

Implementing Religious Moderation as a Strategy for Anti-Discrimination Education in Islamic School Management

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Abstract

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The rising incidents of violence and discrimination under the guise of religion in Indonesian society emphasize the need for effective educational strategies to foster social harmony. This study investigates the implementation of religious moderation as a strategy for anti-discrimination education in Islamic school management, with a focus on SMAN 1 Ponorogo. Using a qualitative field research approach, data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The findings reveal that religious moderation, rooted in the concept of “wasathiyah” (balance), serves as a critical framework for nurturing tolerance, empathy, and respect among students of diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds. The school’s management plays a pivotal role in sustaining these values through strategic policies, including curriculum integration, multicultural education, teacher training, and clinical supervision. Student testimonies and teacher reflections illustrate the tangible impact of these initiatives, with students developing emotional resilience and forming close bonds across religious lines. The research highlights that religious moderation not only enhances school harmony but also has broader societal implications, acting as a preventive measure against radicalism and contributing to national unity. The study underscores the need for continued policy support, community engagement, and ongoing professional development to ensure the long-term sustainability of religious moderation as a cornerstone of peace education in Indonesia.

Kata kunci:

Moderasi Beragama,
Pendidikan Anti
Diskriminasi, Manajemen
Sekolah Islam, Pendidikan
Multikultural, Toleransi

Abstrak

Meningkatnya insiden kekerasan dan diskriminasi dengan dalih agama dalam masyarakat Indonesia menekankan perlunya strategi pendidikan yang efektif untuk mendorong harmoni sosial. Penelitian ini menyelidiki penerapan moderasi beragama sebagai strategi untuk pendidikan anti-diskriminasi dalam manajemen sekolah Islam, dengan fokus pada SMAN 1 Ponorogo. Menggunakan pendekatan penelitian lapangan kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan analisis dokumen, serta dianalisis menggunakan model Miles dan Huberman. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama, yang berakar pada konsep “wasathiyah” (keseimbangan), berfungsi sebagai kerangka kerja yang penting untuk menumbuhkan toleransi, empati, dan rasa hormat di antara siswa dari latar belakang agama dan etnis yang beragam. Manajemen sekolah memainkan peran penting dalam mempertahankan nilai-nilai ini melalui kebijakan strategis, termasuk integrasi kurikulum, pendidikan multikultural, pelatihan guru, dan supervisi klinis. Kesaksian siswa dan refleksi guru menggambarkan dampak nyata dari inisiatif ini, dengan siswa mengembangkan ketahanan emosional dan membentuk ikatan yang erat di antara garis-garis agama. Penelitian ini menyoroti bahwa moderasi beragama tidak hanya meningkatkan harmoni sekolah tetapi juga memiliki implikasi sosial yang lebih luas, bertindak sebagai langkah pencegahan terhadap radikalisasi dan berkontribusi pada persatuan nasional. Studi ini menekankan perlunya dukungan kebijakan yang berkelanjutan, keterlibatan komunitas, dan pengembangan profesional yang

INTRODUCTION

The issue of religious life in Indonesian society has become a matter of concern due to the increase in acts of violence and bullying committed by individuals or groups under the pretext of religion. This phenomenon encompasses a range of intolerant behaviors, both within and between religious communities, as well as insults against religious leaders and incidents of religious harassment or blasphemy (Gunawan et al., 2021). Without a transparent and sustainable solution, this situation threatens social harmony, unity, and even the integrity of the nation. Therefore, it is crucial to implement strategies that promote tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence, particularly within the educational environment, which plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes and behaviors.

Religious moderation has emerged as a critical concept to address these challenges, gaining increasing attention in academic discourse and public policy. The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has actively promoted religious moderation as a national agenda, embedding it in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020–2024. This initiative aims to build a society that upholds religious harmony, emphasizing the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and rejecting extremism (Gunawan et al., 2021). The term "religious moderation" is derived from the Arabic concept of *wasathiyah*, which means balance or the middle path, encouraging people to avoid extreme positions and embrace diversity (Putra et al., 2021).

Education is widely recognized as one of the most effective platforms for promoting religious moderation (Arifin & Kartiko, 2022). Schools are microcosms of society, where students from diverse religious, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds interact daily. These interactions can either be a source of enrichment or conflict, depending on how schools manage diversity. If properly managed, schools can become safe spaces for students to learn empathy, respect, and coexistence (Khanolainen et al., 2024). This aligns with Freeman's findings, who argues that educational settings are essential arenas for preventing radicalism and fostering inclusive mindsets (Freeman, 2021).

In this context, school management plays a strategic role in fostering religious moderation. The principal, as a key figure in school leadership, has the authority to enact policies and design programs that promote inclusivity. For instance, principals can encourage interfaith activities, integrate moderation values into the curriculum, and ensure that teachers are trained to handle sensitive religious topics with care and wisdom (Ma'arif et al., 2025; Widodo & Karnawati, 2019). By actively embedding religious moderation into the school's structural and cultural framework, school leaders can create an environment where diversity is embraced and discrimination is minimized.

The role of teachers is equally vital. As front-liners in the educational process, teachers directly influence students' perceptions and attitudes. Through thoughtful lesson planning, inclusive classroom discussions, and role modeling, teachers can reinforce values of tolerance and understanding (Aziz & Najmudin, 2020). When supported by school management, these efforts become even more impactful as teachers feel empowered to foster a culture of peace and respect. Research by Jannah highlights that teachers who consciously practice moderation in their pedagogy

help students internalize these values and apply them beyond the classroom (Jannah et al., 2022; Kartiko et al., 2025).

Furthermore, religious moderation in school management is not only beneficial for students but also for the broader school community. By cultivating an atmosphere of openness and respect, schools can build stronger relationships with parents, local religious leaders, and community stakeholders. These relationships can serve as a buffer against external influences that may promote division or intolerance, reinforcing the school's position as a pillar of social harmony (Idris & Putra, 2021; Masturin, 2022).

This research focuses on understanding how religious moderation is implemented as a strategy for anti-discrimination education in Islamic school management, specifically at SMAN 1 Ponorogo. The study explores the role of school leadership, curriculum design, and teacher practices in fostering an inclusive school environment, highlighting the concrete actions taken to bridge differences and build emotional proximity among students of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. The findings are expected to contribute valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and school leaders seeking to cultivate religious moderation as a foundation for peace and unity in Indonesia's pluralistic society.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts a field research design involving direct data collection in real-world settings, such as communities, institutions, community organizations, and both formal and non-formal educational institutions, using a qualitative approach (Miles et al., 2014). The research utilizes two types of data sources. Primary data is collected directly from the original sources without intermediaries, obtained through interviews and observations involving Islamic Religious Education teachers and students at SMAN 1 Ponorogo. Secondary data sources include literature reviews, documentation, books, journals, newspapers, and written archives relevant to the research focus (Hamzani et al., 2023).

The data collection techniques applied in this research are observation, interviews, and documentation. The observation process involves the researcher's direct participation in learning activities at SMAN 1 Ponorogo to gather in-depth insights into the implementation of religious moderation in school management. To ensure the accuracy and credibility of the observations, researchers carefully validated their findings. The interview technique employed is semi-structured interviews, allowing researchers to explore participants' perspectives while maintaining flexibility to probe deeper into key topics. Documentation is used to collect institutional records, curricula, and other written materials relevant to the research (Liu, 2016).

The qualitative data analysis follows the Miles and Huberman model, which includes three interconnected stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This model allows researchers to systematically organize, interpret, and synthesize the field data through an iterative process, enabling the emergence of meaningful patterns and themes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, the research applies validity and reliability tests. Validity refers to the extent to which the collected data accurately represent the research object. Credibility is strengthened through source triangulation, where data is cross-checked from multiple respondents with potentially diverse perspectives (Natow, 2020). This triangulation approach helps mitigate bias and enhances the robustness of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Religious Moderation in Islamic School Management

The research findings indicate that religious moderation is a key principle implemented at SMAN 1 Ponorogo to foster inclusivity and prevent discrimination. The school incorporates the concept of "wasathiyah" (balance) into its curriculum and daily practices, aligning with the values of honesty, discipline, tolerance, and mutual respect. These values serve as the foundation for promoting peaceful coexistence in a school with diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Based on interviews with five key informants, including the school headmaster, religious education teachers, and students, three main themes of religious moderation emerged: fostering tolerance, promoting equality, and encouraging empathy. The headmaster, Dasar Daminto, emphasized the importance of teaching moderation to prevent conflicts and strengthen unity:

"In my opinion, religious moderation at school is very important. SMAN 1 has a diversity of students with different religious, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. They tolerate each other and respect and appreciate religious and cultural diversity. The main attitude that must be taught to all students is tolerance and mutual affection between friends without discriminating between religions and races."

Kasmui, a religious education teacher, added:

"Multicultural education is important for students to be taught. SMAN 1 Ponorogo is a favorite school, and students come from various religious, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. Mutual tolerance, respect, and appreciation of cultural diversity are the main attitudes that must be taught to all stakeholders in the school."

In addition, based on observations, the school management has implemented various concrete programs to support religious moderation as part of a broader educational strategy. One key initiative is the regular organization of workshops and training sessions for teachers. These sessions are designed to help educators instill values of tolerance and respect in classroom interactions, equipping them with strategies to manage discussions on religious diversity and handle sensitive issues effectively without escalating conflict. By improving teachers' understanding of religious pluralism, the school ensures that students receive a balanced and inclusive education.

Another significant initiative is the facilitation of interfaith dialogue sessions, where students from different religious backgrounds are encouraged to share their beliefs and practices in a respectful setting. These dialogues serve as an avenue for promoting mutual understanding, breaking down stereotypes, and fostering a more inclusive school culture. By engaging in meaningful conversations, students develop a greater appreciation for religious diversity and strengthen their sense of unity despite their differences.

In addition, the school actively promotes the commemoration of religious holidays as an opportunity for students to learn about and respect each other's traditions. For example, during Islamic holidays, non-Muslim students are invited to observe and understand the significance of these celebrations. This practice fosters curiosity, broadens students' knowledge of different faiths, and reinforces a culture of respect and acceptance within the school environment.

To ensure the continuous implementation of religious moderation values, the school leadership plays a proactive role in supervising and monitoring classroom activities. School administrators conduct routine class visits to observe how teachers incorporate principles of

moderation into their lessons. They also provide constructive feedback to educators to enhance their approaches to promoting inclusivity. Through this ongoing oversight, the school management maintains a consistent commitment to upholding religious moderation as an integral part of the educational experience.

Student Experiences of Religious Moderation

The interviews with students revealed that the practice of religious moderation has a tangible impact on their daily lives. Ni Putu Riski Rosita Debi, a non-Muslim student, expressed how she felt accepted in a predominantly Muslim environment:

“Yes, my religion teacher always teaches the values of tolerance, such as respecting every difference that exists, especially religion. Because everyone must have different views of thought and, of course, religion too. If an action is different from ours but aligns with their religion, we must respect it.”

This statement illustrates how the school successfully fosters an environment where students from minority religious groups feel safe and valued. The emphasis on respect and understanding in religious education classes ensures that students learn to appreciate diversity as an inherent part of social life. Ni Putu’s experience reflects the school’s commitment to nurturing a culture of inclusivity, where students of all faiths can participate fully in school activities without fear of discrimination or exclusion.

Meanwhile, Daffa Bintang Wahyu Pratama, a Muslim student, highlighted how religious education fosters kindness and mutual respect:

“My religion teacher always teaches Islamic values in the form of tolerance, such as respecting every difference that exists, being kind to fellow friends, not discriminating against friends, and being a good example that Islamic values can be shown by good behavior among friends.”

Daffa’s testimony underscores the critical role of teachers in modeling and reinforcing moderation values. Through consistent teaching and personal example, educators help students internalize these values, influencing how they interact with peers from different religious or cultural backgrounds.

Additionally, students mentioned that school events and extracurricular activities provide further opportunities to practice religious moderation. For instance, during interfaith dialogue sessions or cultural exchange events, students are encouraged to share their religious practices and learn from each other. These activities, supported by school policies, contribute to breaking down stereotypes and fostering a sense of unity despite religious differences. Students reported that participating in such events helped them build friendships across religious lines, strengthening social cohesion within the school.

The school’s effort to create a balanced and harmonious environment is not limited to formal lessons but extends to the overall school culture. Through initiatives like collective prayers for national unity, collaborative community service projects, and classroom discussions on empathy and kindness, students are constantly exposed to the practical application of moderation values. This holistic approach ensures that religious moderation is not merely a concept taught in textbooks but a living principle that shapes students’ day-to-day interactions.

These testimonies and observations suggest that religious moderation is not just a theoretical concept but is actively practiced within the school environment, creating a safe and inclusive space for all students. The intentional integration of moderation values into school life

helps cultivate emotionally resilient students who are equipped to navigate religious diversity with empathy, respect, and a deep sense of social responsibility.

The Role of Curriculum and School Policies

The integration of religious moderation into the curriculum is evident through the application of Core and Basic Competencies (KI & KD) as regulated in Permendikbud Number 37 of 2018. These competencies emphasize attitudes such as cooperation, peace, and social care. Religious education classes explicitly teach concepts like *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *husnuzzan* (good prejudice), and *mujahadah an-nafs* (self-control), equipping students with the mindset needed to navigate religious diversity.

The school also practices clinical supervision to ensure that teachers uphold these values in classroom interactions. This strategy not only helps teachers stay aligned with the principles of moderation but also strengthens relationships between students of different faiths through regular discussions on tolerance and mutual respect

Based on the description of the research results, it can be visualized in Figure 1 below.



Figure 1 Four Foundations of Religious Moderation in Educational Environments

The image visually illustrates the main findings of the study on religious moderation in Islamic school management, especially at SMAN 1 Ponorogo. Each visual element represents an important pillar of the implementation of religious moderation, Fostering Tolerance, depicted with three people from different backgrounds, this symbol emphasizes the importance of respecting differences in religion, ethnicity, and culture in the school environment. This is in accordance with the school's practice of creating a safe and inclusive space. Second, promoting equality, namely the Scales symbolize justice and equality. This reflects how the school treats all students fairly without discrimination, including through curriculum and policies that favor all groups. Third, encouraging empathy, namely the symbol of hands holding a heart shows the importance of developing values of compassion and care between students. This is manifested in the teaching of Islamic values such as *ukhuwah* and *husnuzzan* and finally Interfaith Dialogue, namely two students discussing with religious symbols above them emphasizing the importance of interfaith dialogue. This refers

to school programs such as interfaith dialogue sessions and celebrations of major holidays that involve all students. The overall message of this image is that religious moderation is not just a formal policy, but a value that is embodied in everyday school culture.

Discussion

Religious Moderation as a Tool for Social Cohesion

The findings demonstrate that religious moderation has a transformative effect on school culture at SMAN 1 Ponorogo. School management's proactive implementation of moderation principles through policy-making and curriculum design successfully fosters an inclusive atmosphere. This aligns with research by Putra, which states that schools play a pivotal role in shaping students' perspectives on religious diversity (Putra et al., 2021). The concept of social cohesion itself is closely tied to the idea of social capital, where trust, norms, and networks enable collective action for mutual benefit (Orazani et al., 2023; Portes, 2024; Saz-Gil et al., 2021). In this context, religious moderation functions as a form of social capital that strengthens relationships and reduces the risk of conflict.

The positive experiences shared by students and teachers illustrate how religious moderation reduces discriminatory attitudes and strengthens social bonds. By learning to respect religious differences, students develop emotional closeness, which prevents bullying and intergroup conflicts. This supports the argument that promoting religious moderation in education can serve as a preventive measure against radicalism and intolerance (Ngarawula & Wahyudi, 2024; Suryani & Muslim, 2024). In line with Durkheim's theory of social integration, shared values and collective consciousness contribute to societal stability (Donny & Drahati, 2025). Religious moderation, as practiced in SMAN 1 Ponorogo, can be seen as a manifestation of collective consciousness, where respect for diversity becomes a binding force.

A similar conclusion was reached in research by Tondok, who studied Intervention programs to reduce religious prejudice in education settings. The study found that students who engaged in interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange programs developed higher levels of empathy and reduced prejudice against peers of different faiths (Tondok et al., 2022). This reinforces the idea that fostering social cohesion through education is not only possible but sustainable when supported by school policies and management practices.

Curriculum as a Peacebuilding Mechanism

The deliberate inclusion of moderation values in the school curriculum illustrates the strategic role of education in building peaceful communities. Competencies that teach tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful conflict resolution shape students' characters and prepare them to be active contributors to societal harmony. For instance, lessons on the historical preaching strategies of Prophet Muhammad in Medina (KD 2.11) provide students with real-life examples of religious moderation as a foundation for social peace. This is consistent with Freire's concept of critical pedagogy, where education serves as a tool for liberation and social justice (Freire, 2005). By teaching students to question prejudice and embrace diversity, the curriculum helps them develop critical consciousness and become agents of change.

The role of the curriculum as a tool for peacebuilding is further supported by research from Harris and Morrison, who argue that peace education should be embedded in school curricula to promote conflict resolution and intercultural understanding (Harris & Morrison, 2013). They assert that education can break cycles of violence by fostering empathy and encouraging students to see themselves as global citizens. In the context of SMAN 1 Ponorogo,

the inclusion of moderation values directly contributes to this peacebuilding process, as students learn not only religious teachings but also the importance of coexistence and social harmony.

Furthermore, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory emphasizes the role of social interaction in cognitive development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The school's interfaith dialogue activities and collaborative learning experiences create opportunities for meaningful social interactions, enabling students to construct knowledge about religious diversity through shared experiences. This aligns with the idea that learning is not just an individual process but a collective one, where students shape their understanding of the world through dialogue and cooperation. This is supported by Iraola, which suggests that reality is shaped through social interactions. When students engage in discussions about religious tolerance, they actively participate in constructing a shared understanding of peace and respect (Iraola et al., 2024). In addition, Delors et al. emphasized in their report for UNESCO that one of the four pillars of education is "learning to live together." This principle is reflected in the school's curriculum, where students are not only taught religious doctrines but are also encouraged to appreciate cultural and religious diversity through experiential learning (Delors, 1998). Activities such as group discussions, collective reflections on religious texts, and joint celebrations of religious holidays foster a culture of empathy and mutual respect, which are essential components of peacebuilding.

Studies by Mursyahid and Kolis also demonstrate that incorporating religious moderation into Islamic education can prevent radicalism and foster a more harmonious school environment (Mursyahid & Kolis, 2023). Their research found that students exposed to lessons emphasizing tolerance and compassion were less likely to develop extremist views, reinforcing the importance of curriculum design in shaping student worldviews. This holistic approach to education reflects the principles of transformative learning theory proposed by Mezirow. According to Mezirow, transformative learning occurs when students critically reflect on their beliefs, leading to a shift in perspective. By integrating religious moderation into the curriculum, schools provide students with the cognitive tools to challenge prejudices, reflect on their attitudes, and embrace new ways of thinking that prioritize peace and inclusion (Mezirow, 1991; Segers & De Greef, 2021).

Thus, the curriculum at SMAN 1 Ponorogo functions as a powerful peacebuilding mechanism. It not only imparts religious knowledge but also cultivates the values of tolerance, empathy, and collective responsibility. Through intentional curriculum design, the school equips students with the skills and attitudes necessary to navigate religious diversity and contribute to a more peaceful society. This aligns with the broader goal of education as a means of fostering global citizenship and sustaining social cohesion in multicultural settings (Rieckmann, 2017).

The Role of School Leadership in Promoting Religious Moderation

The leadership of the school, particularly the headmaster's commitment to promoting religious moderation, significantly influences the school's overall environment. Through policies that encourage diversity, programs that facilitate interfaith dialogue, and regular teacher training, school leaders actively sustain the values of religious moderation. This finding aligns with previous research that highlights the significance of school leadership in shaping school culture and fostering inclusivity (Gunawan et al., 2021). The headmaster's role can be understood through transformational leadership theory, which suggests that leaders can inspire change by aligning the goals of individuals with the broader vision of the organization (Müller et al., 2024). In this case, the headmaster's vision of a harmonious, inclusive school community motivates teachers and students to practice religious moderation actively.

Additionally, the clinical supervision model used in the school ensures that teachers are not only delivering content but also modeling attitudes of tolerance and empathy. This dual approach to structural policy from leadership and daily reinforcement by teachers creates a sustainable ecosystem where religious moderation can flourish. Bandura's social learning theory provides a valuable framework for understanding this process, as it emphasizes that individuals learn behaviors through observation and imitation (Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022). When students see their teachers and school leaders consistently demonstrating respect, empathy, and fairness, they are more likely to internalize and replicate those behaviors.

Wider Societal Implications

The research also highlights the broader implications of religious moderation for Indonesian society. Given the country's vast cultural and religious diversity, fostering religious moderation in educational institutions can serve as a foundation for national unity and social harmony. By nurturing students who are tolerant and respectful of differences, schools like SMAN 1 Ponorogo contribute to creating future leaders capable of promoting peace and understanding in a pluralistic society. This reflects the concept of multicultural education, Zalli and Yang argues is essential for preparing students to function in diverse societies. Through exposure to different worldviews and the practice of empathy, students develop intercultural competence, which is crucial for maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural nation (Yang & Zhong, 2024; Zalli, 2024).

Recent research underscores the importance of educational institutions as spaces for fostering social cohesion. A study by Kruja found that schools promoting religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue significantly reduced prejudice and strengthened community ties (Kruja, 2022). This aligns with the findings at SMAN 1 Ponorogo, where interfaith programs and curriculum integration of moderation values actively shape students' perceptions of diversity. These initiatives not only influence student attitudes but also ripple out to families and local communities, amplifying their impact beyond school walls. Furthermore, the success of SMAN 1 Ponorogo suggests that religious moderation can be scaled to other schools through policy replication, teacher capacity-building programs, and inter-school exchange activities. This could be a strategic initiative for Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture to promote a national model for peaceful coexistence. According to Smith and Kamaluddin, policy interventions that mandate the inclusion of religious moderation in school curricula, alongside continuous teacher development, are essential for sustaining peace education. They argue that building "peace literacy" among educators is as crucial as teaching students, as teachers serve as role models and facilitators of dialogue (Kamaludin et al., 2021; Smith, 2010).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory helps to explain why such a multi-level approach is necessary (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Schools are embedded within larger social systems, and sustainable change requires coordinated efforts across microsystems (classrooms), mesosystems (school communities), and macrosystems (national education policies). This multi-tiered approach is echoed in the work of Gallagher, who found that successful religious moderation programs are those supported at multiple levels of governance, from school leadership to local government and national policymaking (Gallagher, 2021). Moreover, the long-term societal benefits of religious moderation education extend to the prevention of radicalization. A study by Stephens showed that students educated in environments that promote tolerance and respect for diversity were less susceptible to extremist ideologies (Stephens et al., 2021). This highlights the preventative role of religious moderation in mitigating religious-based conflicts and safeguarding

societal harmony. By instilling these values early, schools act as preventive buffers, equipping students with the cognitive and emotional tools to navigate differences peacefully.

Overall, the study confirms that religious moderation, when effectively integrated into school management and learning processes, not only enhances student well-being but also contributes to the broader societal goal of maintaining peace and unity in a diverse nation like Indonesia. The findings reinforce the need for continued policy support, community engagement, and ongoing teacher training to ensure the long-term sustainability of religious moderation in educational settings. By drawing on educational theories and leadership models, this study highlights the multifaceted nature of religious moderation and underscores its potential as a powerful tool for social transformation. Through concerted efforts at multiple levels, from school management to national education policy, religious moderation in schools can serve as a cornerstone for building a more peaceful and cohesive society.

This study offers novelty in understanding religious moderation not merely as a normative concept, but as a strategic tool to build social cohesion through school management, curriculum design, and educational leadership. Unlike previous studies that only emphasize the importance of tolerance in general, this study shows that religious moderation can function as a form of operational social capital in the school environment that actually builds mutual trust, strengthens the social networks of students and teachers, and prevents religious-based conflicts and discrimination (Aprilianto & Fatikh, 2024).

Another novelty lies in the integration of multi-theoretical perspectives, such as transformational leadership, social learning theory, critical pedagogy, to ecological systems theory, which in an integrated manner explain how the values of religious moderation are implemented systemically starting from the principal's policy-making, strengthening teacher capacity, to curriculum development as an instrument of peacebuilding. This study also shows that religious values can be pedagogically contextualized in learning that forms empathy, critical awareness, and interfaith leadership. In addition, this study provides a practical contribution as a model of moderation education that can be replicated by other educational institutions in Indonesia, as well as being a framework for national education policy to prevent radicalism from an early age. By examining the implementation holistically at SMAN 1 Ponorogo, this study also confirms that religious moderation education has a direct impact on social stability and national integration, making it a long-term solution in the context of the diversity of Indonesian society.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of religious moderation at SMAN 1 Ponorogo has proven to be an effective strategy in preventing discrimination and building peace, tolerance, and social cohesion amidst student diversity. By integrating the values of moderation into the curriculum, facilitating interfaith dialogue, and supporting teacher development through ongoing training and supervision, the school has succeeded in creating an inclusive environment that fosters respect for religious and cultural differences. School leadership plays a central role in maintaining the sustainability of moderation through policies and practices that encourage empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect. This approach not only strengthens internal school relationships but also creates a positive impact on the wider community as a miniature of harmony. This study confirms that religious moderation in the world of education is able to prevent extremism and form a generation of leaders who are wise in diversity. For this reason, support for policies to replicate this model widely and a joint commitment from all stakeholders are needed.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the scope of the study is limited to one school, namely SMAN 1 Ponorogo, so that the findings cannot be generalized widely to other schools with different social and cultural conditions. Second, the data were obtained through interviews and observations of a relatively limited number of informants, so that the potential for subjective bias is still possible. Third, the study emphasizes more on the descriptive-qualitative aspect and has not quantitatively measured the impact of the religious moderation program on changes in student attitudes or behavior as a whole. In addition, the long-term aspect of the implementation of moderation values in shaping student character has not been fully observed in this study. Therefore, further research with a wider scope, a mixed methods approach, and a longer study duration is needed to strengthen and expand these findings.

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