# Integrating Religious Moderation Values into Islamic Religious Education: A Pedagogical Approach for Primary Schools

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**Abstract:** This study aims to analyze how religious moderation values are systematically integrated into Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan, Jember, Indonesia, and to examine the pedagogical strategies, challenges, and institutional supports that shape its implementation. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers and school leaders, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans and school policies. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to curricular integration, pedagogical practice, and school culture. The findings indicate that religious moderation is embedded through contextualized curriculum content, dialogical and participatory teaching methods, teacher role modeling, and the reinforcement of *Nahdlatul Ulama* traditions that emphasize tolerance, balance, inclusivity, and national commitment. Students demonstrate positive engagement when moderation values are connected to local culture, collaborative learning, and real-life moral dilemmas. However, challenges arise from limited curriculum alignment, insufficient professional training, difficulties in assessing value internalization, and socio-cultural influences such as parental conservatism and exposure to radical digital narratives. The originality of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of moderation integration at the primary school level within a *Nahdlatul Ulama* institutional context. This study contributes theoretically by linking religious moderation with sociocultural and moral development frameworks, and practically by offering a holistic model that integrates curriculum, pedagogy, school culture, and community collaboration to strengthen inclusive religious education.

**Abstrak**: *Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana nilai-nilai moderasi beragama diintegrasikan secara sistematis dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam di SDNU 10 Wuluhan, Jember, Indonesia, serta mengkaji strategi pedagogis, tantangan, dan dukungan kelembagaan yang memengaruhi implementasinya. Penelitian menggunakan desain studi kasus kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur bersama guru dan pimpinan sekolah, observasi pembelajaran di kelas, serta analisis dokumen berupa Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran dan kebijakan sekolah. Data dianalisis menggunakan analisis tematik untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola integrasi kurikulum, praktik pedagogis, dan budaya sekolah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama diintegrasikan melalui penguatan materi yang kontekstual, metode pembelajaran dialogis dan*

*partisipatif, keteladanan guru, serta penguatan tradisi Nahdlatul Ulama yang menekankan toleransi, keseimbangan, inklusivitas, dan komitmen kebangsaan. Siswa menunjukkan respons positif ketika nilai moderasi dikaitkan dengan budaya lokal, pembelajaran kolaboratif, dan dilema moral dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Tantangan yang dihadapi meliputi keterbatasan sinkronisasi kurikulum, kurangnya pelatihan profesional guru, kesulitan dalam mengukur internalisasi nilai, serta pengaruh sosial seperti konservatisme orang tua dan paparan narasi radikal di media digital. Kebaruan penelitian ini terletak pada eksplorasi mendalam integrasi moderasi beragama pada jenjang sekolah dasar dalam konteks kelembagaan Nahdlatul Ulama. Kontribusi penelitian ini bersifat teoretis dengan mengaitkan moderasi beragama pada kerangka teori sosiokultural dan perkembangan moral, serta praktis melalui tawaran model integratif berbasis kurikulum, pedagogi, budaya sekolah, dan kolaborasi masyarakat untuk memperkuat pendidikan agama yang inklusif.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, the integration of values into formal curricula has become a significant concern for educators, policymakers, and scholars alike. Among these values, religious moderation occupies an important place in societies that are pluralistic and diverse. As global communities confront increasing challenges related to extremism, intolerance, and sectarian division, schools are expected to function not merely as institutions of academic instruction but also as spaces where learners acquIslamic Religious Education ethical sensibilities that foster peaceful coexistence. In Indonesia, this imperative has been crystallized in the state's promotion of *moderasi beragama* (religious moderation) as an educational and sociopolitical agenda. This discourse is particularly relevant for Islamic Religious Education, which plays a decisive role in shaping students' religious attitudes from an early age (Azra, 2016; Nurdiyanto et al., 2024)

Religious moderation refers broadly to the cultivation of balanced, tolerant, and inclusive attitudes toward religion, in contrast to exclusivist or rigid approaches that often breed intolerance. Within the Indonesian context, it has been conceptualized as encompassing four pillars: national commitment, respect for culture, opposition to violence, and tolerance for difference (Bush, 2009a). These pillars are not external impositions but resonate with the ethos of Islam itself, which emphasizes justice, balance, and compassion (Fealy & Bush, 2014). At the level of elementary education, the introduction of moderation is especially crucial. Children at this developmental stage are constructing their moral frameworks, learning to differentiate between right and wrong, and forming early impressions of how religion operates within society (Tilaar, 2000). Planting the seeds of moderation

from the classroom can therefore be likened to weaving a moral fabric that supports students throughout their educational journey and beyond.

Indonesia provides a particularly rich context for the exploration of religious moderation because it is both the largest Muslim-majority country in the world and home to significant religious and cultural diversity. The archipelago's pluralism is reflected in its national motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity), which underscores the coexistence of multiple identities under a shared national framework. However, this pluralism has also been accompanied by occasional tensions, with instances of intolerance and exclusivism reported in various settings, including educational institutions. Research by the Wahid Foundation indicates that exclusivist ideologies sometimes find resonance among young people, highlighting the importance of preventive measures through education (Hatim et al., 2025). In this regard, Islamic Religious Education is uniquely positioned to provide not only doctrinal instruction but also transformative values that enable students to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

The integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education is consistent with both theological foundations and pedagogical best practices. The Qur'anic notion of *ummatan wasatan* (a community of the middle path) has been interpreted by scholars as a call for balance and inclusivity (Kamali, 2015). This theological orientation aligns with educational theories that emphasize dialogical and participatory approaches to learning. Concept of dialogical pedagogy, for instance, highlights the importance of fostering critical reflection and dialogue rather than rote learning. When applied to Islamic Religious Education, this means creating opportunities for students to discuss, question, and reflect on values of tolerance, respect, and justice. Similarly, Noddings emphasizes the ethic of care in education, which resonates strongly with the Islamic imperative to treat others with compassion. These approaches underline that moderation is not only a content-related value but also a pedagogical stance that shapes the very methods of teaching (Noddings, 2013).

*Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), the largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, provides a strong institutional framework for promoting religious moderation. NU has historically advocated for an Islam that is tolerant, rooted in local culture, and committed to the Indonesian nation-state (Bush, 2009b). Its educational institutions embody these values in both formal and informal curricula, making them important case studies for understanding how moderation can be woven into everyday educational practice. The case of NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan is particularly instructive, as it represents an institutional effort to embed moderation in Islamic Religious Education at the elementary level. Examining this case allows us to see not only theoretical ideals but also the practical challenges and innovations that accompany implementation.

Teachers occupy a central role in this integration process. They act as mediators of knowledge, role models of ethical conduct, and facilitators of learning experiences. The success of embedding moderation in Islamic Religious Education depends significantly on teachers' ability to translate abstract concepts into child-friendly lessons and practices. Research indicates that teacher competence and modeling of inclusive behavior dIslamic Religious Educationctly affect students'

openness to diversity (Sahin, 2018). In elementary classrooms, strategies such as storytelling, dramatization, group work, and experiential learning can be employed to make the values of moderation more tangible. For instance, narratives of the Prophet Muhammad's compassionate treatment of people from different backgrounds can be used to illustrate the principle of tolerance. Moreover, daily school routines, such as greeting practices and collaborative activities, can reinforce moderation as lived behavior rather than abstract theory.

Policy frameworks also shape how moderation is embedded in Islamic Religious Education. The Indonesian government's emphasis on Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter (Strengthening Character Education) seeks to align curricula with values such as tolerance, empathy, and social (Anshori, 2017). While the alignment between religious moderation and character education is evident, challenges remain in ensuring consistent implementation. Limited teacher training, lack of appropriate teaching resources, and differing interpretations of moderation can hinder effectiveness. This underscores the value of case studies like NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan, where contextualized strategies may provide insights into best practices and possible adaptations for other schools.

The integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education also resonates with global conversations on multicultural and intercultural education. James Banks argues that multicultural education equips students to engage constructively with diversity while maintaining a strong sense of identity. This is highly relevant in the Indonesian context, where Islamic identity coexists with plural cultural and religious realities. UNESCO has similarly advocated for global citizenship education that emphasizes dialogue, empathy, and respect across cultures (Banks, 2009). By aligning religious moderation with these frameworks, Indonesia contributes a distinctive model to international discussions on education for peace and pluralism.

The metaphor of weaving moderation is useful because it captures the multifaceted nature of the task. Moderation is not a discrete subject but an interwoven set of values that permeates curricula, teaching methods, community involvement, and school ethos. Just as weaving requIslamic Religious Educations the careful alignment of threads to create a coherent fabric, embedding moderation necessitates coherence between multiple educational dimensions (Swargiary, 2025). At NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan, the weaving process likely involves not only classroom lessons but also extracurricular activities, religious rituals, and community engagement. These dimensions combine to create a holistic educational environment where moderation is not only taught but lived.

This study positions itself within these broader contexts by investigating how NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan integrates moderation values into Islamic Religious Education. It seeks to illuminate the ways in which moderation is conceptualized, practiced, and internalized by students. The research is significant for several reasons. First, it contributes to the literature on Islamic education by highlighting a case where moderation is not only theoretical but actively practiced in a local setting. Second, it provides practical insights for policymakers, educators, and community leaders who aim to strengthen religious moderation in schools.

Third, it enriches global discussions on how education can foster inclusive citizenship in diverse societies.

In summary, the integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at the elementary school level represents both a challenge and an opportunity. It requIslamic Religious Educations alignment between theological principles, pedagogical methods, policy frameworks, and community contexts. By examining the case of NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan, this study aims to show how moderation can be woven into the everyday experiences of students, thereby equipping them with the values needed to navigate diversity with wisdom and compassion. Ultimately, the introduction of moderation through education is not simply a curricular initiative but a moral imperative that underpins the future of peaceful coexistence in Indonesia and beyond.

**METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how religious moderation values are integrated into Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan. The case study approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth investigation of a particular setting where cultural, pedagogical, and institutional dimensions intersect (Cresswell, 2013). By focusing on a single school, the research was able to capture the unique practices and contextual factors that shape the incorporation of moderation into classroom teaching.

Data were collected through multiple sources to ensure richness and triangulation. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers of Islamic Religious Education, school leaders, and selected students to gain insights into their perceptions and experiences of religious moderation in the curriculum and school culture. Classroom observations were carried out to examine how moderation values were translated into daily pedagogical practices, including teacher-student interaction, use of teaching materials, and the handling of diversity in the classroom. In addition, document analysis was undertaken, focusing on lesson plans, school policies, and curricular guidelines to trace the formal structures that support moderation values.

The participants were selected using purposive sampling, which allowed the inclusion of key stakeholders dIslamic Religious Educationctly involved in teaching and shaping the culture of Islamic Religious Education at the school (Achjar et al., 2023). Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity was preserved by using pseudonyms in the reporting of findings. Data collection was conducted in a way that respected the routines and sensitivities of the school environment.

For data analysis, the study employed thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded inductively to identify recurring themes related to moderation in Islamic Religious Education. The themes were then refined and categorized into broader patterns that highlighted the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of integrating moderation

values (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To enhance credibility, the findings were validated through member checking, where participants were invited to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations.

Through this methodology, the study sought not only to document how moderation is taught but also to understand the lived experiences of teachers and students in navigating religious diversity within an educational setting. The qualitative approach provided a nuanced account of the integration process, offering insights that may inform broader educational policies and practices on religious moderation.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

## RESULT

The integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education rests on a constellation of educational and socio-religious theories that illuminate both the need for and the process of cultivating balanced worldviews. Moderation (*wasatiyyah*), understood as equilibrium and justice, converges with progressive educational philosophies that champion holistic growth and democratic participation. Dewey argued that education should prepare learners for active life in a democratic society, underscoring why moderation is not merely an add-on to the curriculum: it is a central pedagogical aim, fostering dialogue, cooperation, and respect for diversity (Dewey, 1938).

From a sociocultural perspective, learning is inseparable from context and interaction. Vygotsky and Cole demonstrate that knowledge construction unfolds within social relationships, while Bandura's social learning theory highlights how students internalize observed behaviors (Bandura, 2001; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Within the Islamic Religious Education classroom, moderation values are transmitted not only through texts but also through the lived example of teachers and peers. In NU-affiliated schools, where traditions of accommodation and tolerance are historically embedded, such modeling provides particularly fertile ground for nurturing inclusive attitudes.

Theories of moral and character development further reinforce the educational imperative of moderation. Kohlberg emphasizes that structured engagement with ethical dilemmas advances moral reasoning, and Lickona contends that schools serve as key arenas for instilling universal virtues such as fairness and responsibility. Embedding moderation into Islamic Religious Education lessons aligns with these frameworks by creating opportunities for students to practice empathy and justice, moving them beyond rote religious instruction toward ethical maturity (Kohlberg, 1981).

The literature on peace education and education for sustainable development situates moderation within a global competency framework. Harris and Morrison describe schools as "laboratories of peace" where learners acquIslamic Religious Education conflict-resolution skills and habits of empathy essential for plural societies (Harris & Morrison, 2012). This perspective underscores the transformative potential of integrating moderation into classroom practice: it

prepares students to participate constructively in Indonesia's diverse democracy and to engage responsibly with an interconnected world. Against this theoretical backdrop, the following results and discussion illustrate how these principles materialize in the lived experiences of teachers and students.

## Strategies of Integrating Religious Moderation into Islamic Religious Education

The fieldwork conducted at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan provides a detailed account of how religious moderation is not only introduced but systematically woven into the fabric of Islamic Religious Education. Observations, interviews, and document analysis consistently demonstrated that the integration of moderation values is not incidental; rather, it is a deliberate and multi-layered process grounded in both Islamic tradition and contemporary educational practices (Ahmad et al., 2024). Three major themes emerged as central strategies: curricular and content integration, pedagogical practices, and the reinforcement of moderation through school culture and teacher modeling.

Analysis of the school's lesson plans, textbooks, and teachers' notes revealed a strong emphasis on embedding moderation values dIslamic Religious Educationctly into the curriculum. Teachers deliberately select Qur'anic verses and Hadith that reflect principles of *wasa tiyyah* (balance, justice, and tolerance) and frame them in ways that relate to the students' daily lives. For example, verses describing Muslims as *"ummatan wasatan"* (a justly balanced nation) were repeatedly presented as a basis for respecting others, cooperating with non-Muslim neighbors, and rejecting exclusivist attitudes. During interviews, teachers explained that their role was not simply to transmit religious knowledge, but to ensure that students internalize the spirit of Islam as a religion of mercy and compassion *(rahmatan lil 'alamin)* (Adi et al., 2023).

This approach is consistent with the national policy on religious moderation outlined by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, which stresses the role of schools in preventing radicalism and nurturing tolerance. Teachers at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan internalize these policies by contextualizing them into their Islamic Religious Education lessons, ensuring students see moderation not as abstract policy but as a lived expression of Islamic faith. Similar practices have been documented in other pesantren and NU-affiliated schools, where moderation is treated as a core religious identity (Azra, 2016; Rajaminsah et al., 2024).

Furthermore, historical narratives are used as teaching tools. Teachers often cite the Prophet Muhammad's interactions with non-Muslims in Medina, or examples from classical Islamic civilizations where diverse communities coexisted peacefully. Students are encouraged to reflect on these stories and apply their lessons in their own school environment, such as by working harmoniously with peers of different backgrounds. This deliberate historical contextualization is a pedagogical strategy that transforms moderation from a theoretical principle into a relatable practice (Berger & Redding, 2010).

Field observations showed that teaching strategies at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan Jember move beyond rote learning, which has traditionally characterized much of religious education in Indonesia. Instead, teachers employ

interactive methods such as small group discussions, role-playing, and debates. In one observed lesson, students were divided into groups and asked to debate how to resolve a classroom conflict using principles from the Qur'an and Hadith. Rather than imposing a single "correct" answer, the teacher facilitated dialogue, emphasizing listening, empathy, and compromise as virtues aligned with moderation.

Such practices align with Dewey's philosophy that education must prepare students for democratic life. They also resonate with peace education literature, which argues that schools should function as "laboratories of peace" where students practice conflict resolution and develop empathy (Harris & Morrison, 2012). Importantly, this pedagogical shift reflects a conscious effort by teachers to foster critical thinking rather than passivity. Students are encouraged to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and articulate their understanding of moderation, thereby developing agency in their moral and religious growth.

Interviews with teachers revealed their intentional avoidance of binary frameworks such as "Muslims versus non-Muslims" or "right versus wrong sects." Instead, they highlight universal Islamic (values, justice, compassion, honesty) that transcend sectarian divisions. This strategy mirrors Banks' framework of multicultural education, where shared human values are emphasized alongside respect for diversity (Banks, 2009).

The school's institutional culture provides another layer of support for moderation. As an NU-affiliated institution, NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan inherits a religious tradition that emphasizes ahlussunnah wal jama'ah values of inclusivity, balance, and cultural accommodation. This identity is evident in school rituals, extracurricular activities, and the language used by teachers in daily interactions.

Daily routines, such as morning prayers and religious assemblies, consistently reinforce moderation themes. Teachers often use these opportunities to connect ritual practice with broader messages of social harmony, such as respect for neighbors of different faiths or the importance of contributing to community welfare (Surachman & Nazib, 2024). During major religious events, the school invites community leaders to speak about national unity and cultural diversity, thereby linking religious education with civic responsibility.

Extracurricular programs such as scouting, arts, and social service projects further deepen students' experiential understanding of moderation. For example, during a community clean-up activity observed by the researcher, teachers framed the initiative as a form of religious duty that simultaneously nurtures civic responsibility. Through these activities, students come to understand moderation not only as a classroom lesson but as a lived practice that shapes their relationships with family, community, and the nation.

One of the strongest findings from field interviews was the central role of teachers as role models of moderation. Students consistently mentioned their admiration for teachers who displayed patience, avoided harsh language, and treated all students fairly regardless of ability or background. Teachers themselves emphasized their awareness of being observed by students, echoing social learning

theory which highlights modeling as a powerful form of value transmission (Muslih et al., 2024).

In this context, moderation is not merely taught but embodied. Teachers deliberately demonstrate inclusivity in their classroom interactions, for instance by encouraging quieter students to voice their opinions or by defusing conflicts through dialogue rather than punishment. One teacher explained, "If we want children to be moderate, we must first show them moderation in our own behavior." This sentiment reflects the Islamic tradition where teachers are viewed as guides not only in intellectual matters but also in moral and spiritual formation (Al-Attas, 1980).

Despite these strengths, the study also identified challenges in embedding moderation. Teachers reported that some students arrive at school with preconceived exclusivist ideas influenced by family environments or social media. These external influences sometimes create tension in the classroom when students express intolerance or rigid interpretations of religion (Achmad et al., 2024). Teachers respond to these challenges by fostering open dialogue, creating a safe space where such views can be expressed and critically examined in light of Islamic principles of balance and tolerance.

Another challenge relates to maintaining religious authenticity. Some community members occasionally perceive moderation initiatives as diluting Islamic identity or accommodating Western ideals. To counter this perception, teachers consistently ground moderation in Islamic sources (Qur'anic verses, Hadith, and historical precedents) demonstrating that moderation is not foreign but intrinsic to Islam. This strategy reflects Abdullah's argument that moderation must be framed as an authentic Islamic principle rather than an external imposition (Abdullah, 2017).

Overall, the strategies employed at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan reflect a holistic integration of moderation into Islamic Religious Education. Curriculum content is carefully selected to highlight inclusivity, pedagogical methods encourage critical thinking and dialogue, school culture reinforces moderation through rituals and extracurriculars, and teachers model moderation in daily interactions. These findings suggest that moderation cannot be effectively taught through textbooks alone; it requIslamic Religious Educations a comprehensive ecosystem that aligns content, pedagogy, culture, and role models.

In short, the case of NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan illustrates how Islamic Religious Education can serve as a strategic platform for fostering moderation values. It provides an example of how religious education, often criticized as rigid or dogmatic, can be reoriented to nurture openness, empathy, and responsibility. The integration observed here not only prepares students for religious life but also equips them for active participation in Indonesia's plural and democratic society.

## Challenges and Opportunities in Integrating Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education

The integration of religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education is not a linear process but rather one characterized by tensions, negotiations, and opportunities that emerge within the daily realities of school life. Findings from

fieldwork at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan demonstrate that while moderation values are strongly emphasized in both curricular and extracurricular practices, several challenges remain in their effective implementation. These challenges, however, coexist with opportunities that, if properly harnessed, can strengthen the role of Islamic Religious Education in shaping tolerant and balanced citizens.

One of the first challenges observed in the study is the structural limitation of the curriculum itself. While the 2013 Indonesian National Curriculum includes elements of character education and interreligious understanding, the explicit integration of moderation values is often left to the discretion of teachers (Mulyasa, 2022). Teachers at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan frequently expressed the difficulty of aligning mandated curricular content with broader goals of religious moderation. They often felt pressured to meet administrative and examination requIslamic Religious Educationments, which sometimes overshadowed efforts to cultivate moderation in practice.

Institutional support also presents a mixed picture. While the school, as part of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* tradition, formally endorses moderation, financial and infrastructural constraints limit the extent of innovative programs that could reinforce moderation values. For example, while extracurricular activities such as student dialogues and cultural celebrations have been effective, their continuity is often hampered by budgetary restrictions. This echoes finding, that schools in Southeast Asia often struggle to institutionalize moderation initiatives due to resource dependency and uneven state support (Jereza, 2016).

Another layer of challenge lies in the pedagogical capacities of teachers. Although teachers are committed to embedding moderation values, not all have received systematic training on strategies to address religious diversity and tolerance in the classroom. The lack of professional development opportunities in this area creates a gap between intention and practice. Teachers often rely on personal experiences or local traditions rather than formalized training, which may result in inconsistencies in how moderation is taught. According to Halstead and McLaughlin, teacher competence in religious education is not only about knowledge transmission but also about embodying pedagogical skills that foster dialogue and critical reflection (McLaughlin, 2004).

Furthermore, the assessment of moderation remains underdeveloped. Teachers voiced uncertainty about how to measure whether students had internalized moderation values, beyond anecdotal observations of behavior. This challenge resonates with the broader issue in moral and character education: the difficulty of assessing internal dispositions without reducing them to checklists (Arthur et al., 2016). As a result, moderation in Islamic Religious Education often relies heavily on the hidden curriculum (teacher modeling, school culture, and peer interactions) rather than formal assessments.

The socio-cultural environment also introduces complexities. Although NU traditions emphasize tolerance, students come from diverse backgrounds, and some are influenced by community discourses that may not always align with moderation. Teachers reported encountering parents or local leaders who preferred a more conservative approach to religious education, occasionally challenging the school's emphasis on inclusivity.

In addition, globalization and digital media expose students to narratives that sometimes contradict moderation. Social media platforms, in particular, were identified by teachers as sources of radical or exclusionary content that children could easily access. This aligns with findings by who argue that digital religion often amplifies polarized voices, creating an additional challenge for educators trying to instill moderation. Thus, the task of teaching moderation extends beyond classroom boundaries and requIslamic Religious Educations strategies that engage with the digital environment (Gumati, 2021).

Despite these challenges, the fieldwork also revealed significant opportunities that can enhance the integration of moderation in Islamic Religious Education. One such opportunity lies in the school's cultural and institutional affiliation with *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU), a movement historically rooted in tolerance, local wisdom, and inclusivity (Bruinessen, 1990). This affiliation provides a strong foundation upon which teachers can draw, offering narratives and traditions that resonate with students and reinforce moderation. Teachers frequently used local NU figures and stories to exemplify balanced religious practice, thereby grounding abstract moderation values in familiar cultural contexts.

Another opportunity is the high level of teacher commitment observed at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan. While formal training may be lacking, teachers' dedication and creativity in contextualizing lessons for their students stand out as strengths. For instance, some teachers employed storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions to help students internalize moderation values. Such practices are supported by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of interaction and dialogue in learning (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Teacher commitment, therefore, compensates to some extent for structural gaps in professional development.

Community engagement also emerges as a potential resource. Although some community members hold conservative views, others actively support the school's moderation efforts by participating in cultural events, interfaith dialogues, and collaborative activities. Building stronger partnerships with these community actors could create a supportive ecosystem that extends beyond the school walls (Surachman & Nazib, 2024). Framework of school-family-community partnerships suggests that such collaboration enhances the sustainability of educational values, including tolerance and respect.

Finally, the increasing national and international emphasis on religious moderation provides a policy window for schools like NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan. Government programs promoting tolerance, alongside international discourses on global citizenship education, offer both legitimacy and potential resources for schools to expand their efforts. By aligning local practices with these broader frameworks, schools can secure support and recognition for their initiatives, thus reinforcing the institutionalization of moderation values.

## DISCUSSION

Taken together, the findings highlight the dual reality of integrating moderation into Islamic Religious Education: the persistent structural, pedagogical, and socio-cultural challenges, alongside the cultural, institutional, and policy opportunities. The coexistence of these factors underscores the need for a multi-layered approach. Efforts to strengthen moderation education must address structural issues such as teacher training and assessment methods, while simultaneously leveraging cultural assets and community partnerships (Mawikere et al., 2023).

This analysis also demonstrates the importance of contextualized religious education. While moderation is a universal value, its successful integration depends on how it is localized within specific cultural and institutional settings. In the case of NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan, the blending of national policy, NU traditions, teacher creativity, and community involvement creates a unique ecosystem for moderation education. The challenges identified should not be viewed merely as obstacles but as opportunities for reflection and innovation, enabling schools to adapt their strategies to contemporary realities.

**Table 1.** Key Findings on the Integration of Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan

| Theme | Findings from Fieldwork | Illustrative Evidence |
|---|---|---|
| Curricular Integration | Moderation values are embedded in Islamic Religious Education lessons through contextual examples, local traditions, and storytelling. | Lesson plans and classroom observations show teachers using NU figures and local wisdom. |
| Teacher Role and Pedagogy | Teachers act as role models and employ interactive methods such as group discussions, role-plays, and debates. | Observation of Islamic Religious Education classes shows students practicing dialogue and respectful disagreement. |
| Institutional Support | The school endorses moderation formally, though limited by financial and resource constraints. | Interviews with administrators noted dependence on external funding for extracurricular programs. |
| Student Engagement | Students respond positively to lessons on tolerance, especially when linked to cultural events and peer activities. | Student interviews highlighted excitement in participating in inter-class cultural celebrations. |
| Community Involvement | Mixed responses: some parents strongly support moderation, while others prefer more conservative approaches. | Teacher interviews described parental concerns about inclusivity in religious practices. |
| Challenges Identified | Lack of systematic teacher training, limited assessment tools, exposure to radical content via social media. | Teachers reported difficulties in evaluating students' internalization of moderation values. |

| Opportunities Identified | Strong NU tradition, teacher commitment, community partnerships, and alignment with national/global policies. | Participation in local NU events and reference to UNESCO's framework on tolerance. |
|---|---|---|

The integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan can be illuminated through sociocultural learning theory. Knowledge construction, as Vygotsky and Cole emphasized, is inseparable from cultural context and interaction. Classroom observations showed that students' understanding of moderation developed through dialogue with peers, joint problem-solving, and the teacher's modeling of balanced attitudes (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). This pattern supports Bandura's social learning theory, which argues that values are internalized when consistently demonstrated by significant role models (Ag & Pustaka, 2025; Bandura, 2001).

Teacher agency emerged as a pivotal factor in translating these theories into practice. Educators who participated in sustained professional development demonstrated greater skill in designing lessons that link Qur'anic teachings with contemporary ethical dilemmas, a finding consistent with research on inquiry-based teacher training (Alsharbi et al., 2021). In these classes, students engaged in structured debates on issues such as environmental stewardship and interfaith cooperation, illustrating Kohlberg's assertion that grappling with moral dilemmas promotes higher stages of moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1981). Teachers nonetheless reported the need for ongoing institutional support to refine dialogic methods and to address occasional parental concerns regarding perceived "liberalism."

The school's *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) heritage provided a distinctive cultural foundation for moderation. NU's tradition of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and ta'adul (equilibrium) aligns closely with the principle of *wasatiyyah* promoted in Indonesian educational policy (Azra, 2016). This heritage legitimized classroom practices that encourage critical questioning and respectful debate, echoing Dewey's argument that democratic education flourishes when students learn to deliberate and cooperate. Interviews with teachers and community leaders confirmed that NU's legacy serves as a counterweight to radical narratives that circulate in digital spaces.

Structural constraints, however, limited the reach of these efforts. Overcrowded classrooms and insufficient instructional materials on peace education reduced opportunities for sustained dialogue, reflecting the broader challenges identified by Harris and Morrison, who observed that peace-oriented curricula falter without systemic institutional backing. Local education offices and policymakers could therefore strengthen resources, teacher training, and assessment systems to reinforce the goals of religious moderation (Harris & Morrison, 2012).

Community engagement proved equally critical. Parental involvement and neighborhood religious activities shaped how students interpreted moderation outside school hours. As Lickona argued in his framework of character education, home–school collaboration is essential for the internalization of values such as tolerance and empathy (Safutra, 2019). This study confirmed that alignment

between school messages and family practices deepens students' commitment to inclusive attitudes, while divergences requIslamic Religious Education teachers to navigate tensions with cultural sensitivity. These findings position NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan within a wider global discourse on education for sustainable development. By nurturing empathy, dialogue, and conflict-resolution skills, the school advances competencies identified by UNESCO as vital for participation in plural societies (UNESCO, 2022). The local–global synthesis evident in this case reinforces the claim that religious education, when grounded in moderation and democratic values, can serve as a powerful instrument for peacebuilding and social resilience.

The findings of this study reveal that integrating religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan is both a promising and complex endeavor. On one hand, teachers, institutional traditions, and community support provide fertile ground for nurturing moderation values. On the other hand, structural limitations, pedagogical challenges, and external socio-cultural pressures often hinder the process. Yet, rather than viewing these challenges as insurmountable barriers, they can be reinterpreted as opportunities to strengthen educational practices and policies that are responsive to contemporary realities of pluralism and globalization.

This study underscores the necessity of a multi-dimensional approach in embedding moderation values into religious education. Effective integration requIslamic Religious Educations not only curriculum design and teacher competence but also active collaboration with families, communities, and policymakers. By situating moderation within both local traditions and global educational discourses, schools like NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan demonstrate how religious education can serve as a platform for peace, tolerance, and democratic coexistence. Ultimately, the cultivation of moderation through education contributes not merely to individual moral development but also to the broader project of building a more harmonious and resilient society.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the integration of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education at NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan reflects both strengths and challenges inherent in contemporary religious education. The findings highlight that teachers, through creativity and role modeling, play a central role in embedding moderation values into classroom practices. Furthermore, the school's affiliation with *Nahdlatul Ulama* provides a strong cultural and institutional foundation that supports the cultivation of tolerance, inclusivity, and balanced religious perspectives.

At the same time, the research identifies significant challenges that requIslamic Religious Education systematic responses. Structural limitations of the national curriculum, the lack of teacher training in moderation pedagogy, and the difficulty of assessing students' internalization of values all hinder the full realization of moderation integration. External influences such as parental conservatism and the digital spread of radical content add layers of complexity that

extend beyond the classroom. However, these challenges, rather than diminishing the process, illuminate areas where policy intervention, community engagement, and professional development can further strengthen the practice of moderation education.

Ultimately, the study underscores the vital role of schools in shaping future generations who can live peacefully in plural societies. By aligning local traditions with national policies and global frameworks on peace and citizenship education, NU Elementary School 10 Wuluhan demonstrates the potential of Islamic Religious Education to act as a transformative space for nurturing both moral character and civic responsibility. The success of such initiatives lies in collaborative efforts among teachers, families, communities, and policymakers to ensure that moderation is not only taught but also lived as a sustainable cultural and educational practice.

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