

Internalizing Religious Moderation through the Hidden Curriculum: A Case Study of an Indonesian Madrasah

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ABSTRACT

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Religious moderation has become a strategic priority in Islamic education, as madrasahs are expected to cultivate students who are tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible. Although previous studies have emphasized formal religious instruction, the contribution of the hidden curriculum to fostering religious moderation remains underexplored. This study aims to examine how the hidden curriculum facilitates the internalization of religious moderation in an Indonesian madrasah. Using an interpretive qualitative case study approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving school leaders, teachers, boarding school supervisors, and students. The data were analyzed through coding, categorization, interpretation, and triangulation to identify patterns of value internalization. The findings reveal that religious moderation is internalized through three interconnected stages: value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. These stages are manifested through teacher role modelling, school culture, collective worship, boarding school life, and students' daily social interactions, fostering tolerance, mutual respect, responsibility, and inclusiveness. The study concludes that the hidden curriculum serves as a strategic mechanism for strengthening religious moderation by integrating moderate Islamic values into students' everyday educational experiences. These findings contribute to the discourse on Islamic education by demonstrating that the hidden curriculum provides a practical framework for promoting religious moderation in madrasahs.

Keywords: *Hidden Curriculum; Islamic Education; Madrasah; Religious Moderation; Value Internalization*

ABSTRAK

Moderasi beragama telah menjadi prioritas strategis dalam pendidikan Islam karena madrasah diharapkan mampu membentuk peserta didik yang toleran, inklusif, dan bertanggung jawab secara sosial. Meskipun penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya lebih banyak menekankan pembelajaran agama secara formal, kontribusi kurikulum tersembunyi (hidden curriculum) dalam memperkuat moderasi beragama masih belum banyak dikaji. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana kurikulum tersembunyi memfasilitasi proses internalisasi moderasi beragama di sebuah madrasah di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif

interpretatif. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan kepala madrasah, guru, pembina asrama, dan peserta didik. Data dianalisis melalui proses pengodean, kategorisasi, interpretasi, dan triangulasi untuk mengidentifikasi pola-pola internalisasi nilai. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama diinternalisasikan melalui tiga tahapan yang saling berkaitan, yaitu transformasi nilai, transaksi nilai, dan transinternalisasi nilai. Ketiga tahapan tersebut diwujudkan melalui keteladanan guru, budaya madrasah, ibadah berjamaah, kehidupan berasrama, serta interaksi sosial peserta didik dalam kehidupan sehari-hari sehingga menumbuhkan sikap toleransi, saling menghormati, tanggung jawab, dan inklusivitas. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa kurikulum tersembunyi merupakan mekanisme strategis untuk memperkuat moderasi beragama melalui integrasi nilai-nilai Islam moderat ke dalam pengalaman belajar peserta didik sehari-hari. Temuan penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan wacana pendidikan Islam dengan menunjukkan bahwa kurikulum tersembunyi menyediakan kerangka praktis untuk memperkuat moderasi beragama di madrasah.

Kata-kata Kunci: Kurikulum Tersembunyi; Pendidikan Islam; Madrasah; Moderasi Beragama; Internalisasi Nilai

1. INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become a strategic priority in Indonesian Islamic education, as madrasahs are expected to cultivate students who are tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible while preserving Islamic values in increasingly diverse societies. As institutions responsible for shaping students' religious understanding and character, madrasahs are expected not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to foster balanced religious attitudes that promote peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and social harmony. However, the implementation of religious moderation in madrasahs, particularly at the Tsanawiyah level, continues to face significant challenges amid the rise of intolerance, religious exclusivism, and the weakening of character education among students. Previous studies indicate that the internalization of moderate Islamic values in madrasahs remains largely formalistic and cognitively focused, with greater emphasis placed on knowledge acquisition than on cultivating students' attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, the role of the hidden curriculum in shaping tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible students has not yet been fully optimized.

The hidden curriculum has considerable potential to strengthen religious moderation through teacher role modelling, school culture, social interaction, and daily religious practices that foster tolerance, mutual respect, inclusiveness, discipline, and responsible behaviour among students (Wimpenny et al., 2022; Wozolek, 2020). Nevertheless, several challenges continue to hinder its effective implementation. These include inconsistent teacher role modelling, limited integration of moderate Islamic values into school culture, and the continuing dominance of formal religious instruction over informal educational experiences (Mardian et al., 2023). Consequently, the

internalization of moral values and moderate religious attitudes often remains superficial and is not consistently reflected in students' everyday behaviour. Several studies have further reported that efforts to integrate religious moderation and character education in madrasahs are frequently confined to classroom-based learning activities and have not been systematically reinforced through school culture or hidden curriculum practices (Ardiansyah & Erihadiana, 2022; Obaid et al., 2024; Santoso et al., 2024). Furthermore, the relationship between hidden curriculum practices and formal curriculum management in madrasahs remains insufficiently explored, indicating the need for a more comprehensive understanding of how implicit educational processes contribute to the development of students' religious character.

Within educational settings, the hidden curriculum encompasses the implicit values, norms, habits, and social practices that are transmitted through teacher role modelling, institutional culture, school routines, and students' daily interactions beyond formal classroom instruction (Lalehzari & Kakamanshadi, 2023; Morweng, 2024). Unlike the formal curriculum, which explicitly specifies learning objectives and instructional content, the hidden curriculum operates through everyday educational experiences that gradually shape students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. In the context of Islamic education, these informal educational processes provide meaningful opportunities for students to experience and practice religious values in authentic situations. Teacher behaviour, collective worship, peer interaction, school traditions, and boarding school activities collectively create an educational environment in which values such as tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, discipline, empathy, and social responsibility are reinforced through authentic educational experiences rather than merely conveyed through formal instruction.

Existing scholarship has consistently demonstrated that the hidden curriculum contributes significantly to character formation, emotional development, ethical awareness, and students' social behaviour across various educational contexts (Yazdani et al., 2019; Bengtsen, 2020). More recent studies have expanded this discussion by examining the role of school culture, teacher role modelling, and institutional environments in strengthening students' moral values and social responsibility (Wimpenny et al., 2022; Jones, 2023). Within Islamic education, growing attention has also been devoted to religious moderation and character education through curriculum implementation, classroom instruction, and institutional culture (Ardiansyah & Erihadiana, 2022; Obaid et al., 2024). These studies collectively suggest that the successful development of students' character depends not only on formal learning activities but also on the broader educational environment in which values are practiced and reinforced. Although the hidden curriculum has been widely discussed in relation to character education and student behaviour (Baghaei & Nazeri, 2023), its contribution to

strengthening religious moderation within madrasahs remains considerably less explored.

In particular, previous studies have acknowledged that school culture, teacher role modelling, and institutional practices play important roles in supporting students' moral development; however, they have generally examined these dimensions separately rather than as interconnected mechanisms of value internalization. Consequently, there remains limited understanding of how hidden curriculum practices collectively foster religious moderation through everyday educational experiences in Islamic schools. This limitation highlights the need for further investigation into the contribution of the hidden curriculum to strengthening religious moderation within the distinctive context of madrasah education.

Despite the growing body of literature on religious moderation and the hidden curriculum, several important issues remain insufficiently addressed. Existing studies on religious moderation in Islamic education have predominantly focused on formal curriculum implementation, classroom instruction, character education programmes, and educational policy ([Ardiansyah & Erihadiana, 2022](#); [Obaid et al., 2024](#); [Santoso et al., 2024](#)). Meanwhile, studies on the hidden curriculum have primarily examined its contribution to students' discipline, character formation, moral development, emotional growth, and social behaviour across general educational settings ([Yazdani et al., 2019](#); [Bengtson, 2020](#); [Baghaei & Nazeri, 2023](#)). Subsequent research has further highlighted the importance of school culture, teacher role modelling, and institutional environments in shaping students' moral values and social responsibility ([Wimpenny et al., 2022](#); [Jones, 2023](#)). Collectively, these studies demonstrate the educational significance of the hidden curriculum; however, they generally discuss religious moderation and hidden curriculum as separate areas of inquiry rather than as interconnected educational processes.

This limitation becomes particularly evident within the context of madrasah education. Although several scholars have acknowledged the importance of school culture and institutional values in strengthening students' religious character, empirical evidence explaining how hidden curriculum practices systematically facilitate the internalization of religious moderation in madrasahs remains limited. In particular, little attention has been devoted to understanding how teacher role modelling, boarding school culture, collective religious activities, habituation programmes, and students' daily social interactions work together to cultivate tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, discipline, and social responsibility. Furthermore, the relationship between informal educational practices and formal curriculum implementation has rarely been examined as an integrated process of value internalization. As a result, existing studies have not yet provided a comprehensive explanation of the educational mechanisms

through which religious moderation becomes embedded in students' everyday experiences within Islamic educational institutions.

Building upon previous scholarship, this study addresses these limitations by positioning the hidden curriculum as an integrated educational strategy for strengthening religious moderation in madrasahs. Unlike previous studies that have separately examined hidden curriculum, character education, and religious moderation, this research explains how multiple dimensions of the hidden curriculum operate simultaneously within everyday educational life. These dimensions include teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school activities, collective worship, habituation programmes, and students' daily social interactions. Rather than functioning as isolated educational practices, these elements collectively create an educational environment in which moderate Islamic values are continuously introduced, practised, reinforced, and internalized through authentic educational experiences. This perspective extends previous discussions by emphasizing that religious moderation is not merely an instructional outcome but a continuous process embedded within institutional culture and students' daily lives.

The novelty of this study lies in its application of the value internalization framework comprising value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization to explain the educational process through which religious moderation is cultivated in madrasahs. While previous studies have identified the importance of school culture, teacher role modelling, and religious activities in character education ([Wimpenny et al., 2022](#); [Jones, 2023](#); [Pokhrel, 2024](#)), few have examined how these educational practices interact throughout successive stages of value internalization. Moreover, recent studies in Islamic education have highlighted the contribution of collective religious activities and institutional culture to students' moral development ([Ambar Wati Ningsih, 2023](#); [Obaid et al., 2024](#)), yet the mechanisms through which these activities facilitate the development of tolerant and inclusive religious attitudes remain insufficiently explained. By integrating the theory of value internalization with the concept of the hidden curriculum, this study offers a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding how moderate religious values are gradually embedded in students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours through sustained participation in everyday educational practices.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine how the hidden curriculum facilitates the internalization of religious moderation in an Indonesian madrasah by analysing teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school life, collective worship, habituation programmes, and students' daily social interactions. Specifically, the study seeks to explain how these interconnected educational practices support the processes of value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization that collectively strengthen students' attitudes of tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, discipline, and

social responsibility. Rather than viewing religious moderation solely as a curricular objective, this study conceptualizes it as a continuous educational process that develops through sustained interaction between students, teachers, institutional culture, and the wider educational environment.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic education. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature by integrating the concepts of the hidden curriculum, religious moderation, and value internalization into a coherent analytical framework for understanding character formation in madrasahs. Practically, the findings provide an empirical framework that may serve as a practical guide for educators, school leaders, and policymakers seeking to strengthen religious moderation through teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school programmes, collective worship, habituation activities, and inclusive social interaction. Consequently, this study contributes not only to the advancement of scholarly discussions on Islamic education but also to the development of educational practices that promote peaceful coexistence, mutual respect, and inclusive citizenship within contemporary madrasah education.

2. METHOD

This study employed an interpretive qualitative case study approach to examine how religious moderation values are internalized through hidden curriculum practices within the madrasah environment. The interpretive paradigm was adopted to explore participants' experiences and interpretations of the implementation of the hidden curriculum in strengthening religious moderation. A qualitative case study was considered appropriate because it enables an in-depth exploration of teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school activities, and students' daily interactions as interconnected educational processes through which religious moderation is fostered in the madrasah context (Yin, 2020).

The research was conducted at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas, Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, Indonesia. The madrasah integrates formal learning with boarding school programmes to strengthen students' character and religious values. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants who possessed relevant knowledge and direct experience regarding the implementation of the hidden curriculum and the internalization of religious moderation. Snowball sampling was subsequently employed to identify additional participants recommended by the initial informants, thereby enabling the collection of richer and more comprehensive data. The participants included the principal, vice principal, Islamic education teachers, boarding school supervisors, and students who were actively involved in religious learning, boarding school activities, and character education programmes. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis across both

the madrasah and boarding school environments. Interviews explored participants' experiences and perceptions regarding the implementation of the hidden curriculum and religious moderation. Participant observation focused on religious activities, classroom interactions, teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school programmes, and students' daily social behaviour. Document analysis complemented and verified the findings derived from interviews and observations through the examination of school regulations, religious activity schedules, student disciplinary records, and institutional programme documents. The research instruments consisted of interview guides, observation protocols, field notes, and document analysis checklists, which enabled the systematic collection of data from multiple sources.

The data were analysed following Yin's qualitative case study procedures through data reduction, coding, categorization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing (Yin, 2020). Interview transcripts, observation records, and documentary evidence were first reduced in accordance with the research focus and subsequently coded into thematic categories related to teacher role modelling, school culture, boarding school activities, religious habituation, and students' moderate behaviour. These categories were subsequently interpreted to identify recurring patterns that explained how hidden curriculum practices facilitated the internalization of religious moderation. Conclusions were drawn by comparing findings across multiple data sources and relating them to the research objectives and the theoretical framework of the study. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, the study employed source, technique, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from the principal, teachers, boarding school supervisors, and students. Technique triangulation involved cross-checking evidence derived from interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, whereas time triangulation was achieved through repeated observations and interviews conducted at different stages of the research process. These procedures strengthened the credibility, dependability, and consistency of the findings while minimizing potential researcher bias.

Prior to data collection, permission to conduct the research was obtained from the management of MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate after receiving a clear explanation of the study's objectives. Participants' identities were anonymized, and all information collected during the study was treated confidentially and used exclusively for academic purposes.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas, located in Sorong Regency, Southwest Papua Province, Indonesia, integrates formal education with boarding school programmes to strengthen students' character and religious values. The findings reveal that the madrasah implements hidden curriculum practices through teacher role modelling,

collective worship, school discipline, and students' everyday social interactions. These practices contribute to the internalization of religious moderation by fostering tolerance, mutual respect, discipline, and inclusive attitudes within the madrasah community.

Document analysis revealed that the vision of MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas emphasizes the integration of Islamic values, character education, and academic development through classroom learning and boarding school activities. This vision is implemented through extracurricular programmes, collective worship, religious habituation, and daily social interaction designed to cultivate discipline, tolerance, responsibility, and mutual respect among students. Furthermore, the boarding school environment reinforces the internalization of religious moderation by encouraging inclusive interaction, cooperation, and respectful communication in students' everyday lives.

The first stage of value internalization identified in this study is value transformation, in which religious moderation values are introduced through teacher role modelling, collective worship, disciplinary practices, and positive social interaction embedded within school culture. Observational findings indicate that these practices function as hidden curriculum mechanisms through which students gradually acquire values of tolerance, mutual respect, inclusiveness, and responsibility through continuous habituation rather than through formal instruction alone.

One teacher explained that religious moderation is strengthened through teacher role modelling, collective worship, community service, and extracurricular activities that consistently promote tolerance and mutual respect among students. This finding indicates that the hidden curriculum functions as an informal learning process through which students acquire moderate religious values by observing and practising them in their daily lives.

Participant observation revealed that teacher role modelling, congregational prayer, community service, extracurricular activities, and respectful interaction among students were repeatedly practiced in both classroom and boarding school settings. These repeated practices enabled students to experience moderate religious values directly and gradually develop tolerance, empathy, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity.

The second stage, value transaction, reflects the process through which religious moderation values are reinforced through continuous interaction between educators and students. The findings demonstrate that dialogue, collaborative learning, mentoring, collective decision-making, and respectful communication provide students with opportunities to practise tolerance, fairness, and collective responsibility in both academic and boarding school contexts.

Interviews with teachers and boarding school supervisors revealed that the internalization of religious moderation is strengthened through direct interaction

between educators and students in both classroom and boarding school activities. Respect for different opinions, collaborative deliberation, and collective responsibility are continuously practiced through extracurricular programs, dormitory activities, and daily communication patterns within the madrasah environment. From the perspectives of the hidden curriculum and social learning theory, these interactions function as informal learning processes through which students construct moderate attitudes by observing, imitating, and experiencing positive social behaviour demonstrated by educators and their peers. As a result, religious moderation is not merely understood as a theoretical concept but becomes part of students' social habits and character formation.

The third stage, value transinternalization, represents the stage at which religious moderation becomes embedded in students' personal awareness and everyday behaviour. Interviews with school leaders and teachers, supported by classroom and boarding school observations, indicate that continuous habituation, teacher role modelling, collective worship, and positive social interaction encourage students to consistently demonstrate tolerance, inclusiveness, fairness, and mutual respect both within and beyond the madrasah environment.

These findings indicate that the hidden curriculum plays a significant role in transforming religious moderation from a conceptual understanding into a lived social practice. Through continuous habituation, collective worship, collaborative activities, and daily interaction within the boarding school environment, students gradually develop moderate attitudes as part of their personal character and social identity. From the perspective of Islamic character education and social learning theory, repeated exposure to positive role models and inclusive social practices enables students to internalize values of tolerance, justice, empathy, and mutual respect in a sustainable manner. As a result, religious moderation is not only understood cognitively but is reflected in students' behavior, communication patterns, and social relationships both inside and outside the madrasah environment. [Figure 1](#) illustrates the three-stage process of internalizing religious moderation through hidden curriculum practices at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas.

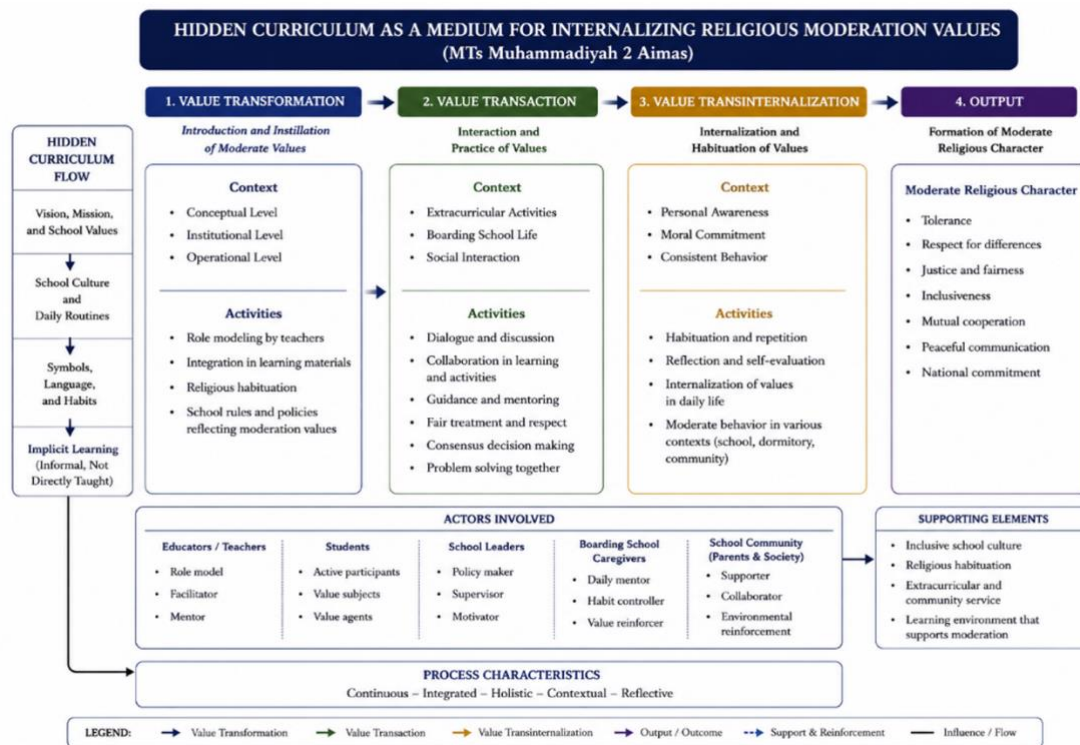


Figure 1. The Process of Internalizing Religious Moderation through the Hidden Curriculum at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas

The findings indicate that the internalization of religious moderation at MTs Muhammadiyah 2 Aimas operates through three interconnected stages: value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization. These stages demonstrate that the hidden curriculum functions as a continuous social and cultural process through which moderate values are gradually embedded into students' attitudes and behaviour via teacher role modelling, religious habituation, boarding school interaction, and collaborative activities. These findings confirm Muhaimin's perspective on value internalization, which emphasizes that values are progressively developed through transformation, transaction, and transinternalization (Haidir et al., 2021). It also supports previous studies highlighting that school culture, teacher role modelling, and informal interaction significantly influence students' moral and social development (Bengtsen, 2020; Wimpenny et al., 2022).

Furthermore, studies in Islamic education have highlighted that religious moderation is more effectively strengthened through experiential learning and inclusive social practices than through formal instruction alone (Ardiansyah & Erihadiana, 2022; Obaid et al., 2024). The present study extends these discussions by demonstrating that boarding school culture, collective worship, extracurricular activities, and daily social interaction function as hidden curriculum mechanisms that continuously shape students' tolerant, inclusive, and respectful behaviour. Therefore, the hidden curriculum serves as

a strategic medium for integrating religious moderation values into students' character formation and social behavior in a sustainable manner.

Beyond pedagogical practices, the findings also reveal that the managerial dimension plays an important role in supporting the internalization of religious moderation through the hidden curriculum. The implementation of moderate values is not solely dependent on teachers' classroom practices but also requires institutional policies, school regulations, boarding school supervision, and the development of an inclusive school culture. In this context, Madrasah management functions as a coordinating mechanism that integrates religious activities, extracurricular programmes, disciplinary practices, and social interaction into a continuous process of character formation.

The findings further indicate that this managerial role is reflected in the implementation of religious activities, boarding school programmes, disciplinary systems, and extracurricular activities coordinated by the madrasah management. Interviews with the principal and teachers, supported by classroom and boarding school observations, demonstrate that school regulations, collective worship schedules, mentoring activities, and routine evaluations are systematically implemented to reinforce students' attitudes of tolerance, responsibility, and mutual respect.

These findings are consistent with [Akhtar \(2024\)](#), who emphasized that institutional management strengthens value-based education through effective coordination, supportive school culture, and the integration of educational values into students' everyday experiences.

These findings demonstrate that the managerial dimension extends beyond administrative functions to serve as a strategic mechanism for integrating moderate religious values into the overall educational culture. Consistent with previous studies ([Carvalho et al., 2022](#); [Ismail et al., 2022](#); [Kaplan & Zafiropoulos, 2022](#)), effective educational management reinforces the implementation of the hidden curriculum through supervision, habituation, and collaborative interaction among teachers, students, and boarding school supervisors. Consequently, religious moderation is strengthened not only through formal learning but also through students' everyday social interactions and institutional culture, thereby supporting the sustainable development of tolerant, inclusive, and socially responsible character.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the hidden curriculum functions as an effective strategy for internalizing religious moderation through teacher role modelling, boarding school culture, collective worship, disciplinary practices, and students' everyday social interactions within the madrasah environment. The internalization process occurs through continuous habituation, shared norms, and meaningful social experiences that

gradually cultivate tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and responsibility among students. These findings indicate that religious moderation is more effectively strengthened through lived educational practices and school culture than through formal classroom instruction alone. The study demonstrates that this process operates through three interconnected stages of value internalization: value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization, through which moderate religious values are progressively embedded in students' attitudes and behaviour. The findings further demonstrate that the hidden curriculum plays a strategic role in strengthening religious moderation through continuous social interaction, teacher role modelling, religious habituation, and boarding school culture. Through these practices, values of tolerance, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and responsibility become integrated into students' everyday behaviour and character formation. The implementation of the hidden curriculum contributes significantly to the development of an inclusive madrasah culture and students' moderate character by encouraging tolerance, cooperation, mutual respect, and social responsibility through everyday educational practices. Through the hidden curriculum embedded in school culture, boarding school activities, religious habituation, and daily social interaction, students are encouraged to practise tolerance, mutual respect, cooperation, and social responsibility in their everyday lives. These practices create a learning environment that not only strengthens students' religious understanding but also fosters harmonious social relationships and inclusive attitudes within the madrasah community. These interactions create an educational relationship in which students not only understand religious moderation conceptually but also experience and apply it directly through everyday communication and social engagement within the madrasah environment. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the hidden curriculum serves as an effective and sustainable approach to strengthening religious moderation through school culture, teacher role modelling, boarding school interaction, and religious habituation. By integrating moderate religious values into students' daily social and religious experiences, the hidden curriculum contributes to the sustainable development of tolerant, inclusive, and responsible character than formal classroom instruction alone. The study offers both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it positions the hidden curriculum as a strategic framework for explaining the internalization of religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions. Practically, the findings provide guidance for madrasah leaders, educators, and policymakers in promoting religious moderation through collaborative interaction, collective worship, extracurricular activities, and a value-based school culture.

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