited by its single-case design, focusing on a single educational institution; consequently, the generalizability of the findings is analytical rather than statistical. Furthermore, the qualitative approach used emphasizes data depth, thus failing to capture broad quantitative variations. Nevertheless, these limitations actually allow for a deeper exploration of the dynamics of the internalization of religious moderation within a specific, richly meaningful context.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study confirm that religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education does not function merely as the transmission of normative values, but rather shapes lived dispositions through repeated interactions among pedagogical structures, educational agents, and everyday social practices. Values of tolerance and non-violence are constructed through concrete classroom experiences, internalized through the mechanisms of modelling, dialogue, and habituation, and culminate in the transformation of students' attitudes toward an inclusive, reflective, and adaptive pattern of religiosity. Thus, religious moderation emerges as a pedagogical habitus: a configuration of values that is not only understood but lived out and continuously reproduced within the educational ecosystem (see table 3).

Table 3.

Summary of Three Key Findings

No	Dimension of Findings	Empirical Indicators	Data Source	Frequency	Interpretation
1	Value Construct	Tolerance in worship, anti-bullying, mutual respect	Interviews, Observations, Documents	December 7–12	Values are formed as social practices
2	Mechanisms of Internalization	Teacher modelling, discussion, habituation, reprimand	Interviews, Observations	5–10/12	Values are internalized through a socio-cognitive process
3	Impact	Empathy, self-control, social harmony	Interviews, Observations	6–10/12	Development of inclusive and adaptive attitudes

Source: thematic analysis by Researcher

Construction of Religious Moderation Values in PAI Learning

The first finding reveals that the value of religious moderation does not exist as a rigid conceptual entity, but rather emerges as a nuanced, layered, and recurring social practice within the daily routine of Islamic Religious Education. In the classroom, the values of tolerance and non-violence are not taught merely as doctrinal concepts but are brought to life through meaningful interpersonal interaction. These values appear in students keeping quiet while a classmate prays, in gestures of mutual assistance without questioning ethnic or religious background, and in the teacher's calm and non-judgmental communication style. Thus, the construction of moderation values moves from text to context, from curriculum to experience, and from formal instruction to lived awareness. Religious moderation, therefore, becomes not only a learning topic but also a social atmosphere that shapes pedagogical interaction in everyday school life.

Interviews with teachers indicate that the construction of moderation values is intentionally embedded through daily communication and classroom interaction rather than through rigid doctrinal instruction. One teacher explained:

"We do not force students to think in exactly the same way. What matters is that they learn how to respect differences and maintain good relationships with others in everyday interaction" (Informant 02, teacher interview).

Another teacher emphasized that moderation is cultivated through repeated social practice rather than through memorization of concepts:

“Students understand moderation more easily when they see examples directly in class. If teachers speak harshly or discriminate, students will imitate that behaviour as well” (Informant 04, teacher interview).

These findings indicate that teachers function not merely as transmitters of knowledge, but as social agents who continuously reproduce values through symbolic interaction and pedagogical behaviour.

Furthermore, the construction of moderation values reveals an integration between formal and informal dimensions of education. On the one hand, curriculum documents such as lesson plans and syllabi explicitly incorporate values of tolerance, justice, cooperation, and non-violence within learning objectives. Documentation analysis showed that several learning indicators explicitly emphasized “respecting different opinions,” “avoiding verbal violence,” and “developing cooperative attitudes within diversity” (School Document 04). On the other hand, these values gain practical meaning precisely through everyday interaction. Teachers create space for students to express opinions without fear of humiliation, while students learn to negotiate differences through dialogue rather than confrontation. In this sense, moderation values are not merely written in curriculum documents but are socially negotiated and reproduced within classroom practice.

Classroom observations also demonstrate that the value of moderation is often expressed through small, repeated social actions rather than explicit verbal statements. During observation sessions, students were seen spontaneously lowering their voices and remaining silent while classmates from different religious backgrounds were praying, even without direct instruction from the teacher (Observation Note, Week 3). In several group discussions, students also shared learning materials and assisted peers without considering ethnic or social background. These repeated practices indicate that direct experience functions as an important medium in shaping students’ understanding of tolerance and inclusivity.

The construction of moderation values also appears uneven among students, depending on the intensity of their social involvement and classroom participation. Students who actively participated in discussions and collaborative activities tended to demonstrate a deeper awareness of tolerance and respect than those who were more passive. One student stated:

“In this class, we are used to listening before responding. Even if we disagree, we are taught not to mock other people’s opinions” (Informant 09, student interview).

Another student similarly explained:

“What makes us comfortable is that the teacher never immediately judges students who think differently. We are asked to understand first before responding” (Informant 11, student interview).

These statements suggest that moderation values are internalized not only cognitively but also emotionally through repeated social interaction and reflective communication.

Table 4.

Construction of Religious Moderation Values

Theme	Empirical Indicators	Data Source	Frequency	Interpretation
Religious tolerance	Respect for the religious practices of others	Teachers (3), Students (4), Observation	7/12	Tolerance as a Core Value
Helping one another	Cross-cultural assistance	Student Observation	(5), 5/12	Social solidarity
Anti-bullying	Prohibition against teasing, insulting	Teachers (4), Students (3)	7/12	Prevention of symbolic violence
Harmonious interaction	Minimal conflict, peaceful atmosphere	Observation	10/12	Inclusive classroom culture
Inclusive language	Teachers use a gentle approach	Teacher (4)	4/12	Mediating values through communication
Formalization of values	Values in lesson plans, syllabi	Documents	12/12	Institutionalization of values

Source: thematic analysis by Researcher

The data in the table 4 show that tolerance and non-violence appear frequently in interviews and observations, indicating that these two values serve as the primary foundation for the construction of religious moderation. Meanwhile, aspects of inclusive language and harmonious interaction demonstrate that these values are present not only in rules but also in the nuances of communication and social relations.

These findings confirm that the construction of religious moderation values in Islamic Religious Education is performative and relational in nature. Values are not transmitted linearly through doctrinal instruction alone, but are constructed through repeated interaction, symbolic communication, and shared social experience. In this context, teachers play a central role as mediators, translating normative values into

meaningful pedagogical experiences. At the same time, classroom interaction becomes the primary arena where moderation is negotiated and reproduced. Consequently, the success of religious moderation education depends not only on curriculum structure but also on the quality of social relationships and pedagogical practices that sustain these values within everyday educational life.

Mechanisms of the Internalization of Religious Moderation Values

The second finding demonstrates that the internalization of religious moderation values does not occur instantly or linearly, but rather develops through a layered, repetitive, and contextual socio-cognitive process. Values are not merely transmitted verbally but are continuously shaped through interaction, observation, reflection, and repeated social experience. In this context, the classroom functions not only as a formal learning space but also as a social arena where students gradually negotiate, experience, and internalize moderation values into their everyday dispositions. The findings indicate that this internalization process operates through three interconnected mechanisms: teacher role modelling, reflective dialogue, and social habituation.

Among these mechanisms, teacher role modelling emerged as the most dominant form of value internalization. Teachers function not only as instructional actors but also as behavioural models, constantly observed by students in daily interactions. The way teachers respond to disagreement, manage classroom tension, choose inclusive language, and demonstrate fairness becomes a concrete representation of moderation values. One student explained:

“What influences us the most is not only the lesson, but how the teacher behaves. When students argue, the teacher remains calm and never humiliates anyone” (Informant 08, student interview).

Similarly, another student emphasized:

“The teacher often reminds us that differences are normal. But more importantly, the teacher shows us directly how to respect others during discussion” (Informant 10, student interview).

These findings indicate that students tend to internalize moderation values more effectively through observable practice than through abstract explanation. Observation data also revealed that teachers consistently avoided confrontational responses and instead used persuasive and reflective approaches when addressing student disagreement (Observation Note, Week 5).

Reflective dialogue also appears as an important mechanism in strengthening students’ understanding of moderation values. Classroom discussions were not limited

to cognitive knowledge transfer but became spaces where students negotiated meaning, expressed disagreement, and reflected on social differences without fear of being blamed. Teachers deliberately encouraged students to listen before responding and to evaluate alternative perspectives critically. One teacher stated:

“We allow students to express disagreement during discussion, but they must learn how to respond respectfully and not attack each other personally” (Informant 03, teacher interview).

This dialogical atmosphere enabled students to develop empathy and critical awareness simultaneously. During classroom observations, students with differing opinions were seen engaging in discussion without interruption or verbal aggression, while teachers facilitated interaction by redirecting emotionally sensitive statements into reflective questions (Observation Note, Week 6). These findings suggest that dialogue functions not merely as a communication method but as a pedagogical mechanism that transforms differences into opportunities for social learning.

In addition to modelling and dialogue, social habituation emerged as a crucial mechanism in embedding moderation values into students’ everyday behaviour. Small but repeated practices such as greeting one another, helping classmates, cooperating in group activities, and maintaining respectful communication gradually formed behavioural patterns that became normalized within the classroom culture. Observation findings showed that students spontaneously demonstrated cooperative behaviour without direct instruction, including helping peers complete assignments and maintaining a calm atmosphere during moments of disagreement (Observation Note, Week 4). One student explained:

“At first we followed the classroom rules because the teacher asked us to, but over time it became something normal for us to do automatically” (Informant 11, student interview).

These repeated practices indicate that moderation values gradually shifted from external rules into internal dispositions embedded within students’ daily social behaviour.

However, the findings also reveal that the process of internalization is not always smooth or uniform. Several teachers acknowledged that students sometimes experienced tension between moderation values taught at school and the realities they encountered outside the classroom, particularly through digital media and peer environments. One teacher noted:

“Sometimes students are exposed to harsh or intolerant content on social media. That is why discussion in class becomes important so they can reflect critically instead of immediately accepting those ideas” (Informant 01, teacher interview).

This finding indicates that the internalization of moderation values remains dynamic and context dependent. External social influences may reinforce or disrupt the process of value formation, making the teacher’s mediating role increasingly important within contemporary educational settings.

Documentation analysis further supports these findings by showing that reflective discussion methods, collaborative learning activities, and character-based interaction were formally integrated into lesson plans and classroom activities (School Document 06). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depended largely on how teachers translated them into actual pedagogical practice. In this sense, curriculum structure alone was insufficient; rather, the quality of interaction and social experience determined the depth of value internalization.

Table 5.

Mechanisms for the Internalization of Religious Moderation Values

Mechanism	Empirical Indicators	Data Source	Frequency	Interpretation
Teacher Role Modelling	Fairness, inclusive language	Teachers Students Observation	(4), 7/12 (3),	Primary model of internalization
Reflective Dialogue	Open discussion, differences accepted	Students Teachers (2)	(5), 7/12	Meaning negotiation
Social Habituation	Greetings, interaction, cooperation	Observation	10/12	Habitus formation
Social Reprimand	Mutual reminders among students	Teachers Students (2)	(3), 5/12	Normative control
Curriculum Integration	Discussion method in lesson plans	Documents	12/12	Systematic pedagogical design

Source: thematic analysis by researcher

The table 5 above shows that social conditioning has the highest frequency, indicating that repeated practice is the most effective mechanism for instilling values. Meanwhile, modelling and reflective dialogue demonstrate a balance between the cognitive and affective dimensions in the internalization process.

The internalization of religious moderation values is relational, ongoing, and socially embedded. Values are not imposed through rigid indoctrination but emerge through repeated interaction, observation, dialogue, and habituation within meaningful pedagogical relationships. The findings, therefore, demonstrate that

moderation develops not only as cognitive understanding but also as a lived social disposition reproduced through everyday educational practice.

The Impact of Internalization on the Formation of Student Attitudes

The third finding highlights the most visible outcome of the entire process of constructing and internalizing religious moderation values within Islamic Religious Education: the transformation of students' attitudes and social behaviour in everyday life. The findings indicate that moderation values do not remain at the level of conceptual understanding but gradually develop into lived dispositions reflected in students' interaction patterns, emotional responses, and social relationships. This transformation emerges through accumulated experiences, repeated interaction, and continuous pedagogical engagement that shape students into becoming more inclusive, reflective, and adaptive in responding to diversity within the school environment.

One of the most prominent impacts identified in this study is the development of stronger social empathy among students. Students demonstrated increasing sensitivity toward the perspectives and conditions of others, particularly in situations involving religious, cultural, or social differences. Several participants explained that they became more careful in speaking, less judgmental toward peers, and more willing to understand differences before reacting emotionally. One student stated:

"Now I try not to immediately judge people who think differently from me. We are taught to listen first and understand why someone has a different opinion" (Informant 07, student interview).

Another student similarly explained:

"Before, some students often mocked each other during discussion, but now we are more careful because we realize words can hurt others" (Informant 10, student interview).

These findings indicate that moderation values contribute not only to cognitive understanding but also to emotional awareness and interpersonal sensitivity.

In addition to empathy, self-control also emerged as a significant outcome of the internalization process. Observation findings revealed that students increasingly avoided emotional confrontation and tended to resolve disagreements through discussion and communication rather than aggression. During several classroom discussions, students who disagreed with one another maintained calm interaction without shouting or insulting opposing opinions (Observation Note, Week 7). Teachers also noted visible behavioural changes among students over time. One teacher explained:

“Students are now more able to control their emotions during debate. Even when disagreement happens, they tend to communicate more calmly compared to before” (Informant 03, teacher interview).

This finding suggests that moderation values gradually function as mechanisms of self-regulation, shaping students’ emotional responses during social interaction.

Another important impact is the emergence of a more harmonious social climate within the school environment. Classroom interaction was characterized by relatively minimal conflict, fluid communication across social groups, and cooperative behaviour among students from different backgrounds. Observation data showed that students interacted naturally without forming rigid social barriers based on ethnicity or religious identity (Observation Note, Week 8). One student described this atmosphere as follows:

“What feels different in this class is that we can work together with anyone without worrying about religious or cultural background” (Informant 12, student interview).

Similarly, one school administrator stated:

“The atmosphere at school has become more peaceful because students are getting used to respecting one another in both formal and informal interaction” (Informant 05, administrator interview).

These findings indicate that moderation values contribute not only to individual transformation but also to the formation of collective social harmony within the educational environment.

Nevertheless, the findings also reveal that the impact of internalization is not entirely uniform among students. Variations in students’ family backgrounds, peer environments, and exposure to digital media influenced the degree to which moderation values were internalized. Several teachers acknowledged that some students occasionally still displayed exclusive tendencies or emotional reactions influenced by social media narratives. One teacher explained:

“Some students still bring intolerant narratives from social media into classroom discussion, but usually discussion activities help them reflect more critically” (Informant 01, teacher interview).

This finding demonstrates that the internalization of moderation values remains dynamic and context-dependent, shaped continuously by both school experience and external social influences.

Documentation analysis further supports these findings by showing that schools actively organized collaborative religious activities, social service programs, and character-building initiatives intended to strengthen tolerance and cooperation among students (School Document 08). These activities expanded students’ opportunities to

practice moderation values beyond formal classroom instruction and reinforced moderation as part of everyday school culture.

Table 6.

Impact of the Internalization of Religious Moderation Values

Impact	Empirical Indicators	Data Source	Frequency	Interpretation
Social Empathy	Understanding and respecting differences	Students Teachers Observation	(5), 7/12 (2),	Inclusive relationships
Self-control	Managing emotions, avoiding conflict	Students Observation	(4), 4/12	Self-regulation
Non-violence	No bullying, minimal physical conflict	Teachers Observation	(3), 6/12	Social stability
Social Harmony	Peaceful atmosphere, smooth interaction	Observation	10/12	Positive social climate
Collaboration	Cross-cultural cooperation	Documents, Observation	8/12	Social integration

Source: thematic analysis by researcher

The table 6 above shows that social harmony has the highest frequency, indicating that the impact of religious moderation is most evident at the collective level. Meanwhile, empathy and self-control demonstrate how these values have permeated the students' personal lives.

The internalization of religious moderation values produces multidimensional transformation encompassing cognitive, affective, behavioural, and social dimensions. Moderation is no longer merely understood as a normative concept but becomes embodied in students' everyday attitudes, interaction patterns, and emotional behaviour. In this sense, Islamic Religious Education functions not only as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge but also as a strategic pedagogical space for shaping inclusive social character and sustaining harmony within multicultural educational contexts.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal a subtle yet robust common thread: religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education does not remain merely a taught norm, but manifests as a disposition lived out through repeated social experiences. Values are not merely understood but are embedded in the fabric of practice, shaped through

interaction, and reproduced in everyday relationships. Thus, these findings not only affirm the existence of religious moderation as an educational value but also reposition it as a dynamic and living process of pedagogical habitus formation.

Theoretically, these findings can be explained through a synthesis of three major frameworks: Albert Bandura's social learning theory, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of habitus, and Michel Foucault's perspective on power relations. Within Bandura's framework, human behaviour is shaped through the process of observing and imitating social models (Bandura, 1977; Fahmi et al., 2025; Ward & Brown, 2015). The findings of this study show that teachers serve as the primary models that students observe continuously, so that the value of moderation is internalized more effectively through modelling than through verbal instruction. This is consistent with the concept of observational learning, which holds that direct experience is the primary medium of learning.

However, the process of internalization identified in this study goes beyond mere imitation. It moves toward the formation of a habitus, as described by Bourdieu, that is, a system of dispositions ingrained through repeated practice and becoming part of an individual's cognitive structure (Eloire, 2018; Mohseni, 2022; Sitnikov, 2017; Taufikin, 2021; Tully, 2023). Values of tolerance and non-violence are not merely imitated but internalized through social routines such as greetings, interactions, and inclusive engagement that are continuously repeated. Thus, religious moderation is no longer something that is "thought about," but something that is "felt" and "practiced" spontaneously.

On the other hand, Foucault's (1980) perspective offers a more critical layer of analysis by demonstrating that the learning process is never neutral, but is always embedded within power relations (Foucault, 1995; Kotten et al., 2025). In this context, teachers are not merely models but also agents who shape the discourse on what is considered "moderation." The language used, the manner of reprimanding, and the boundaries established in the classroom serve as subtle mechanisms that guide student behaviour. These findings suggest that religious moderation is also a product of discursive practices regulated within the pedagogical space.

Compared to previous research, these findings reveal both continuity and a shift. Earlier studies tended to view religious moderation as a value instilled through the curriculum or teaching strategies (Fahmi et al., 2025; Kosim et al., 2024; Muhajir et al., 2025; Saepudin et al., 2023; Supriyatno & Ubabuddin, 2019). This study reinforces those findings by showing that the curriculum does indeed provide a formal framework for moderation. However, this study also goes beyond that approach by revealing that the effectiveness of moderation does not lie solely in curriculum design, but rather in how

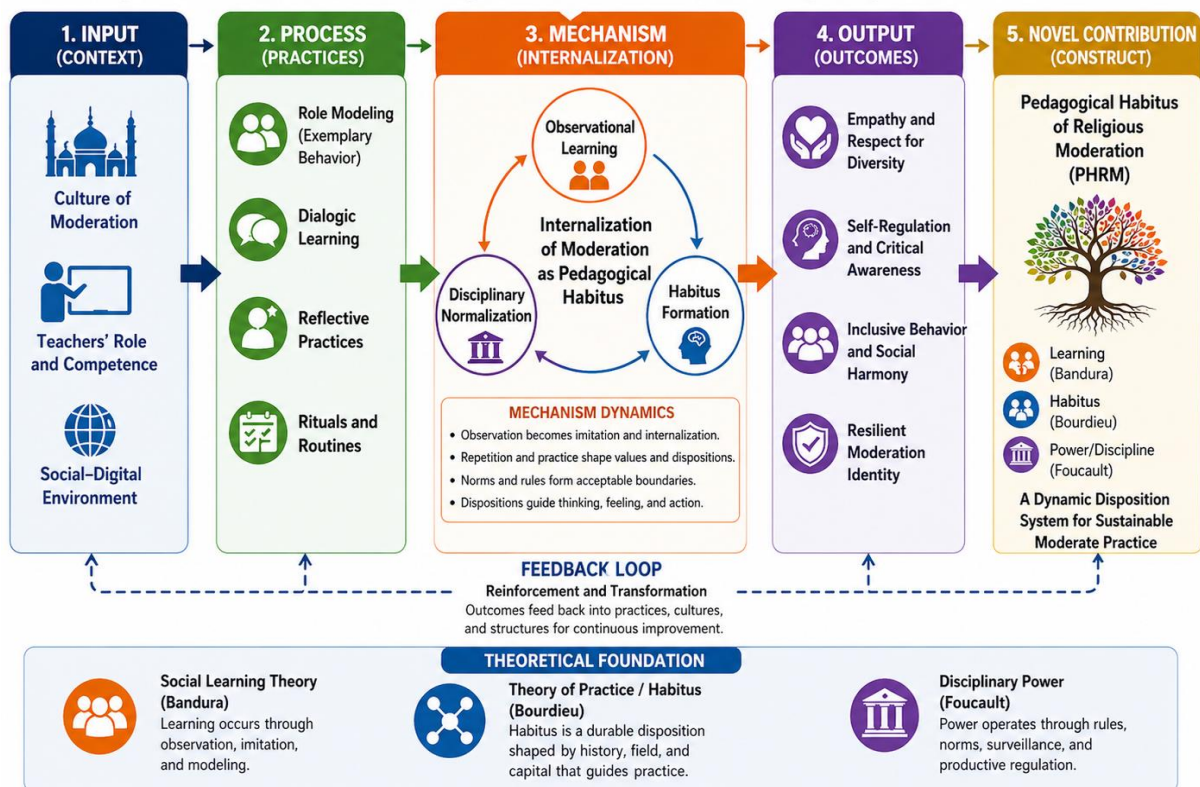
that value is brought to life in social practice. In other words, this study shifts the focus from “what is taught” to “how the value is lived out.”

Furthermore, this study also differs from research that views religious moderation as the result of a normative or ideological approach. Empirical findings show that moderation is not formed through indoctrination, but through social experiences that enable students to critically reflect on differences. In this regard, this study aligns with constructivist approaches in education that position students as active agents in constructing meaning.

The main contribution of this study lies in the formulation of a new concept, “religious moderation as a pedagogical habitus.” This concept positions moderation not as a static attribute, but as the result of a dynamic interaction between structures, agents, and social practices. Epistemologically, this concept is structured through the integration of three layers: (1) pedagogical structures that provide a framework of values, (2) educational agents who mediate values through actions, and (3) social practices that internalize values into dispositions. Thus, this concept not only reinforces habitus theory but also extends it within the context of religious education. This can be simply illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

The Pedagogical Habitus of religious moderation



The theoretical implication of these findings is the need to redefine religious moderation in educational studies. Moderation can no longer be understood merely as a normative value or an indicator of attitude; rather, it must be positioned as a process of habitus formation that simultaneously involves cognitive, affective, and social dimensions. Practically, these findings confirm that the success of moderation education depends not only on the curriculum but also on the quality of interaction between teachers and students. Teachers need to be positioned as reflective agents who not only teach but also embody these values.

From a social perspective, this study contributes to strengthening the role of education as a strategic arena for fostering harmony in a multicultural society. Religious moderation that has become ingrained as a habitus has the potential to endure longer and be more resilient than moderation that is merely cognitive in nature. This is particularly important for addressing the increasingly complex challenges posed by radicalism, especially in the digital age.

However, this study has limitations. The focus on a single research site limits the generalizability of the findings, although it allows for in-depth exploration. Furthermore, this study has not explicitly examined the influence of external factors, such as digital media, on the process of value internalization. Therefore, future research could adopt a comparative approach across schools or integrate digital analysis to enrich our understanding of the dynamics of religious moderation.

As a direction for future research, it is important to test this pedagogical habitus model in broader, more diverse contexts, including across different educational levels and in environments with greater diversity. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach could be used to examine the relationship between the internalization process and behavioural outcomes in a more measurable way.

In conclusion, this discussion underscores that religious moderation is not merely a value to be taught, but a process to be lived. It grows within the small spaces of interaction, in repeated gestures, and in relationships that shape people to be more sensitive toward one another. It is at this point that education finds its deepest meaning: not merely the transfer of knowledge, but the shaping of how people exist in the world.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores a key insight that cannot be ignored: religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education is not merely a value taught, but rather a disposition cultivated through a dynamic, recurring social process. The main findings indicate that religious moderation manifests as a pedagogical habitus, a construct arising from the

dynamic interplay between pedagogical structures, educational agents, and everyday social practices. The values of tolerance and non-violence do not stop at the cognitive level; they flow into attitudes, foster empathy, hone self-control, and promote social harmony in real-world interactions. Thus, this study not only reinforces previous understandings of the importance of religious moderation in education but also shifts the framework from a normative to a praxis-based approach rooted in habitus. This conceptual contribution broadens the horizons of Islamic education studies by presenting moderation as a continuous process of disposition formation, rather than merely a fleeting learning outcome.

The implications of these findings extend to two main areas. Theoretically, this study enriches the body of knowledge by offering a new synthesis of social learning theory, habitus, and power relations in understanding the process of value internalization in education. In practice, this study confirms that the success of religious moderation does not depend solely on the formal curriculum but on the quality of pedagogical interactions that bring values to life in students' daily lives. However, this study has limitations due to its single-case study scope, which restricts generalizability, and it has not yet deeply examined the influence of the digital ecosystem on the process of value internalization. Therefore, future research should develop a cross-contextual comparative approach and integrate digital dimensions to better understand the dynamics of religious moderation. Despite its limitations, this study still makes a significant contribution to positioning education as a space for shaping moderate character, one that is not merely understood but lived out, a crucial foundation for sustaining harmony in an increasingly complex society.

DECLARATIONS

Author Contribution

Hanafie, I., Conceptualization, Writing - Original Draft, and Methodology; **Khojir, K.**, Writing - Review & Editing; **Shafa, S.**, Validation and Supervision; **Taufikin, T.**, Review, Editing, and visualisation; **Fakhlai, M. T.** Review & Editing, Grammar Checking and Final review and Editing.

Funding Statement

This research received no external funding.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Declaration of AI Use

DeepL Translate, Grammarly and ChatGPT improve language clarity under authors' supervision.

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