

Religious Moderation in PAI Learning: Local Wisdom of Sunan Kudus

**Ahmad Falah¹, Muhdhor Muhammad Sodikin², Dany Miftah M. Nur³,
Muhammad Yusril Muna⁴**

^{1,2,3} Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus, Indonesia

⁴Universitas Az-Zaitunah, Tunisia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Article History: Received: February 17, 2026 Revised: June 25, 2026 Accepted: June 27, 2026 Keywords: religious moderation; local wisdom; pendidikan agama Islam; Sunan Kudus; multicultural education	Religious moderation has become a strategic issue in contemporary Islamic education due to the increasing challenges of intolerance, religious exclusivism, and social fragmentation in multicultural societies. This study aims to analyze the implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning grounded in the local wisdom of Sunan Kudus as a pedagogical strategy to strengthen religious moderation at SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus and SMAN 01 Bae Kudus. This research employed a qualitative approach with a multi-site case study design. Data were collected through participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing, combined with thematic analysis. The findings reveal that the internalization of religious moderation was implemented through the integration of Sunan Kudus local wisdom values into the PAI curriculum, the application of reflective-dialogical learning strategies, teacher role modeling, and the habituation of attitudes that respect cultural and religious diversity. This study confirms that contextual Islamic learning based on local wisdom constitutes an effective pedagogical model for strengthening religious moderation and preventing intolerance in secondary education.
Corresponding Author: Ahmad Falah Email: falah@uinsuku.ac.id	

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology over the last two decades has significantly transformed religious discourse and authority in contemporary society. Digital platforms have become influential spaces for disseminating religious narratives across diverse audiences. While digital media provide opportunities for promoting constructive religious values, they also facilitate the spread of intolerant, exclusive, and radical religious ideologies. In multicultural societies such as Indonesia, this phenomenon increasingly affects students in formal educational institutions who are vulnerable to ideological contestation and religious extremism.¹ Therefore, religious moderation should not merely be understood as a normative discourse, but as a strategic educational framework for maintaining social cohesion, tolerance, and national harmony in pluralistic societies.² This underscores the imperative for educational institutions to adopt systematic and contextual approaches in operationalizing religious moderation, thereby transforming schools from passive recipients of ideology into active agents of tolerance and national cohesion. The urgency of this transformation is particularly evident in the Indonesian context, where rapid social change, increasing digital connectivity, and the proliferation of transnational ideological movements have collectively intensified the need for educational institutions to serve as sites of moderation, civic engagement, and interfaith dialogue. Schools are no longer merely spaces for academic learning; they have become critical arenas in which students negotiate religious identity, cultural belonging, and democratic citizenship.³ Empirical studies conducted in Islamic school contexts further confirm that structured learning models grounded in moderate religious values are effective in cultivating students' inclusive and balanced religiosity, particularly when integrated into the everyday pedagogical practices of religious education.⁴

Conceptually, religious moderation is rooted in the principle of *wasathiyah*, which refers to a moderate, balanced, and proportional attitude in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Religious moderation rejects two extreme orientations, namely rigid radicalism and unrestricted liberalism. The principles of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) constitute the ethical foundation for maintaining harmony between spiritual devotion and social responsibility.⁵ Madjid argued that Islam normatively recognizes plurality as *sunnatullah* and encourages interreligious dialogue as a manifestation of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.⁶ Wahid and Suharto further emphasized that Indonesian Islam historically developed through a dynamic interaction between Islamic teachings and local cultural traditions, resulting in a moderate and inclusive religious character.⁷

¹ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23-25.

² Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, "Moderasi Beragama," *Jakarta: Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI* (Jakarta) 14 (2019): 18–24.

³ Dany Miftah M. Nur and Mohammad Dzofir, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Tradisi Pesantren (Studi Kasus Pondok Pesantren Nuris Jember)," *National Conference on Educational Science and Counselling* 2, no. 1 (2022): 157-174.

⁴ Ashif Az Zafi et al., "A Learning Model of Religious Moderation: Learning from Islamic Schools," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 21, no. 2 (2023): 197–208.

⁵ Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī, "Fiqh Al-Wasāṭiyyah al-Islāmiyyah Wa al-Tajdīd," in *Dar Al-Shouruk* (2009), 1–30.

⁶ Nurcholish Madjid, *Islam, Doktrin Dan Peradaban*. (Paramadina, 2000), 1-30.

⁷ Toto Suharto, "Indonesianisasi Islam: Penguatan Islam Moderat Dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam

In the Indonesian context, the urgency of strengthening religious moderation is growing as transnational religious ideologies gain greater influence. Azra explained that Indonesian Islam continuously evolves through interactions between global Islamic discourses and local sociocultural realities.⁸ When religious education is implemented without contextual and reflective approaches, schools may become spaces for reproducing exclusivist religious attitudes. Therefore, educational institutions play a strategic role in preventing intolerance and radicalism by systematically internalizing moderate religious values.⁹

One important dimension of religious moderation is the acceptance of local traditions and cultural wisdom as part of social harmony. In the context of Kudus, the legacy of Sunan Kudus (Sheikh Ja'far Shodiq) represents an adaptive and contextual model of Islamic moderation that integrates religious values with local cultural traditions.¹⁰ Furthermore, the *GusJiGang* philosophy, comprising bagus (good character), ngaji (religious learning), and dagang (entrepreneurship), integrates morality, intellectual development, and social responsibility, all of which are relevant to students' character formation. Previous studies demonstrate that Islamic education grounded in local wisdom significantly strengthens tolerance, multicultural awareness, and moderate religious attitudes among students.¹¹

In this regard, the values embedded in a community's local traditions serve not merely as cultural heritage but also as living mediators of religious moderation, facilitating tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence across diverse social groups.¹² Recent studies integrating local wisdom into religious moderation education have demonstrated that contextually embedded learning approaches are more effective at fostering durable moderate religious attitudes among students, particularly in multicultural community settings where local cultural values serve as a shared social bond.¹³

Philosophically, Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) aims to develop individuals who possess balanced spiritual, intellectual, and social capacities. Islamic education is not limited to ritual instruction but also emphasizes social piety, civic responsibility, and ethical awareness in multicultural societies.¹⁴ However, several studies indicate that PAI learning practices in schools still predominantly emphasize cognitive achievement and textual understanding, while the contextual, dialogical, and reflective dimensions remain underdeveloped.¹⁵ Muhtarom emphasized that strengthening religious moderation in Islamic

Di Indonesia,” *Al-Tabrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* (Yogyakarta) 17, no. 1 (2017): 155-178.

⁸ Azyumardi Azra, *Islam Indonesia: Kontribusi Dan Tantangan Kebangsaan* (Kencana, 2017), 15–25.

⁹ Indra Satia Pohan et al., “Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Di Lembaga Pendidikan Formal,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Maidah* 1, no. 1 (2025): 86-99.

¹⁰ Miftahul Huda, “Dakwah Kultural Sunan Kudus Dan Moderasi Islam Jawa,” *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2019): 33–48.

¹¹ Eko Susanto, “Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation in Multicultural Education,” *Journal of Social and Religious Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 88–101.

¹² Destina Marta Fiani et al., “Tradition and Moderation: Exploring the Values of Religious Moderation in the Local Wisdom of the Jrahi Pati Community,” *Jurnal Pendidikan IPS* 14, no. 2 (2024): 367–78.

¹³ Ahmad Zubaidi and Hasan Jali, “Integrating Local Wisdom in Religious Moderation Education: A Study of Mountain Slope Communities,” *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 23, no. 1 (2025): 106–20.

¹⁴ Muhammad Naguib al Attas, *Prolegomena to the Metaphysics of Islam: An Exposition of the Fundamental Elements of the Worldview of Islām* (International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, 1995), 148-160.

¹⁵ Khaerul Fajri, “Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education,” *Annual*

education requires dialogical pedagogical strategies grounded in students' social experiences and cultural realities.¹⁶

Based on the existing literature, previous studies on religious moderation have predominantly focused on theological discourse, government policies, or conceptual discussions of *wasathiyah* in Islamic education. Empirical studies examining how local wisdom is integrated into PAI learning practices in multicultural secondary schools remain relatively limited. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the planning, implementation, and evaluation of PAI learning based on the local wisdom of Sunan Kudus at SMK Raden Umar Said and SMAN 01 Bae Kudus.

This study is grounded in three interlocking theoretical pillars: the Islamic concept of *wasathiyah*, contextual education theory, and multicultural education perspectives. The principle of *wasathiyah* posits that Islamic religiosity should be expressed through a balanced and moderate orientation, rejecting both radical exclusivism and unrestricted liberalism. Al-Qaradawi articulates that *wasathiyah* is not a passive middle ground but an active ethical stance that integrates spiritual commitment with social responsibility.¹⁷

Contextual education theory, drawing from constructivist traditions, holds that learning is most effective when it connects abstract knowledge to learners' real-life experiences and socio-cultural contexts. In the context of PAI, this means situating religious instruction within students' lived cultural traditions rather than treating religious content as decontextualized doctrine.¹⁸ Local wisdom, as a culturally embedded knowledge system, provides a pedagogically rich medium for this contextualization, enabling students to construct meaning through familiar cultural references.

Multicultural education theory, as articulated by Banks, further supports the integration of diverse cultural and religious perspectives in formal schooling. It emphasizes the development of students' capacity to interact respectfully across cultural differences and to understand, critically, the social structures that produce inequality and exclusion.¹⁹ Nussbaum's capabilities approach similarly underscores the importance of humanistic education in developing empathy, critical thinking, and cosmopolitan citizenship competencies directly relevant to religious moderation education.²⁰

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative, multi-site case study design to explore in depth strategies for strengthening religious moderation through PAI learning grounded in local wisdom traditions. A qualitative approach was selected because it enables researchers to

International Conference on Islamic Education for Students 1, no. 1 (2022): 695-703.

¹⁶ Ahmad. Muhtarom, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education Curriculum," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 1 (2021): 45–60.

¹⁷ Yūsuf Al-Qaradāwī, "Fiqh Al-Wasathīyyah al-Islāmiyyah Wa al-Tajdīd," in *Dar Al-Shouruk* (2009), 1–30.

¹⁸ Muhammad Zulfa Alfaruqy and Endang Sri Indrawati, "Experience Rising From Quarter-Life Crisis: A Phenomenology Study," *Jurnal Psikologi* 22, no. 1 (2023): 57–68.

¹⁹ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Boston, 2008), 1–25.

²⁰ Martha Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs The Humanities*, The Public (Princeton University Press, 2010), 95.

understand meanings, perceptions, experiences, and social interactions contextually within natural educational settings.²¹ A multi-site case study design was considered the most appropriate approach for investigating the implementation of religious moderation in two different schools with similar educational orientations.²²

This research was conducted at SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus and SMAN 01 Bae Kudus. The selection of these research sites was purposive, guided by several considerations. First, both schools are located in multicultural communities. Second, both institutions integrate tolerance, inclusivity, and local cultural values into their learning activities. Third, PAI teachers in both schools actively implement dialogical and contextual learning strategies to strengthen students' religious moderation.

Primary data were obtained from informants directly involved in PAI learning and school policies, including school principals, PAI teachers, students, and foundation administrators at SMK Raden Umar Said. Informants were selected purposively based on the relevance of their roles and experiences.²³ Secondary data were obtained from curriculum documents, teaching modules, lesson plans, school regulations, and relevant scientific literature.

Data collection techniques included participatory observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis was conducted interactively using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive analysis model, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.²⁴ Thematic analysis techniques were also employed to identify, categorize, and interpret major themes emerging from field data.²⁵

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability procedures proposed by Lincoln and Guba.²⁶ Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement, source triangulation, and technique triangulation. In addition, limited member checking was conducted to confirm the appropriateness of the researchers' interpretations of participants' experiences and perspectives.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Cultivating Religious Moderation through Classroom Learning

The findings of this study demonstrate that systematically and contextually designed PAI learning plays a significant role in cultivating students' attitudes toward religious moderation. In this context, learning is not merely a process of transmitting religious knowledge, but also a pedagogical space for internalizing the values of tolerance, balance,

²¹ John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches* (Sage publications, 2016), 96–99.

²² Yin K Robert, "Case Study Research and Applications Design and Methods," 2018, 15.

²³ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kualitatif* (Alfabeta, 2020), 95-99.

²⁴ Matthew B. Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis a Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, California SAGE Publications, Inc., 2014), 12–14.

²⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77–101.

²⁶ Yvonna Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, *Lincoln, Yvonna, and Egon G. Guba, Naturalistic Inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1985., 1985, 289–331.

inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence.²⁷ Reflective and dialogical learning practices enable students to develop social awareness and respect for religious diversity within multicultural educational environments.²⁸

Furthermore, contextual learning approaches rooted in students' socio-cultural experiences contribute significantly to strengthening moderate religious attitudes and preventing exclusivist tendencies.²⁹ These findings reinforce previous studies emphasizing that moderation education should be implemented through reflective dialogue, contextual learning, and socio-cultural interaction rather than solely through doctrinal instruction. The distinction between doctrinal instruction and dialogical learning is crucial. While the former tends to produce rote acceptance of normative positions, the latter engages students' critical faculties and affective dimensions, enabling them to construct personally meaningful and socially engaged understandings of moderate religiosity. This pedagogical shift from transmission to transformation constitutes the defining characteristic of effective religious moderation education in contemporary multicultural schools.³⁰

At SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus, religious activities conducted before classroom learning created an inclusive educational atmosphere that encouraged interaction among students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.³¹ Qur'anic recitation activities and reflections on Islamic values were integrated with the internalization of local wisdom through the GusJiGang philosophy, which emphasizes moral character, religious learning, and social responsibility.³² The findings indicate that local wisdom-based Islamic learning significantly strengthens students' empathy, tolerance, and social cohesion in multicultural educational environments.³³

Similar findings were identified at SMAN 01 Bae Kudus, where religious moderation was systematically integrated into school culture and collaborative learning activities involving both Islamic Education teachers and non-Muslim religious teachers. The collaboration created a dialogical and inclusive educational climate that enabled students to experience moderation values directly within their social interactions. This finding confirms that moderation values become more effective when implemented through experiential and contextual educational practices rather than through purely cognitive approaches.³⁴

The experiential quality of moderation learning at SMAN 01 Bae Kudus was further enhanced by the school's practice of organizing structured interfaith dialogue sessions in

²⁷ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Boston, 2008), 1–25.

²⁸ Khaerul Fajri, "Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education," *Annual International Conference on Islamic Education for Students* 1, no. 1 (2022): 695–703.

²⁹ Paulo Freire, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," in *Continuum*, 30th Anniv (Continuum, 2005), 71–75.

³⁰ Fathur Rohman, "Contextual Islamic Education and the Development of Moderate Character among Students," *International Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 66–81.

³¹ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Boston, 2008), 1–25.

³² Miftahul Huda, "Dakwah Kultural Sunan Kudus Dan Moderasi Islam Jawa," *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi Islam* 5, no. 1 (2019): 33–48.

³³ Eko Susanto, "Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation in Multicultural Education," *Journal of Social and Religious Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 88–101.

³⁴ Fathur Rohman, "Contextual Islamic Education and the Development of Moderate Character among Students," *International Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 66–81.

which students from different religious backgrounds were invited to share their perspectives on common ethical and social issues. These dialogue sessions, facilitated by PAI teachers and non-Muslim religious education teachers collaboratively, created a safe and structured space for students to encounter religious otherness with curiosity and respect rather than suspicion or indifference. Over time, such experiences cultivated in students a genuine openness to religious difference, one of the most essential and most difficult-to-cultivate outcomes of religious moderation education.

PAI Teacher Planning and Integration of Religious Moderation Values

The planning of religious moderation learning constituted an essential component in strengthening students' moderate religious attitudes. PAI teachers at both schools conducted curriculum analyses to identify opportunities to integrate moderation values, such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), anti-violent attitudes, inclusivity, and respect for local traditions.³⁵ This integration was systematically embedded into learning objectives, teaching materials, classroom activities, and reflective learning practices to ensure that moderation values were understood cognitively and internalized behaviorally.³⁶

This finding aligns with previous studies that emphasize the need to systematically and contextually integrate moderation values into the PAI curriculum to create meaningful and transformative learning experiences.³⁷ Furthermore, contextual curriculum planning enables students to connect religious teachings with their socio-cultural realities, thereby strengthening inclusive and moderate religious attitudes within multicultural educational settings.³⁸

The development of local wisdom-based learning modules using the *GusJiGang* philosophy functioned as a pedagogical instrument for aligning learning materials and classroom activities with moderation values. Tolerance values were taught without blurring students' theological commitments, while anti-violence values were directed toward preventing exclusivism, intolerance, and radical attitudes among students.

Table 1. Islamic Education Teacher Planning Map in Cultivating Religious Moderation

Planning Stage	Activity Focus	School Implementation	Impact on Students
Curriculum analysis	Integration of religious moderation values	Identification of PAI learning outcomes and moderation content	Students' understanding of religious moderation
Material development	Integration of local wisdom GusJiGang	Development of contextual learning modules	Development of tolerant and empathetic attitudes

³⁵ Muhammad Amin Abdullah, "Religion, Science, and Culture: An Integrated, Interconnected Paradigm of Science," *Al-Jami'ab: Journal of Islamic Studies* 52, no. 1 (2014): 175–203.

³⁶ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Boston, 2008), 1–25.

³⁷ Khaerul Fajri, "Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education," *Annual International Conference on Islamic Education for Students* 1, no. 1 (2022): 695–703.

³⁸ Ahmad. Muhtarom, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Education Curriculum," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 1 (2021): 45–60.

Planning Stage	Activity Focus	School Implementation	Impact on Students
Learning strategies	Reflective dialogue and interaction	Interfaith discussions and collaborative learning	Improvement of dialogical competencies
Attitude evaluation	Behavioral observation and reflection	Habituation activities and reflective assessment	Development of anti-violent behavior

Source: Interview and classroom observation data analysis (2025).

Table 1 illustrates how PAI teachers systematically integrate religious moderation values into curriculum planning, learning strategies, and behavioral evaluation. The findings further demonstrate that integrating local wisdom values into learning planning strengthened the coherence among learning objectives, pedagogical strategies, and students' character formation.

Table 2. Strategies and Manifestations of Religious Moderation in PAI Learning

Aspect	Indicator	School Implementation	Research Findings
Planning	Integration of religious moderation values	Development of GusJiGang-based learning modules	Systematic integration of tolerance and inclusivity values
Learning implementation	Inclusive and dialogical learning	Interfaith discussions and reflective classroom interaction	Harmonious and respectful social interaction among students
Habituation	Religious and cultural activities	Congregational prayer, reflection, and cultural participation	Development of an anti-violent and tolerant school culture

Source: Developed by the researchers based on field findings and qualitative data analysis (2025).

Table 2 presents the strategies and manifestations of religious moderation implemented in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning across three interconnected dimensions: planning, learning implementation, and habituation. The table illustrates how religious moderation values are systematically embedded in the educational process, from curriculum planning through classroom instruction to students' daily practices within the school environment. The findings demonstrate that religious moderation is not merely introduced as theoretical knowledge but is cultivated through a comprehensive educational approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions.

In the planning stage, religious moderation values are incorporated into the curriculum through the development of GusJiGang-based learning modules, which serve as

contextual teaching materials rooted in local wisdom. This strategy enables teachers to integrate values of tolerance, inclusivity, and mutual respect into instructional planning. As a result, moderation values become an integral part of learning objectives, teaching materials, and classroom activities rather than being delivered as separate or incidental topics. The research findings indicate that this systematic curriculum integration strengthens students' understanding of religious diversity while promoting inclusive perspectives toward people from different religious and cultural backgrounds.

The implementation stage emphasizes inclusive, dialogical learning, with students actively engaging in interfaith discussions, collaborative learning, and reflective classroom interactions. Such pedagogical practices encourage learners to express their opinions respectfully, appreciate different viewpoints, and develop critical yet empathetic attitudes toward religious diversity. Rather than relying on one-way transmission of religious knowledge, teachers facilitate meaningful dialogue that allows students to construct moderation values through interaction and reflection. Consequently, the study found that these instructional strategies foster harmonious, respectful social interactions among students from diverse backgrounds.

The habituation stage extends moderate education beyond formal classroom instruction by integrating religious and cultural activities into students' daily school experiences. Activities such as congregational prayer, reflective sessions, and participation in local cultural traditions provide opportunities for students to internalize moderation values through repeated practice and social engagement. These habitual activities reinforce the consistency between religious teachings and everyday behavior, allowing moderation to become part of the school's culture rather than remaining an abstract concept. The findings reveal that this sustained process contributes to the development of an anti-violent, tolerant, and inclusive school environment where peaceful coexistence is continuously nurtured.

Overall, it demonstrates that the successful internalization of religious moderation depends on the coherence between curriculum planning, instructional practices, and school culture. The three dimensions function as complementary components of a holistic educational model in which local wisdom, dialogical pedagogy, and value-based habituation mutually reinforce one another. This integrated approach highlights that religious moderation is most effectively cultivated when it is systematically embedded across all stages of the educational process, thereby fostering students who are not only knowledgeable about Islamic teachings but also capable of practicing tolerance, inclusivity, and social responsibility in multicultural societies.

Implementation of Strategy and Manifestation of Moderate Attitudes

The next is the implementation of the strategy and manifestation of moderate attitudes. The implementation of religious moderation learning strategies was oriented toward shaping students' social attitudes and behaviors through continuous educational experiences. Teacher role modeling, habituation practices, reflective dialogue, and disciplinary approaches were consistently applied to cultivate inclusive, respectful, and

peaceful interactions among students.³⁹ Through these practices, students developed tolerant attitudes in their social relationships and prioritized deliberative dialogue to resolve differences. They actively participated in cultural and religious activities without disrupting others' beliefs and practices. Classroom observations further revealed that the consistent application of these pedagogical strategies created a distinctive school climate characterized by mutual respect, open dialogue, and shared commitment to communal harmony. Students demonstrated the capacity to engage in substantive discussions about religious differences without resorting to polemics or exclusionary rhetoric, suggesting that the internalization of moderation values had progressed beyond superficial tolerance toward genuine intercultural competence.⁴⁰

The findings also reveal that students developed the ability to appreciate diversity, communicate respectfully across religious differences, and collaborate actively in multicultural school activities.⁴¹ Such social competencies indicate that moderation values were not only understood cognitively, but were also reflected in students' daily interactions and behavioral practices within the school environment.⁴²

This behavioral dimension of moderation is particularly significant because it signals the successful translation of curricular intentions into lived social practice. When students internalize moderation values not as abstract doctrines but as active dispositions that guide their everyday conduct, the educational process achieves its deepest transformative purpose, producing individuals who are not merely religiously knowledgeable but also socially competent and ethically committed in their engagement with cultural and religious diversity.

These findings support previous studies indicating that values-based PAI learning significantly strengthens students' moderate character, social empathy, and inclusive religious attitudes while preventing exclusivist and intolerant tendencies.⁴³ Furthermore, contextual and dialogical learning approaches enable students to internalize moderation values through direct social experiences and intercultural interaction within multicultural educational settings.⁴⁴

Table 3. Manifestations of Students' Moderate Religious Attitudes in School Culture

Moderation Indicator	Forms of Behavior	SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus	SMAN 01 Bae Kudus
Tolerance	Interfaith interaction	Harmonious dialogue	Interfaith organizations

³⁹ Khaerul Fajri, "Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education," *Annual International Conference on Islamic Education for Students* 1, no. 1 (2022): 695–703.

⁴⁰ Khaerul Fajri, "Internalization of the Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Education," *Annual International Conference on Islamic Education for Students* 1, no. 1 (2022): 695–703.

⁴¹ Paulo Freire, "Pedagogy of the Oppressed," in *Continuum*, 30th Anniv (Continuum, 2005), 71–75.

⁴² Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (Sage Publications, 1996), 13–17.

⁴³ Hanung Sito Rohmawati et al., "Mediatization and Hypermediation in Digital Religion and the Transformation of Indonesian Muslim Religious Practices through Social Media Usage," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 18, no. 2 (2025): 133–50.

⁴⁴ Fathur Rohman, "Contextual Islamic Education and the Development of Moderate Character among Students," *International Journal of Islamic Education* 5, no. 1 (2021): 66–81.

Moderation Indicator	Forms of Behavior	SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus	SMAN 01 Bae Kudus
Anti-Violence	Conflict resolution	Deliberative culture	Inclusive discussion forums
Respect for Tradition	Cultural participation	GusJiGang local activities	Interfaith cultural activities

Source: Developed by the researchers based on qualitative findings from students' social interaction and school culture practices (2025).

The manifestation of students' moderate religious attitudes was reflected not only in their cognitive understanding of moderation values but also in their social behavior and participation in school culture. As shown in Table 3, the implementation of contextual and dialogical PAI learning significantly strengthened students' inclusive attitudes, anti-violent behavior, and respect for local cultural traditions in both schools.

These findings collectively affirm that the most effective religious moderation education is neither prescriptive nor superficial, but rather emerges organically from sustained engagement with local cultural wisdom, reflective pedagogical practices, and genuine intercultural encounter. The schools examined in this study serve as compelling examples of how educational institutions can consciously cultivate an ethos of moderation that permeates not only the formal curriculum but also the relational fabric of school life, shaping students' character in ways that endure beyond the classroom.

Overall, these findings strengthen the argument that religious moderation learning, when designed contextually and systematically, can contribute significantly to the formation of an inclusive and harmonious school culture. This finding aligns with multicultural education perspectives emphasizing the importance of inclusive learning environments and social interaction in strengthening democratic and pluralistic values.⁴⁵ Furthermore, this study confirms that contextual Islamic learning based on local wisdom provides an effective pedagogical model for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural educational settings.

This finding is consistent with research demonstrating that the habitualization of religious and cultural values within Islamic educational environments, whether formal schools or boarding institutions, constitutes a powerful social capital for building moderate Islamic education, fostering students' sense of belonging to a moderate religious tradition while simultaneously reinforcing their civic identity in a pluralistic nation.⁴⁶ Moreover, studies on the internalization of religious moderation values in informal religious education settings underscore that consistent teacher guidance, routine habituation, and community-based cultural practices are indispensable pedagogical instruments in cultivating tolerant, balanced, and inclusive religious attitudes among young learners.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Will Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 327-330.

⁴⁶ Ahmad Fauzi et al., "Habitualization of Pesantren Values as Social Capital in Building Moderate Islamic Education," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 22, no. 1 (2024): 127-139.

⁴⁷ Abdul Qowim et al., "Upaya Guru Dalam Menanamkan Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Di TPQ Ngerang Tambakromo-Pati," *Tunas Nusantara* 2, no. 2 (2020): 242-248.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of this study have important theoretical implications for the development of Islamic education studies, particularly for understanding religious moderation as a constructivist, contextual educational process. Religious moderation values are not formed solely through doctrinal instruction, but also through social interaction, reflective dialogue, cultural habituation, and contextual learning experiences within school environments.⁴⁸ This finding reinforces the view that Islamic education should serve not only as a medium for the transmission of religious knowledge but also as a transformative pedagogical process that develops inclusive, tolerant, and socially responsible attitudes among students. In this sense, the study aligns Islamic education with the broader humanistic tradition in education theory, which regards the cultivation of human dignity, empathy, and democratic participation as fundamental educational goals. The integration of local wisdom into this humanistic-Islamic educational framework provides a culturally grounded pathway for developing students who are simultaneously faithful, socially engaged, and civically responsible.⁴⁹

This study further enriches the discourse of Islamic education by positioning local wisdom as a strategic pedagogical medium for internalizing moderation values in multicultural societies.⁵⁰ The integration of local cultural traditions into PAI learning enables students to connect religious teachings with their socio-cultural realities, thereby strengthening contextual understanding and inclusive religious attitudes.⁵¹

In practice, these findings provide important references for PAI teachers, curriculum developers, and school administrators in designing moderation-oriented learning grounded in local cultural traditions, dialogical interaction, and value internalization.⁵² The model developed in this study may also be adapted and implemented in other multicultural educational institutions as a preventive strategy against intolerance, radicalism, and religious extremism. Specifically, the study recommends that PAI teachers receive professional development training that equips them with competencies in contextual curriculum design, dialogical pedagogy, and culturally responsive teaching. School administrators are further encouraged to create institutional frameworks that support the systematic integration of local wisdom into formal and informal educational programs, thereby ensuring coherence between classroom learning and the broader school culture.⁵³ Furthermore, contextual and culturally responsive learning models can foster harmonious school cultures that support peaceful coexistence and democratic citizenship in plural societies.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ James A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* (Pearson/Allyn and Bacon Boston, 2008), 1–25.

⁴⁹ Paulo Freire, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” in *Continuum*, 30th Anniv (Continuum, 2005), 71–75.

⁵⁰ Robert W. Hefner, *Civil Islam: Muslims and Democratization in Indonesia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 23–25.

⁵¹ Ahmad. Muhtarom, “Religious Moderation in Islamic Education Curriculum,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 1 (2021): 45–60.

⁵² Martha Nussbaum, *Not For Profit: Why Democracy Needs The Humanities*, The Public (Princeton University Press, 2010), 95.

⁵³ Eko Susanto, “Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation in Multicultural Education,” *Journal of Social and Religious Studies* 4, no. 2 (2022): 88–101.

⁵⁴ Lia Iswati, “Mind Mapping Learning Model in Science Subject Of 4th Grade Elementary School Students,” *Social, Humanities, and Educational Studies (SHES): Conference Series* 4, no. 6 (2021): 82–87.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the theoretical development of Islamic education by proposing that the internalization of religious moderation should be conceptualized as a holistic educational process that integrates cognitive understanding, affective development, and behavioral transformation. The findings demonstrate that moderation values become more meaningful when they are embedded in authentic social experiences and reinforced through culturally relevant educational practices. This perspective extends existing theories of values education by highlighting the reciprocal relationship between religious teachings, local wisdom, and students' lived experiences. Consequently, the study offers a contextual framework for understanding how Islamic education can cultivate moderate religious identities that remain faithful to Islamic principles while promoting openness, mutual respect, and constructive engagement within culturally diverse societies.

From a broader educational policy perspective, the findings underscore the importance of strengthening partnerships among schools, families, community leaders, and religious institutions to sustain religious moderation programs. Such collaboration enables moderation values to be consistently reinforced across formal, informal, and non-formal educational settings, creating a more coherent learning ecosystem for students. Policymakers may therefore consider incorporating culturally responsive moderation education into curriculum standards, teacher education programs, and school quality assurance systems. By institutionalizing these practices, educational institutions can more effectively foster students' intercultural competence, social resilience, and commitment to peaceful coexistence, while simultaneously preserving local cultural heritage as an educational resource for strengthening national unity in increasingly pluralistic societies.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that PAI learning based on local wisdom traditions plays a significant role in strengthening religious moderation among students in multicultural educational settings. The findings reveal that SMK Raden Umar Said Kudus and SMAN 01 Bae Kudus have successfully implemented religious moderation values through systematic, contextually grounded learning practices integrated into school culture. The success of this implementation is closely related to comprehensive learning planning, including curriculum analysis, integration of moderation values, development of contextual teaching materials, and the application of dialogical and reflective learning strategies.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of contextual Islamic education by positioning religious moderation as a constructivist, socio-cultural learning process embedded in students' lived experiences. In practice, the findings have important implications for PAI teachers, curriculum developers, and educational policymakers in designing moderation-oriented learning models grounded in local wisdom and multicultural interaction as preventive strategies against intolerance, exclusivism, and religious extremism in schools. Future research may expand the scope of investigation to comparative studies of Islamic schools, public schools, and pesantren institutions across regions to provide broader insights into the development of contextual religious moderation education in Indonesia.

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