

Promoting Religious Moderation in Public Schools: An Analysis of Islamic Religious Education

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Received October 28, 2025; Revised December 24, 2025;
Accepted December 26, 2025; Available Online December 28, 2025

Abstract:

Indonesia faces challenges of diversity and rising exclusivity, which demand proactive strategies to foster social cohesion. In response to these dynamics and internal school incidents, strengthening religious moderation has become urgent for shaping inclusive student character. This study examines the implementation of religious moderation at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan, Yogyakarta, using a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through interviews with Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and the school's quality assurance team. Analysis followed the Miles and Huberman interactive model, and data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques. The results indicate that the program is driven not only by government directives but also by an internal crisis (the 2022 hijab case) and the broader vision of preparing students for the post-truth era. Implementation occurs through three main strategies: (1) daily practices combining religious rituals and nationalism, (2) integration of moderation values into PAI as a hidden curriculum, and (3) fostering an inclusive school culture grounded in local wisdom. Evaluation is conducted through the National Assessment and internal supervision. The program has demonstrated a positive impact on students' tolerance and critical thinking skills. This study recommends an adaptive model for integrating religious moderation in public schools.

Abstrak:

Indonesia menghadapi tantangan keberagaman dan menguatnya eksklusivitas yang menuntut strategi proaktif dalam merawat kebhinekaan. Merespons dinamika tersebut serta insiden internal sekolah, penguatan moderasi beragama menjadi urgensi untuk membentuk karakter siswa yang inklusif. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji penerapan moderasi beragama di SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan, Yogyakarta. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji penerapan moderasi beragama di SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif studi kasus. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan guru PAI dan tim penjamin mutu sekolah. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan model interaktif Miles dan Huberman, sedangkan validitas data diuji melalui triangulasi sumber dan teknik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa program ini tidak hanya didorong oleh instruksi pemerintah, tetapi juga respons terhadap krisis internal (kasus jilbab 2022) dan visi menghadapi era *post-truth*. Implementasi dijalankan melalui tiga strategi utama: (1) pembiasaan harian yang menyatukan ritual agama dan nasionalisme; (2) integrasi nilai moderasi dalam PAI sebagai *hidden curriculum*; dan (3) budaya sekolah inklusif berbasis kearifan lokal. Evaluasi dilakukan melalui Asesmen Nasional dan pengawasan internal. Program ini terbukti berdampak positif pada peningkatan toleransi dan kemampuan berpikir kritis siswa. Studi ini merekomendasikan model integrasi moderasi beragama adaptif di sekolah umum.

Keywords:

Religious Moderation, School Activities, Hidden Curriculum, Islamic Religious Education.

How to Cite: Hak, M. A. A. & Achdi, M. W. (2025). Promoting Religious Moderation in Public Schools: An Analysis of Islamic Religious Education. *Lentera Pendidikan : Jurnal Ilmu Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*, 28(2), 522-536. <https://doi.org/10.24252/lp.2025v28n2i15>.

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Introduction

Indonesia, as a nation founded on ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, continually faces dynamic challenges in maintaining social harmony and national unity (Zulkarnain, Soraya, Amalia, & Mumtaazah, 2025). In recent decades, these challenges have become increasingly complex due to the rise of narrow and exclusive religious interpretations, which have the potential to undermine the fabric of nationalism (Yanto, Abidin, Maizah, & Inayati, 2023). In response, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has proactively promoted the concept of “religious moderation” as a national strategic agenda, explicitly outlined in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) (Albana, 2023).

Conceptually, religious moderation is defined as “*a perspective, attitude, and behavior that takes a middle position, always acts fairly, and is not extreme in religion*” (Albana, 2023). This definition aligns with a fundamental principle in Islamic teachings, namely *wasathiyah*, which refers to the position of Muslims as a middle community (*ummatan wasathan*) as stated in the Qur’an (Darlis, 2017). The concept emphasizes the importance of balance in religious practice, avoiding two extremes: *ifrath* (excessiveness) and *tafrith* (belittling or neglecting religious teachings). Thus, religious moderation is not an attempt at syncretism or a dilution of faith, but rather an approach to practicing religious teachings fairly, balanced, and tolerantly within the context of a pluralistic society (Rozak, Maftuhin, A., & Faridi, 2025). Religious moderation inherently supports the holistic goals of contemporary Islamic education, which focus not only on cognitive development but also on the integrated growth of students’ spiritual, intellectual, emotional, social, and physical capacities (Siregar & Hasibuan, 2024). Students with moderate understanding and attitudes tend to exhibit higher emotional and social intelligence, enabling them to empathize with others, regulate negative emotions, foster healthy and constructive interpersonal relationships, and resolve conflicts peacefully (Wahid, 2024).

In the context of secondary education, the values of religious moderation do not exist as abstract normative concepts but are embodied in the daily practices of the school community. The principles of *wasathiyah* (taking the middle path) and *i’tidal* (upright and firm) are reflected in the attitudes of students and teachers, who approach religious

teachings in a balanced manner, firm in principle but fair and proportional in social relations. Values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *al-la 'unf* (non-violence in the sense of non-coercion), and *ash-shura* (deliberation) are evident in the culture of dialogue, respect for differences of belief, and resolution of problems through consensus that prioritizes the common good.

The spirit of *al-ishlah* (repair) and *al-qudwah* (exemplary conduct) is expressed through the role of teachers as role models and agents of change, instilling honesty, responsibility, and openness in learning. Meanwhile, *al-muwathanah* (love of the homeland) is internalized through the habituation of nationalism integrated with religious activities, emphasizing that religiosity and nationalism are complementary rather than contradictory. The principle of *i'tiraf al-'urf* (cultural friendliness) manifests in the rejection of coercion and extremism while promoting acceptance of local wisdom as part of students' identities (Abdul Azis & Anam, 2021; Nur, 2015). Collectively, these values are operationalized into four main indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture, which form the framework for implementing religious moderation in schools (Zulkarnain, Soraya, Amalia, & Mumtaazah, 2025).

Within the framework of this national agenda, educational institutions play a vital role. Schools, as epicenters of character formation for the younger generation, serve as strategic arenas for cultivating and fostering values of moderation. Among educational components, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) occupies a central position (Yanto, Abidin, Maizah, & Inayati, 2023). Its role extends beyond transferring doctrinal knowledge, encompassing the formation of students' character and personality into well-rounded individuals who are not only pious personally but also socially, able to live peacefully in a multicultural society (Arikarani, Azman, Ansyah, Aisyah, & Kirti, 2016).

The transformation of "*religious moderation*" from a macro-level government policy to a micro-level pedagogical imperative places PAI teachers at the center of this challenge. They are required to translate broad concepts such as tolerance and national commitment into effective and meaningful classroom practices. Therefore, in-depth research into how this implementation occurs in educational institutions is highly relevant and urgent (Yanto, Abidin, Maizah, & Inayati, 2023). Academic studies from 2023–2025 indicate that the implementation of religious moderation in senior high schools (SMA) follows a comprehensive, multi-track approach (Albana, 2023). Three main strategies consistently emerge in the literature: (1) Curricular Integration, incorporating the values of moderation into subjects, especially Islamic Education (Zulkarnain, Soraya, Amalia, & Mumtaazah, 2025); (2) Extracurricular Activities, leveraging the role of Rohis as a strategic vehicle for interfaith dialogue and social engagement (Albana, 2023); and (3) School Culture, fostering an inclusive environment and habits that support the values of tolerance (Merliana, Imamah, & Mashar, 2023). However, most of these studies still treat schools as homogeneous entities and tend to focus on normative-ideal models of implementation, without deeply examining how these strategies are negotiated, adapted, and internalized within the local context of state schools with specific social dynamics.

Although the literature has mapped out various models and strategies for implementing religious moderation, there remains a significant gap in understanding how and why these strategies operate in the complex realities of public school implementation. Existing research tends to be descriptive of ideal models but lacks a deep exploration of the interactions between school policies, teacher agency, and student responses within specific contexts. At SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan, the implementation of religious moderation occurs in less-than-ideal conditions, shaped by the school's empirical experiences, including the viral hijab incident in 2022, the challenges of fostering student character post-pandemic, and the demands of navigating the post-truth era in Yogyakarta's multicultural society. These conditions render religious moderation not merely a normative program but a strategic school response to crises, public scrutiny, and the imperative of student character development. Such contextual aspects have not been widely explored in previous research, particularly concerning the dynamics between school policies, Islamic Religious Education teacher agency, and student responses in daily school life.

To address this gap, this study employs a qualitative case study approach to examine in depth how religious moderation is internalized in learning, especially through Islamic Religious Education, at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan, a state school with distinctive social and cultural characteristics. Theoretically, this research contributes to the study of religious moderation by highlighting the importance of local context and teacher agency in achieving effective implementation. Practically, the findings can provide a reference for other public schools in designing and managing religious moderation programs that are responsive to local social and cultural dynamics.

Research Method

This research employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive case study design (Sugiono, 2015). This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of religious moderation in its natural context, specifically at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan. The case study design allowed for a detailed and holistic exploration of the program, processes, and dynamics of religious moderation implementation within a specific school setting, providing rich insights into how these values were internalized and practiced in daily school life. The study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan, a state senior high school located in Bantul Regency, Yogyakarta Special Region. This school was selected because it implemented a structured religious moderation program, making it an ideal site for exploring both policy-driven and context-specific practices. The determination of research subjects was carried out using purposive sampling, a technique in which informants were selected based on their relevance to the research problem and their ability to provide comprehensive information (Moleong, 2017). The primary informants included the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher and the Sociology teacher, who also served on the school's Quality Assurance Team. These individuals were chosen for their dual roles as implementers of learning and contributors to school policy and culture.

Data were collected primarily through in-depth interviews with the PAI and Sociology teachers. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, the study employed both source and technique triangulation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Source triangulation involved comparing the perspectives of the PAI teacher, representing classroom practices, and the Sociology teacher, representing school policy and cultural development. Technique triangulation was achieved by cross-referencing interview data with relevant supporting documentation. Additionally, limited member checking was conducted with the informants to verify the accuracy and consistency of the findings and the researcher's interpretations. Then, data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of three simultaneous stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing or verification (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). During the data reduction stage, researchers selected and focused on interview data directly relevant to the research objectives. A manual thematic coding process was then applied, including open coding, which involved identifying units of meaning from interview transcripts; axial coding, which grouped related codes into broader categories; and selective coding, which synthesized the main themes representing patterns of religious moderation implementation.

Through this coding process, four main themes emerged: first, religious moderation as a response to crises and public pressure; second, the internalization of moderation values through daily habits; third, the integration of moderation values into Islamic Education learning as a hidden curriculum; and fourth, the development of an inclusive and locally friendly school culture. These themes provided a comprehensive framework for understanding how religious moderation was operationalized in a state school with unique social and cultural characteristics.

Results and Discussion

The implementation of the religious moderation program at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan did not emerge in a vacuum but rather at the intersection of an internal crisis and a strategic educational vision. Interviews revealed that the primary catalyst for the program was a 2022 incident involving a female student's hijab, which went viral after being "*twisted by the media*." This incident, publicly perceived as a "*case of forced hijab wearing*," combined with the school's observation of a decline in student behavior following the COVID-19 pandemic, described by staff as "*careless*", created a strong sense of urgency for action. Based on the findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

"In 2022, Banguntapan 1 State Senior High School experienced a case related to religious practices, specifically the use of the hijab, which occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic. One Muslim student, who was not wearing a hijab, was reprimanded by a teacher and summoned by the guidance counselor. Perhaps because she was not happy about it, and coincidentally, at the time, the student's parents were journalists. The incident was distorted by the media, and escalated into an issue of forced hijab use. In fact, the school did not commit any coercive acts; in fact, the students were given a tutorial on

how to wear the hijab, merely teaching them to be like everyone else. This case, which went viral, prompted the school to evaluate its policies and formulate a program to strengthen religious moderation to foster tolerance, mutual respect, and wisdom in religious practices within the school environment."

This incident acted as a catalyst rather than a starting point. Religious Moderation Education had long been implemented as a "*government instruction*," but the incident provided the political will and momentum for schools to carry it out in a more structured and deliberate manner. This process illustrates how a moderation program can emerge from the practical need to manage an institution's reputation while simultaneously addressing internal challenges. The crisis underscored the vulnerability of schools in the modern media landscape, where narratives can be easily distorted. Consequently, formalizing a moderation program served not only to shape students' character but also as a form of institutional risk management. According to findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

"In fact, before we discussed the importance of implementing religious moderation, all schools had been instructed by the department to implement religious moderation."

This aligns with the theoretical perspective that religious moderation often emerges as a response to real challenges, such as intolerance or misunderstandings in religious practice (Habibie, Kautsar, Wachidah, & Sugeng, 2021). Furthermore, the school's vision extended beyond a reactive response to the crisis. Interviews with the Sociology teacher revealed a broader framework aimed at equipping students to navigate the "*post-truth era*" and the "*modern POS era*." In this perspective, cultivating a moderate character, encompassing critical thinking and tolerance, was considered a top priority to anticipate the rapid and complex developments of contemporary society (Sahroni, 2023). This proactive vision was embedded in the school motto, "*Smart is Crucial, Personality is More*," which explicitly positioned personality development as the foundation for academic achievement. According to findings from an interview with Informant 2, Mr. Sutrisna, a Sociology teacher and quality assurance officer, he stated that:

"In fact, the written guidelines or plan that serve as a reference for implementing the Religious Moderation program at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan have been clearly stated in the school's vision and mission, "Smart is Crucial, Personality is More." Smart is indeed important, but personality is more important, indirectly, of course, we emphasize a moderate personality to students so that they are able to act in a balanced, tolerant, and wise manner in future social life. Moreover, in the context of today's developments, we have entered an era of very rapid information and communication, known in sociological studies as the post-truth and postmodern era, a sign of the increasingly rapid flow of information and technological developments, including AI. In my opinion, this condition requires schools to be adaptive and anticipatory, so we place the strengthening of religious moderation as a top priority in the implementation of education. When the values of religious moderation have been

implemented and become a habit, it will slowly form a positive culture in the school environment, including a culture of sustainable achievement."

Thus, the religious moderation program at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan (SEMABA) was implemented as a conscious and deliberate educational strategy, grounded in the school's core philosophy of developing individuals with strong character prior to pursuing intellectual excellence (Merliana, Imamah, & Mashar, 2023). The school designed its religious moderation program as a coherent and holistic framework, systematically addressing multiple aspects of school life. This approach was organized around three interconnected main pillars: habituation, curricular integration, and school culture. The following table summarizes how the empirical findings at SEMABA aligned with the four main indicators of Religious Moderation as outlined by the Ministry of Religion, as well as with supporting theoretical perspectives.

Table 1. The Empirical Findings at SEMABA Aligned with the Four Main Indicators of Religious Moderation as Outlined by the Ministry of Religion

No	Indicators of Religious Moderation (Theory)	Empirical Data Findings (Field Facts)	Analysis
1	National commitment (Al-Muwathanah) Acceptance of national principles & love of the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting used to singing Indonesia Raya. - The school's vision is to produce national cadres with character. 	The habit of singing Indonesian songs strengthens the spiritual dimension of nationalism, uniting religious and state rituals in one breath of education.
2	Tolerance (Tasamuh) Respecting differences & giving space to other beliefs.	The behavior of non-Muslim students waiting for Muslim friends to pray (respecting each other).	Building togetherness among religious communities.
3	Anti-Violence (Al-La 'Unf) Reject physical/verbal violence in problem solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contextualization of the hadith "Signs of Hypocrisy" with the prohibition of spreading hoaxes. - Instilling the value of "fair to non-Muslim groups". 	Emphasis on honest information, interfaith justice, and peaceful problem solving.
4	Adaptive to Local Culture (I'tiraf al-'Urf) Friendly to local traditions & culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obligation to wear traditional Gagra Yogyakarta clothing (Thursday Pon). - Participating in Bergodo activities in the cultural parade in the village. 	Students are not positioned as an exclusive group, but as part of a wider cultural community.

Internalization of Values Through Habituation

SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan designed its religious moderation program as a coherent and holistic framework, systematically addressing various aspects of school life. This series of spiritual activities was consciously and systematically paired with nationalistic practices, such as the collective singing of “*Indonesia Raya*,” Stanza 2. According to findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

"The main pillar in its implementation, in my opinion, is the habituation program. Every morning, Muslim students carry out the Tadarus Al-Quran (PROTILA) Tilawah Program, while non-Muslim students carry out in-depth study of the holy book they believe in, accompanied by non-Muslim teachers. In practice, it is also seen when students who embrace Islam carry out PHBI (Islamic Holiday Commemoration) activities. Non-Muslim students are usually given instructions to carry out separate events, such as deepening their religion by inviting their own speakers. This is a form of school tolerance towards the differences in beliefs of students at SMA N 1 Banguntapan. This series of spiritual activities is consciously juxtaposed with national practice through singing the song "Indonesia Raya" together."

This practice was more than just a routine; it served as a powerful ritual pedagogy. The deliberate juxtaposition of daily religious and national activities established a deep psychological association in the minds of students, symbolically conveying that being a devout individual and a patriotic citizen were not conflicting identities. This process directly implemented the values of moderation, *Al-Muwathanah* (love of one's country) and *Tawassuth* (balance), which rejected extremism and promoted harmony between religious obligations and national commitments (Hasanah & Ramadhan, 2023). Furthermore, providing a respectful space for non-Muslim students to practice their faith manifested the values of *Tasamuh* (tolerance) and *Al-La 'Unf* (non-violence in the sense of non-coercion) (Abror, 2020).

Integration of Islamic Education Curriculum as a Hidden Curriculum

The instillation of moderate values at SEMABA was not conducted through a separate subject, but rather through integration into existing subjects, particularly Islamic Religious Education. This strategic approach transformed Islamic Religious Education from a subject primarily focused on doctrinal knowledge into a primary vehicle for cultivating moderate character. Mr. Amali, the PAI teacher, actively translated broad concepts of moderation into concrete classroom practices. For example, in teaching the value of *Tawasuth* (middle path), he explained four key points related to daring to live honestly: (1) daring to defend the truth in everyday life; (2) daring to act truthfully in realizing honesty; (3) avoiding unfairness toward disliked groups; and (4) being fair to everyone. In discussing the second point, the teacher guided students to understand that realizing honesty might involve difficult decisions, such as accepting a low exam grade because they prioritized integrity in their work.

The value of *I'tidal* was reinforced by studying a hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah about the three signs of a hypocrite: “When he speaks, he lies; when he promises, he breaks

it; and when he is trusted, he betrays.” While explaining the meaning of the hadith, the teacher encouraged students to speak and act truthfully to avoid hypocrisy in words and actions. According to findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

“I certainly apply this program during class, such as emphasizing the importance of honesty, courage to defend the truth, always doing the right thing, not discriminating against anyone, and always having a sense of justice with others, especially with non-Muslim students. I also include the arguments that doing the right thing must be done, such as the Hadith narrated by Abu Hurairah RA, which I forgot what it said, but it means the characteristics of a hypocrite, when he speaks he lies, when he promises he breaks it and when he is trusted he betrays. In essence, I always emphasize the importance of having an honest attitude.”

By incorporating a moderate attitude as one of the assessment components in the Learning Implementation Plan (RPP), religious moderation was no longer treated as an additional topic but became part of a hidden curriculum, a fundamental ethos shaping how all Islamic Religious Education materials were taught, studied, and evaluated (Ahmad Faozan, 2020). Islamic Religious Education teachers played a central role as agents of value internalization, demonstrating their agency in translating and developing the curriculum at the classroom level, rather than merely serving as passive implementers (Nurhidayani, Novelina, Niami, Setiawati, & Hayati, 2025).



Figure 1. Interfaith Learning Process

This interfaith discussion was conducted incidentally, based on an agreement between the Islamic Religious Education teacher and the Catholic/Christian Religious Education teacher. The discussion aimed to provide students with insight into the perspectives of adherents of other religions on universal topics, such as avoiding violence, which was addressed as a sub-topic within “Daring to Live Honestly.” The learning activity began with greetings, checking on students’ well-being, taking attendance, and offering prayers according to each student’s faith. The teacher then explained that the discussion would focus on the sub-topic of avoiding violence, emphasizing that practicing religious moderation required students to embrace differences tolerantly and refrain from any form of violence.

Building an Inclusive School Culture

The third pillar focused on creating a school culture that consistently reinforced the values taught. This was realized through the umbrella program SMABAHARMONY, which ensured equal treatment and opportunities for all students. The program demonstrated SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan's commitment to fostering togetherness, celebrating diversity, and deepening students' understanding of faith.



Figure 2. SMABAHARMONY Activities

According to findings from an interview with Informant 2, Mr. Sutrisna, a Sociology teacher and quality assurance officer, he stated that:

"To build tolerance in schools, we have an activity called SMABAHARMONY. It's a program that accommodates differences in beliefs and fosters tolerance in schools. This is done to prevent these differences from triggering conflict or social tension. After all, you also have educators who hold different beliefs."

In addition, the school strongly integrated local culture into its activities, including the requirement for students to wear traditional Jogjakarta Gagrang clothing every Thursday Pon and actively participate in cultural events within the surrounding community, such as village parades (*bergodo*). According to findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

"We also participate in other programs, such as the Merti Dusun (traditional clothing) activity. This is a village activity themed around traditional clothing, followed by a parade, which in East Java is usually called a carnival. Well, what is this, in the nine values of religious moderation, is it respect for culture or what is it? So, indirectly, we have implemented religious moderation."

This approach embodied the value of *I'tiraf al-'urf* (cultural friendliness). By integrating the three pillars of student identity, individual piety, national commitment, and attachment to local wisdom, the school implicitly countered extremist narratives that often positioned religious identity in opposition to local traditions and national identity. An inclusive school culture served as a foundation for internalizing the values of multiculturalism and religious tolerance (Hamdan, Nurzana, Munthe, & Albina, 2025).

The success of SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan's religious moderation program was measured through a multi-layered evaluation system that combined formal state instruments with ongoing internal monitoring mechanisms. This evaluation model can be described as the "Climate and Compliance" model. At the formal level, the program was evaluated annually through the National Assessment, specifically via the "Learning Environment Survey," which assessed the school climate from students' perspectives, including their perceptions of safety and tolerance. At the internal level, the school implemented regular compliance monitoring through the Disciplinary Team (*Tim Tatib*), which enforced regulations in stages and involved parents. According to findings from an interview with Informant 2, Mr. Sutrisna, a Sociology teacher and quality assurance officer, he stated that:

"In assessing the success of the religious moderation program, there is a formal evaluation process conducted by the state every August and October by the National Assessment. Internally, within schools, there are regular observations. We have a *Tatip Team* (a discipline team). Teachers will then ensure that any violations are reported. We also have a group to monitor the children."

The combination of these two approaches proved highly effective. Compliance monitoring ensured discipline, while climate surveys ensured that this discipline did not create a repressive environment. The outcomes of the program were reflected in students' actual behaviors. Interviews revealed significant changes in student attitudes, including increased tolerance, demonstrated by respect for peers with different beliefs; enhanced critical thinking, shown by efforts to verify information in news sources; and greater openness, reflected in a willingness to listen to others' opinions. This level of tolerance was evident even in instances where non-Muslim students patiently waited for their Muslim peers to perform congregational prayers. According to findings from an interview with Informant 1, Mr. Amali, a PAI teacher, he stated that:

"I usually assess how moderate individuals manifest themselves because I created my own assessment tool. They're willing to express their opinions in class and engage in discussions to solve problems. That, to me, is a sign of successfully implementing moderate character in students. I once saw a female student sitting on the mosque porch, thinking she was about to pray, but it turned out she was waiting for a friend who was praying. Then they asked me about an issue on social media, asking if it was true, and even asking for my opinion."

These observed behaviors provided evidence that the program at SEMABA had successfully progressed beyond the stage of value transformation, which occurs through

classroom teaching, into value transactions, reflected in daily interactions and habits, and ultimately reached the stage of value internalization, where moderate values had become an integral part of students' character, emerging spontaneously and naturally (Rohman, 2021).

Conclusion

The implementation of religious moderation at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan was the school's strategic response to the internal crisis of the 2022 hijab case and the challenges of the post-truth era. It was carried out holistically through three main pillars. These included a habituation program that juxtaposed religious rituals with nationalism, such as the collective singing of Indonesia Raya; the integration of moderation values into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum as a hidden curriculum, exemplified by contextualizing hadiths on hypocrisy with the dangers of hoaxes; and the development of an inclusive school culture that valued local wisdom, implemented through the SMABA HARMONY program and the mandatory wearing of traditional attire. This process was monitored through a dual evaluation system, combining a learning climate survey conducted by the National Assessment with discipline monitoring by the school's Discipline Team.

The effects of this strategy were evident in significant changes in student behavior, including increased interfaith tolerance, such as non-Muslim students patiently waiting for their peers to perform congregational prayers, and the growth of students' critical thinking skills in responding to information. These findings suggested that religious moderation education in public schools served a dual function: as a pedagogical method for internalizing moderate character, moving from knowledge to behavior, and as an institutional risk management strategy to maintain the school's reputation within a multicultural society. The success of this program demonstrated that strengthening national identity and local culture provided an effective entry point for instilling values of tolerance without conflicting with students' religious beliefs.

Based on the limitations of this study, SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan was advised to develop more measurable and individually documented instruments for assessing student attitudes and to transform the current incidental interfaith discussion program into a regular, structured agenda to strengthen students' inclusive understanding. For academic development, this research was limited to a qualitative case study at a single school, focusing primarily on the teachers' perspectives. Further research was recommended to explore students' perspectives directly, in order to validate whether the observed behavioral changes stemmed from internalized awareness or merely compliance with school rules. Additionally, comparative studies between public schools and religious-based schools (*Madrasah Aliyah*) were suggested to map differences in the integration patterns of religious moderation values.

Acknowledgments

The author sincerely thanks all parties who provided support and assistance throughout this research. Special gratitude is extended to Dr. Muh. Wasith Achadi for his guidance, Mr. A. Amali Kurniawan for his insights on religious moderation in PAI learning, and Mr. Sutrisna for his perspectives on the school's vision and culture. Appreciation is also given to all teachers, staff, and students of SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan for their cooperation and hospitality. The research was fully self-funded, and the author is grateful to the school for not imposing any fees. It is hoped that the findings will contribute positively to the development of character education at SMA Negeri 1 Banguntapan.

Ethical Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with ethical research principles. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and they were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and all personal information was securely stored and used solely for research purposes. The research posed no harm to participants, and the findings were reported accurately and honestly.

CRediT Authorship Contribution Statement

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

Conflict of Interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

Data Availability

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

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