



Integrating Moderate Religious Values into School Curricula and Management Through an Ethnographic Approach

Zainal Abidin¹, Ahmad Qusairi², Muhamad Maulana³

^{1&2} Universitas Islam Internasional Darullughah Wadda'wah, Jawa Timur, Indonesia.

³ Hartford International University, United States.

* Correspondence to: zainalabidin@uiidalwa.ac.id

Abstract: In today's era, religious moderation has become a significant issue in multicultural education, particularly in public schools characterized by religious, cultural, and social diversity. However, limited studies have examined how religious moderation is institutionally established through the integration of school management and curriculum in heterogeneous public vocational schools. This study aims to investigate how institutional integration within a school contributes to fostering religious moderation at Public Vocational High School Sukapura, Indonesia. Employing an ethnographic methodology, data were collected through participant observation, interviews with school leaders, teachers, students, and school committee members, as well as document analysis. Data were analyzed using thematic coding, while credibility was strengthened through triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, and thick description. The findings reveal eight themes contributing to religious moderation: transformational leadership, inclusive managerial policies, curriculum integration, interfaith social interaction, the hidden curriculum, extracurricular collaboration, an inclusive school environment, and school-community collaboration. The interaction among these themes creates an inclusive school ecosystem in which religious moderation is internalized through formal and informal educational processes. Rather than functioning as an isolated program, religious moderation is embedded within organizational culture, managerial practices, learning activities, social relationships, and community engagement. This institutional approach demonstrates that religious moderation can be strengthened when school policies, curriculum, leadership, and social interactions operate cohesively and continuously. The findings contribute to educational management and multicultural education by applying systems theory to explain how religious moderation can be institutionalized through dynamic interactions among various elements within educational organizations.

Keywords: Religious moderation; inclusive school ecosystem; ethnography.

How To Cite: Abidin, Z., Qusairi, A., & Maulana, M. (2026). Integrating moderate religious values into school curricula and management through an ethnographic approach. *Al-Ta'lim Journal*, 33(2). doi:<https://doi.org/10.15548/jt.v33i2.1147>

Article info: Submitted: 02nd February 2026 | Revised: 14th June 2026 | Accepted: 31th July 2026

INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity in Indonesia is an undeniable sociological reality, simultaneously a wealth and a challenge (Mulyana, 2023; Sealy et al., 2022). Pancasila, as the foundation of the state, places this diversity as a crucial pillar that must be maintained through a spirit of tolerance and harmony (Anwar, 2021). At the same time, the growing level of social polarization due to the divergence in terms of religious identity shows that diversity cannot always turn into positive social capital but may potentially cause conflicts if not handled properly (Castle & Stepp, 2021). Under these circumstances, education assumes its strategic importance as a means of creating respect and social cohesion based on internalizing values of religious tolerance from childhood. Thus, schools become not just

the place where the transmission of knowledge takes place but also a means of forming character that enables one to live in a diverse society in peace (Siddik et al., 2025).

Formal education, as an agent of socialization, bears significant responsibility not only for teaching subject matter but also for instilling character and noble values, including religious moderation (Solahudin et al., 2023). Unfortunately, many educational institutions still face challenges in effectively integrating these values. Religious education is often implemented in a sectoral manner, potentially segregating students based on their religious identity (Amzalag & Gross, 2025; Nelson et al., 2025). This can hinder the development of a holistic understanding of tolerance, where harmony is seen only as the absence of conflict, rather than as the result of positive interactions and deep mutual understanding (Jailani et al., 2023). There has been an intriguing occurrence in Sukapura public Vocational School, which is a school wherein there are students who are from Muslim and Hindu religious beliefs who can coexist peacefully in the same environment.

This school has managed to create a positive academic environment that is conducive and harmonious regardless of religious differences. Based on the preliminary data gathered by the researchers using preliminary observation and interview techniques with the school administration, the Sukapura public Vocational School has policies that give holidays for both religious events, provide facilities for both religions to worship, and conduct various activities of the school collectively without segregating due to religion. The school administration even claimed that there had never been any incident of conflict among the students due to religious differences in the past several years. These preliminary findings show that there are actual practices of diversity management that are worthy of scientific investigation. The success of religious diversity management in Sukapura public Vocational School can provide important insights into how educational management should be conducted effectively.

Several previous studies have explored religious moderation in educational contexts. For instance, the research conducted by Banks (2015a) stresses the multicultural aspect of education based on the change in students' perspectives, yet does not account for the way that school leadership and hidden curriculum affect the creation of a culture of moderation. Alfian et al.'s (2025a) research focuses on implementing a moderation curriculum in a fairly homogeneous madrasah setting, so it lacks insight into managing the implementation of a moderation curriculum in that setting and, therefore, does not offer insight into the management of diversity in heterogeneous public schools. On the other hand, Rahman et al.'s (2022) research is dedicated to the influence of Islamic religious education teachers on the formation of moderation values in students, yet it does not consider the interrelation between the policies and strategies of school management, leadership, organizational culture, and a comprehensive curriculum.

The main limitation of previous research lies in its partial approach and lack of in-depth exploration of actual practices in the field. Most studies use normative or survey approaches that only capture surface perceptions, failing to uncover the dynamics of social interactions, informal mechanisms, and the true process of school culture formation. Furthermore, previous research tends to separate curriculum analysis from school management, even though the two aspects are interconnected and form a complete educational ecosystem. This gap results in a lack of a comprehensive understanding of how religious moderation can be holistically integrated in the context of public schools facing active diversity. This study aims to address these limitations by using an ethnographic

approach to deeply explore the management practices and curriculum integration that form a moderate school culture at Sukapura public Vocational High School.

This paper offers three innovative contributions. First, the use of an ethnographic methodology enables the study to identify not only formal regulations but also hidden curricula and spontaneous interactions that shape tolerance and religious moderation. Second, the study integrates transformational leadership, managerial policies, and curricular practices into a coherent institutional system rather than examining them as separate components. Third, unlike previous studies conducted in relatively homogeneous educational settings, this research focuses on a public vocational school characterized by Muslim and Hindu diversity. Addressing this research gap, the study employs an ethnographic approach to explore how management and curriculum integration contribute to the formation of a moderate school culture at Sukapura public Vocational High School in Indonesia.

This study investigates religious moderation as a system built through an interaction of school leadership, managerial policies, formal curriculum, and hidden curriculum in the context of a heterogeneous public school as opposed to the research by Banks (2015a) which leans more on the pedagogical dimension; Alfian et al. (2025a) which leans more on the homogeneous madrasah context; and Rahman et al. (2022) which emphasizes the role of teachers of religious education. The present study is novel for three main reasons. This study first employs an ethnographic approach to uncover everyday practices, informal mechanisms, and hidden curricula that previous research has not widely identified. Second, this study interactively analyzes the dimensions of transformational leadership, managerial policies, and curricular practices as a mutually supportive system, rather than as stand-alone elements.

Third, this study presents empirical evidence from public schools with active diversity between Muslim and Hindu students, thus broadening the understanding of the implementation of religious moderation beyond the context of Islamic educational institutions or relatively homogeneous schools. Thus, this study is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of a school ecosystem-based model of religious moderation integration while offering practical implications for the management of multicultural schools in Indonesia. Thus, this study aims to: (1) describe how school management at Sukapura public Vocational High School manages religious diversity through inclusive leadership and policies, (2) analyze how the values of religious moderation are integrated both formally in the curriculum and informally in the school culture, and (3) identify key success factors that can serve as models for other educational institutions facing similar challenges.

METHOD

An ethnographic study design exploring the practices, social interactions, and cultural meanings hidden behind the success of Sukapura public Vocational School in implementing religious moderation. Ethnographic studies enable researchers to immerse themselves in the school environment as the primary subject, interact directly with the actors (teachers, students, and management), and gain an understanding of the phenomenon from their own perspectives. This method not only describes "what" happens, but also "why" and "how" these practices become an integral part of the school culture (Abidin et al., 2025; Qusairi et al., 2025). The research location was Sukapura public Vocational High School, a public school with students from different religious backgrounds,

namely Islam and Hinduism. This location was chosen intentionally because the school serves as a successful case study in managing religious diversity.

Meanwhile, research subjects were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques (Ahmad & Wilkins, 2025; Tajik et al., 2025). The main subjects included the principal, vice-principal, religious teachers (both Muslim and Hindu), several student representatives from both religions, and relevant school committee members. The involvement of these various parties is crucial to gaining a comprehensive perspective of the entire school ecosystem. Data collection was conducted through three main techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis (Deterding & Waters, 2021). Participant observation was conducted through direct involvement in daily school activities, such as attending teaching and learning activities, flag ceremonies, religious holiday celebrations, and social interactions in the cafeteria and school environment.

In-depth interviews were designed to explore the research subjects' understanding, experiences, and perceptions regarding religious moderation, school policies, and interfaith interactions. Meanwhile, document analysis included examining the Lesson Implementation Plan, curriculum, school regulations, student handbooks, and other important records that could provide formal evidence of existing policies and practices. The collected data were then analyzed using the qualitative data analysis model developed by Miles et al. (2014). This analysis process begins with data reduction, which involves summarizing and selecting important data from observations, interviews, and documents. The data is then presented in descriptive narrative form, tables, or charts for ease of understanding. The final stage is drawing conclusions, where researchers interpret the findings and relate them to relevant theories.

The data analysis process flow in this study is presented in Table 1 to provide a clear and systematic overview of the analytical procedures undertaken. The analysis began with data collection through participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, which generated comprehensive information regarding the institutionalization of religious moderation within the school. The collected data were then reduced by selecting, organizing, categorizing, and coding relevant information according to the research objectives and emerging themes. Subsequently, the reduced data were presented in an organized manner through thematic descriptions and analytical categories to facilitate interpretation. The final stage involved drawing conclusions by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings across the data. These conclusions were continuously verified through triangulation and comparison of multiple data sources to ensure credibility, consistency, and accuracy of the findings.

Table 1. Data Analysis Process

Stage	Activities
Data Collection	Observation, interviews, documentation
Data Reduction	Coding, categorization, and theme identification
Data Display	Narrative description, matrices, tables
Conclusion Drawing	Interpretation and verification of findings

This study applies the trustworthiness criteria as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to guarantee the validity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the research findings. To increase the credibility of the research, data triangulation is used by comparing data from participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and member checking is done with several informants to confirm the researcher's

interpretations. Thick descriptions are provided to enhance transferability, providing a comprehensive and detailed account of the research setting, the attributes of Public Vocational High School Negeri Sukapura as a public institution housing Muslim and Hindu learners, the participants' profiles, the social interaction scenarios observed, and the procedure of religious moderation implementation throughout the study. This vivid description of the context enables readers to assess the extent to which the results of the research can be transferred to other schools having similar characteristics (Shenton, 2004).

The reliability of this study was ensured through the development of an audit trail documenting all procedures and decisions throughout the research process, from the selection of informants to data analysis and interpretation. The validity and trustworthiness of the findings were established by systematically linking interpretations to empirical evidence and applying multiple strategies, including data triangulation, reflective journal writing, and group discussions. These procedures were employed to minimize researcher subjectivity, enhance transparency, and ensure consistency between the collected data and the conclusions drawn. The audit trail also provided a systematic record that enabled the research process to be reviewed and evaluated at each stage. Together, these strategies strengthened the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are presented based on data obtained from diverse participants and analyzed through a systematic coding process. As shown in Table 2, the participants represented key elements of the school community, including the principal, vice principal, curriculum coordinator, religious education teachers, Muslim and Hindu students, and the school committee. Their perspectives were complemented by participant observations and document analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation practices. The coding process presented in Table 3 involved identifying initial codes, grouping them into categories, and developing broader themes that reflected recurring patterns across the data. This analytical process generated several interconnected themes, including transformational leadership, inclusive management, curriculum integration, hidden curriculum, and religious moderation, which collectively illustrate how an inclusive school ecosystem is institutionally developed.

Table 2. Characteristics of Participants

Code	Participant	Role	Data Source
KS-01	Principal	Key Informant	Interview
WK-01	Vice Principal	Key Informant	Interview
CUR-01	Curriculum Coordinator	Key Informant	Interview
GAI-01	Islamic Education Teacher	Interview	Data Source
GH-01	Hindu Religion Teacher	Interview	Interview
SM-01-03	Muslim Students	Interview & Observation	
SH-01-03	Hindu Students	Interview & Observation	
COM-01	School Committee	Interview	

Table 3. Coding Process

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
The principal as a role model	Leadership	Transformational leadership
Equal treatment	School policy	Inclusive management
Religious accommodation	School policy	Inclusive management
Collaborative learning	Teaching practice	Curriculum integration

Initial Codes	Categories	Themes
Respect for worship	Daily interaction	Hidden curriculum
Shared activities	School culture	Religious moderation

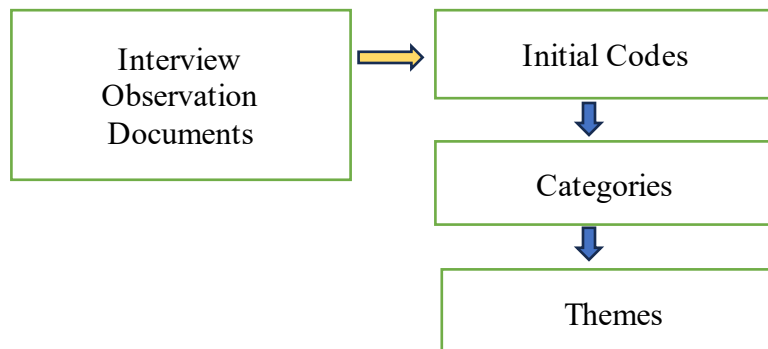


Figure 1. Development of Themes

Data analysis through coding yielded three main themes explaining the mechanisms of religious moderation integration at Sukapura public Vocational High School: (1) transformational leadership, (2) inclusive managerial policies, and (3) the formation of a hidden curriculum through daily social interactions. Transformational leadership was the first theme to emerge from participant observation, interviews, and analysis of school documents. These initial codes included equal treatment, the principal as a role model, inclusive leadership, and participatory decision-making. These were then grouped under the theme of transformational leadership. The principal was observed not just speaking about the significance of religious moderation in official gatherings but also setting an example by taking part in different school events involving students of both Muslim and Hindu faiths. For example, the principal permitted all the students to participate equally without any discrimination on the basis of their religion during the morning assembly.

This egalitarian interaction was also reflected when the principal greeted the students and teachers of different religions and participated in religious activities conducted on the school grounds as a mark of respect to diversity. These observational findings were supported by an interview with the principal, who stated: *“We are trying to create a school culture that is not discriminatory to students based on religion. All school policies. All school policies are designed to make sure that every student feels valued and has equal development opportunities,”* the principal said. (KS-01, interview, 12 March 2025). The view was also shared by an Islamic religious education teacher who said that the role-model behavior of the principal was an important factor in creating a culture of moderation in the school. *“It is always the principal who sets the first example. He participates in both Islamic and Hindu religious activities, allowing teachers and students to observe how to respect differences”*. (Interview, GAI-01, March 14, 2025)

Observations and interviews reveal that leadership within Sukapura public Vocational School not only takes place in administrative decisions but is also realized in activities that help develop an inclusive school culture. Such exemplary behaviors constitute an effective way of internalizing the values of religious moderation since they set examples that people can imitate. Inclusive managerial policies were another significant theme that surfaced from the analysis. This theme is composed of many other codes, such as equal access to religious services, accommodation of religious holidays,

equitable school policies, and institutional recognition. All these codes suggest that school policies are meant to offer recognition and equal treatment to all students irrespective of their religious background. Based on field observations by researchers, it was found that the school's academic calendar takes into account Islamic and Hindu religious holidays.

Adjustments are also made to the learning schedule during certain periods, such as Ramadan and Nyepi Day, to facilitate religious practice without hindering academic performance. Furthermore, prayer rooms are available for both religions with equal access and facilities. It is further noted that there is no discrimination in the implementation of school policies or activities based on students' religious identity. The Vice Principal for Curriculum further clarified the policy in the following words: *"Academic calendar always considers the needs of all students. Religious holidays are included in the school calendar for all members of the school community to feel respected."* (WK-01, interview, March 15, 2025). *The above statement was supported by a teacher of the Hindu religion who said: "All Hindu students get equal space for prayer in the school. We do not ever feel different from Muslim students."* (GH-01, interview, March 16, 2025).

A Hindu student held the same point of view: *"We feel at ease studying here because whenever there are any religious ceremonies, we are given the chance to participate in them. Our fellow students also respect them."* (SH-02, interview, March 16, 2025). Through observation and interviews, it can be found that apart from being a part of administrative guidelines, policies at the school level act as institutional mechanisms that provide a sense of justice, recognition, and inclusion to all members of the school community. The school policy ensures religious moderation through day-to-day management of the school. The third theme that emerged from the process of coding was the incorporation of moderation values into the curriculum (curriculum integration). Some of the initial codes from which this theme emerged included cross-curriculum values, dialogic learning, collaborative classrooms, contextual learning, and teacher collaboration.

The analysis shows that although the values of moderation are instilled in religious education lessons, the same values are also applied in other subjects using contextual and dialogical learning techniques. From the observations made in classrooms, it was clear that teachers did not teach religious moderation as mere norms but rather associated these with the experiences of the learners in the educational institution. For instance, in Pancasila Education lessons, teachers asked learners to share their experiences working in a team with learners from other religions during class activities and organizations within the educational institution. On the other hand, in history lessons, teachers used discussions about the diversity of the Indonesian nation to urge learners to consider the significance of coexistence within a diverse community. In the entire process of teaching and learning, it was found that learners from different religions worked together in groups without exhibiting tendencies to group by religion.

The curriculum coordinator further pointed out that this type of integration is one of the policies accepted by all the teachers. He said: *"The importance of moderation should not be left to religious teachers alone. All teachers can integrate the subject matter with the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and coexistence depending on the context of their respective subjects"* (CUR-01, interview, March 18, 2025). One of the Pancasila Education teachers further added that: *"While teaching Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity), we ask students to explain their experiences of working with their friends from various religions. As a result, students understand that tolerance is not only a theory but a practice that they practice in their daily lives"* (GPP-01, interview, March 18, 2025). This experience is supported

by one of the Muslim students, who said that *"In our classes, we often have a discussion session together. Teachers do not discriminate among us; rather, we are asked to listen to the views of others even when we differ in our beliefs"* (SM-03, interview, March 19, 2025).

The integration of moderation values into the formal curriculum is carried out systematically in the form of collaboration between teachers and the application of contextual learning based on the results of observations, interviews, and analysis of learning device documents. This finding suggests that the internalization of religious moderation is developed through cross-curricular learning experiences, such that students see tolerance as part of everyday school life and not just material learned in religious education. The next theme that emerges from the process of analysis is interfaith social interaction. The theme emerged from several initial codes, such as shared daily interaction, mutual respect, collaborative friendship, informal communication, and peer acceptance. All of these codes imply that harmonious relationships among students are developed through social experiences that occur naturally in daily activities in the school environment.

In participant observation, researchers observed that interactions occurred between Muslim and Hindu students without any distinction based on religious identity. Students of both religions sat together chatting about lessons and organizational activities during their break in the school canteen, sharing food they had brought with each other. The teacher randomly forms groups for class activities or allows students to agree on group members, disregarding their religious backgrounds. The researchers also observed that when one of the students requested to conduct worship, other group members changed the discussion schedule to respect their friend's religious needs. The situation arose spontaneously, without direct instructions from the teachers or the school. As one Muslim student explained: *"We are used to studying and playing together. We wait for our Hindu friend to pray. When we pray, they also respect us and therefore understand each other well"* (SM-02, interview, March 20, 2025).

This was reinforced by a Hindu student who said: *"We never feel discriminated against here. Our Muslim friends have often helped us during class activities, and vice versa. We look at each other more as friends than as religious."* (SH-01, interview, March 20, 2025). The guidance and counseling teacher also noted a similar pattern of interaction. She said: *"Since I have been here, I have seldom seen any conflict over religious differences. The relationships have developed naturally because the school has been promoting activities from the very beginning that involve all students."* (BK-01, interview, 21 March 2025). Observations, interviews, and field notes indicate that harmony among students is not only built by formal rules but is rather constructed through social interactions in daily life. Learning, organizing, and communicating common experiences builds mutual trust and further mutual respect among students of different religions.

The results of this study indicate that social interaction is an important basis for internalizing the values of religious moderation in the school environment. The fifth theme revealed during the analysis is that the hidden curriculum serves as a mechanism for forming a culture of religious moderation. These themes were derived from several codes, including habituation on a daily basis, respect for each other, appreciation of religion, informal role models, culture of the school, and spontaneous tolerance. It has been analyzed that the internalization of moderation values happens not only via formal education but also through repeated practices of social habits in everyday life in the school setting. In participant observation, several cultural practices were identified that indirectly contribute to the creation of a tolerant culture.

Participant observation has revealed several cultural practices that indirectly foster a culture of tolerance. In the morning before classes, students greet one another depending on their cultures without making anyone feel awkward or offending any students of a particular religion. Whenever the time for Zuhr prayer arrives, Muslim students go to the prayer room to pray, while Hindu students either continue studying or wait for their friends without interfering in the prayer process. On the other hand, whenever Hindu students are doing prayers during some religious activity, Muslim students also show their respect by creating peace in the school atmosphere. Researchers found that teachers always maintain mutual respect among themselves through communication, inclusive language, and treat all students equally regardless of their religious identity.

This is how an Islamic Religious Education teacher described the process: *"We do not teach tolerance in the abstract. Children learn about teachers respecting each other and the school respecting all religions equally. They learn naturally from that"* (interview, March 22, 2025, GAI-01). Similarly, a teacher of Hindu religious education explained: *"The most important thing is to make it a habit. Students see all the teachers respecting each other every day. They will accept that attitude as normal and eventually do the same"* (interview, March 22, 2025, GH-01). One Muslim student reflected on this experience, saying: *"No one tells us who to be friends with. We are already used to helping each other. We hold in high regard a friend who prays, as we have observed all the teachers doing so since the beginning of our education."* (SM-01, interview, March 23, 2025). The hidden curriculum at Sukapura public Vocational High School comes from the process of habituation, teacher role modeling, and social interaction based on observation, interviews, and field notes.

Moderation values are internalized not just through teaching but also through social norms that all school members constantly perform. The implications indicate that the culture in schools affects the tolerant behaviour of the students since they learn not only the subjects but also through social interaction. The next theme that came out of the analysis was extracurricular activities as a space to strengthen religious moderation. Initial codes, such as collaborative participation, shared responsibility, inclusive school activities, and peer learning, were derived to generate this theme. The analysis revealed that extracurricular activities are an important medium for students to develop interfaith relations through the experience of working together in various school activities. In the course of observations, the researchers noted that Muslim and Hindu students took part together in student organizations, scouting activities, sports, and the preparation for national holidays.

Tasks were divided by ability and responsibility, not religious identity. In some activities, students helped each other complete assignments and engaged in discussions to achieve common goals without showing exclusive attitudes towards their religious group. These interactions show that the value of tolerance is fostered through organic collaborative experiences. One of the extracurricular activity teachers explained the following: *"We always emphasize cooperation in all our activities. They work in teams, and the children are used to working together with children of different religions, so they learn mutual respect from experience."* (EXT-01, interview, 24 March 2025). A student, too, said: *"When we are participating in scouts or school activities, we never think of religious differences. The important thing is that everyone works and does the tasks together."* (SM-04, interview, 24 March 2025)

The results of observation and interview show that extracurricular activities are social learning spaces that strengthen the values of religious moderation through cooperation, communication, and shared responsibility. Such experiences enable the internalization of values of tolerance to extend from the classroom to other school activities and become a sustainable part of the school culture. The second theme that emerged from the analysis process was the provision of school facilities and environments that support the practice of religious moderation. The theme developed from initial codes like equal religious facilities, institutional support, respect for worship, and an inclusive learning environment. The provision of equal facilities, the analysis revealed, is a reflection of the school's commitment to building an environment that respects religious diversity. Observations revealed that the school provides facilities that enable each student to practice their religion according to their beliefs.

In addition to a prayer room for Muslim students, the school also permits Hindu students to conduct prayer activities according to their needs. In their observations, the researchers did not find any restrictions or differential treatment in the use of religious facilities. In this respect, the school environment is also important: the members of the school community respect each other during the worship activities. The vice principal explained, *"We try to make sure all students have equal rights to practice their religion. The facilities provided are not only for administrative needs but also show respect to the diversity of the school"* (WK-01, interview, March 25, 2025). A Hindu student added, *"We feel good because the school has a place for us to worship. Our friends also respect us when we do religious things"* (SH-03, interview, March 25, 2025).

The data of observation and interview show that the availability of inclusive facilities not only supports the practice of religion but also strengthens respect and acceptance senses among students. Hence, the physical environment and facility provision policies are part of the school ecosystem that help to internalize the values of religious moderation in daily life. The last theme that came out of the analysis was cooperation between schools, parents, and the community in strengthening the implementation of religious moderation (school-community partnership). The theme emerged from several initial codes, such as parental engagement, community participation, shared commitment, and collaborative communication. The analysis indicates that the success of the implementation of religious moderation is not only determined by internal policies in schools but also by the support and involvement of various stakeholders outside the school.

Observations revealed that schools routinely involve parents and community leaders in various activities such as school committee meetings, national holiday commemorations, and community outreach activities. In these activities, schools stress the importance of mutual respect, improved communication among stakeholders, and a common commitment to building students' character. Researchers also found that open relationships between schools, parents, and the community help create a conducive environment for the strengthening of the values of religious moderation, both inside and outside school. A school committee member said: *"The school always invites us to speak about programs regarding the development of students' characters. We agree with this because the value of mutual respect has to be constructed together, not only the responsibility of the school"* (COM-01, interview, March 26, 2025).

The principal also stressed the following: *"It is not possible for the school alone to succeed in creating a culture of moderation. Parents and community support are important factors in ensuring that values taught at school are practiced by students consistently in their*

daily lives" (KS-01, interview, March 26, 2025). The results show that the cooperation between schools, families, and the community is sustainable and strengthens the ecosystem for religious moderation. This synergy makes it possible to internalize values of tolerance within the school environment and to cultivate them in the social life of students. The synthesis of the analysis results describes that the implementation of religious moderation at Public Vocational High School Sukapura is not determined by one program or policy but is influenced by the synergic interaction of school leadership, managerial policies, formal curriculum, hidden curriculum, extracurricular activities, inclusive school environment, and collaboration with parents and the community.

The coding results indicate that these themes are connected by a central category, the inclusive school ecosystem, which refers to the integration of various elements in the construction of a school culture that respects diversity. Observations in this study show that the values of religious moderation are always found in various school activities, both in the classroom and school environment, and outside of learning. Interviews with the principal, teachers, students, and school committee also revealed that mutual respect was not viewed as a temporary program but a culture that is consistently practiced in daily life. This coherence between formal policies and social practices reinforces the internalization of the values of moderation, thus becoming part of the school's identity. *"Religious moderation is not a school program but a culture that we build together," says the principal. "It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to build a climate of mutual respect so that students can live these values directly in their daily lives"* (KS-01, interview, March 26, 2025).

Therefore, the findings indicate that the successful implementation of religious moderation at Sukapura public Vocational High School is strongly supported by the formation of an inclusive and integrated school ecosystem. Religious moderation is not implemented as an isolated program but emerges through continuous interaction among leadership, school policies, curriculum, teaching practices, social relationships, extracurricular activities, and community engagement. Each component contributes to and reinforces the others, creating a consistent institutional environment that promotes mutual respect, equality, cooperation, and tolerance among students and school members. This interconnected system enables members of the school community to move beyond merely understanding the principles of religious moderation toward applying them in everyday interactions and practices. Consequently, tolerance becomes embedded within the school culture and can be sustained through collective participation and shared institutional commitment.

Based on the above findings, it can be seen that the effective application of religious moderation in Public Vocational High School Sukapura is not the effect of one particular effort but the product of a number of organizational variables coming into play to create an environment of inclusivity within the school. This is true in line with the theory of systems, whereby the school is viewed as an interrelated social system (Becvar et al., 2023; Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024; Wieland et al., 2023). The integration of transformational leadership, inclusive managerial policies, curriculum implementation, hidden curriculum, extracurricular activities, supportive school facilities, and collaboration with parents and the community demonstrate that religious moderation is embedded throughout the educational process, not just at the formal classroom level. From this theoretical perspective, the effectiveness of religious moderation in addressing the interrelationships between components can be explained in terms of the synergy between these

components, where changes in one component strengthen and sustain changes in the other components.

Hence, the results expand the application of systems theory to the field of religious moderation by demonstrating that sustainable moderation is achieved through the development of an integrated school ecosystem rather than isolated curricular or managerial interventions. This systemic view offers a broader explanation of how Sukapura public Vocational School is able to in still a culture of religious moderation sustainably in a religiously diverse educational context. The results indicated that transformational leadership is the main factor for the institutionalization of religious moderation in Public Vocational High School Sukapura. This finding is consistent with the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006). It stresses that effective leaders impact the organizational members not only by formal authority but also by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

In the current study, the principal's active participation in interfaith activities and persistent demonstration of inclusive behavior serve as examples of idealized influence, in which values are passed on through personal example rather than through administrative directives. Such leadership practices motivate teachers and students to embrace religious moderation as a common value within the organization, rather than a mandatory policy. This finding supports the transformational leadership theory by demonstrating that symbolic participation in interfaith practices enhances the leader's moral legitimacy and facilitates the creation of an inclusive school culture. In this situation, transformational leadership fosters commitment voluntarily and is founded upon trust, values, and accountability rather than administrative leadership based on rules and processes. In addition, the results are supported by other studies (Hadiyanto et al., 2025; Maisaroh et al., 2025).

They provide ethnographic proof that leadership effectiveness is enhanced through daily socialization and example-giving, emphasizing the importance of practical experience in religious moderation within a multireligious context. The findings also demonstrate that inclusive managerial policies work not only as administrative regulations but also as cultural mechanisms that institutionalize religious moderation within the school community. This finding can be understood through Schein's (2010) organizational culture theory, which states that organizational values are incorporated when they are constantly translated into shared practices, routines, and institutional norms. In the present study, equal accommodation of Islamic and Hindu religious observances, equal access to worship facilities, and inclusive academic scheduling are organizational artifacts that communicate the school's core assumptions about equality and mutual respect.

In addition, the policies offer institutional recognition of students' religious identities in line with Honneth's (2014) recognition theory, which states that individuals' sense of belonging is strengthened when their identities are publicly acknowledged and respected. Thus, students see religious diversity not as a cause of division but as a legitimate and valued part of school life. This study is an extension of prior studies (Alfian et al., 2025b; Rahman, Walid, et al., 2022) in which inclusive management practices in religiously diverse schools serve not only as procedural practices but also as cultural tools that foster organizational trust, build collective identity, and ensure inclusivity within the education system. The embedding of religious moderation in several subjects shows that

value formation is more effective if it is spread throughout the curriculum rather than limited to religious education alone.

The finding is consistent with Banks' (2015b) multicultural education theory, which states that multicultural values should be infused throughout the educational experience in terms of curriculum content, teaching strategies, and the overall school climate. At Public Vocational High School Sukapura, the teachers integrated religious moderation into subjects such as Pancasila Education and History, and other general subjects by encouraging students to reflect on their daily experiences of living and learning with peers from different religious backgrounds. Rannikmäe et al., (2020) social constructivist theory also justifies the use of this teaching method since, according to it, learning of any value or information takes place through social interaction and discussion, rather than through passive transmission of knowledge from teacher to student. Consequently, religious moderation was taught through discussions and activities related to this concept, not as an established notion that had to be memorized.

The results obtained contribute to earlier studies Banks (2015b); Rahman, Walid, et al., (2022) as they confirm that curriculum integration helps students gain both cognitive knowledge and a positive attitude towards diversity. These results demonstrate that the hidden curriculum is the most effective means of internalizing religious moderation. Values are learned from day-to-day experience and not by direct teaching. This result is well backed up by the hidden curriculum theory that states that institutions pass their social norms and values to individuals through daily life (Baykut et al., 2022; Rossouw & Frick, 2023). Over time, practices such as mutual respect during religious celebrations, inclusive communication between teachers and students, and spontaneous cooperation between religious groups at Sukapura public Vocational School have made religious moderation a shared social norm.

This process can also be understood through the lens of Pentón Herrera & Becker (2026) in that the hidden curriculum shapes the students' identities through the embedding of dominant cultural values in everyday educational experiences (Aktaş & Engin, 2024; Ebabuye & Asgedom, 2023). The school promoted religious moderation through constant social interaction, the example of the teachers, and collective habituation, rather than through formal moral instruction; Thus, tolerance is internalized by students as a normal and meaningful part of school life. These results support the previous research on multicultural and religious education by demonstrating that sustainable religious moderation is primarily developed through lived social practices, not solely through cognitive instruction. Hence, the hidden curriculum should not be seen as an addition to schooling but as a key pedagogical tool that will allow the formal curriculum and institutional policies to construct an inclusive school culture.

Based on these findings, we see that interaction plays an important role in the lives of students from different religions as a means of reinforcing moderation through personal experience. This is confirmed by Pettigrew (2021), according to which contacts between representatives of different groups, provided that there is an equality of status, common interests, and cooperation, help overcome prejudice (Mancini & Imperato, 2026). Classroom interactions, informal peer interactions, and equal participation in school activities can be facilitated to achieve a tolerant learning environment in Public Vocational High School Sukapura. In addition, Akers & Jennings (2015) social learning theory underpins this process by explaining how people learn attitudes and behaviors through observation, imitation, and repeated social interaction (Huang & Chen, 2026). Students developed

tolerance not only through formal instruction but also through witnessing teachers' inclusive practices and participating in respectful peer interactions in their daily routines.

Consequently, religious moderation became a socially learned behavior that was reinforced through reciprocal interaction and collective participation. These results add to the literature by demonstrating that the efficacy of intergroup contact in schools is contingent not only on the frequency of contact but also on the development of an inclusive institutional climate that models and regularly reinforces respectful relationships. This is an ethnographic fact." Therefore, it extends existing applications of contact theory by illustrating how positive interfaith interactions become embedded within the everyday culture of a multicultural school. Furthermore, from the above findings, it is evident that the whole-school approach promotes religious moderation, with co-curricular activities, inclusive school infrastructure, and the participation of parents and the whole community as part of an integrated system of the teaching and learning processes.

The above finding aligns with the Whole-School Approach, which suggests that character and citizenship education are more effective when it cuts across all elements of school life (Carney, 2022). Collaborative extracurricular activities offered students real opportunities to develop mutual trust and a sense of shared responsibility. Equal access to religious facilities confirmed institutional recognition of religious diversity. In addition, ongoing contact with parents and the school committee reinforced the values learned at school in the context of students' homes and community settings. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory helps to explain this interconnected process by suggesting that students' attitudes and behaviours are influenced by their interactions within multiple social environments such as school, family, and the larger community (Scarpa & Trickett, 2022).

The consonance of values between these interdependent systems alleviates discordant social expectations and fortifies the long-term internalization of religious moderation. Thus, this study develops the Whole-School Approach to illustrate that sustainable religious moderation is reliant not just on internal school practices but also on the consistency of educational values across multiple ecological contexts. This finding highlights that collaborative engagement between educators, families, and community stakeholders as an integrated support system is required for the development of an inclusive school culture. Theoretically, this study contributes significantly by providing an integrated model of religious moderation where transformational leadership, inclusive managerial policies, curriculum integration, hidden curriculum, interfaith social interaction, and school-community partnerships are mutually reinforcing in one educational ecosystem.

Religious moderation cannot be explained by isolated interventions from a systems theory Midgley & Rajagopalan (2021) perspective because each organizational component is in continual contact and influence with the others (Mzulwini et al., 2026). The ethnographic data demonstrate that sustainable religious moderation emerges through dynamic interactions among formal structures, informal social practices, and cultural norms shaping students' everyday experiences. Unlike previous studies that examine leadership, curriculum, or religious education separately, this study provides a holistic explanation of how these dimensions interact within a multicultural school context. The findings contribute to educational management and religious moderation literature by extending systems theory to explain the institutionalization of inclusive values in religiously diverse schools. Furthermore, the integrated school ecosystem proposed in this study

offers a conceptual framework for future research and educational policy to strengthen religious moderation through holistic organizational transformation rather than fragmented educational interventions.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study conclude that the successful implementation of religious moderation in Public Vocational High School Sukapura is carried out through the integration of transformational leadership, inclusive managerial policies, integration of the curriculum, hidden curriculum, interfaith social interaction, extracurricular activities, equitable religious facilities, and school–community partnership that form an inclusive school ecosystem. Theoretically, these findings contribute by demonstrating that religious moderation is institutionalized through the dynamic interplay of formal and informal educational processes, not through isolated interventions. However, the study is limited by its ethnographic design in a single public vocational school, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts with different cultural, religious, or institutional characteristics. Furthermore, the study is largely a reflection of school stakeholders' perspectives and does not provide an in-depth analysis of the long-term impact of these practices on students' attitudes outside the school setting. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies should be comparative multi-site ethnographic studies or mixed-methods studies involving diverse educational settings to confirm and expand the proposed integrated school ecosystem model of religious moderation across various socio-cultural settings.

REFERENCES

- Abidin, Z., Ramdhani, D., & Qusairi, A. (2025). Manajemen kurikulum berbasis pendidikan holistik di sekolah Islam terpadu: Sebuah studi etnografi. *Jurnal Madinasika Manajemen Pendidikan Dan Keguruan*, 7(1), 218–225.
- Ahmad, M., & Wilkins, S. (2025). Purposive sampling in qualitative research: A framework for the entire journey. *Quality & Quantity*, 59(2), 1461–1479. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-024-02022-5>
- Akers, R. L., & Jennings, W. G. (2015). Social Learning Theory. In A. R. Piquero (Ed.), *The Handbook of Criminological Theory* (1st ed., pp. 230–240). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118512449.ch12>
- Aktaş, H. H., & Engin, C. (2024). The Influence of Cultural Capital on Students' Perceptions and Experiences of Hidden Curriculum. *Erzincan Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 26(3), 352–367. <https://doi.org/10.17556/erziefd.1488249>
- Alfian, M., Herningrum, I., & Putra, P. H. (2025a). Perspective of Islamic Religious Education Study Program Students on the Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia. *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, 7(1), 578–594. <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i1.7146>
- Alfian, M., Herningrum, I., & Putra, P. H. (2025b). Perspective of Islamic Religious Education Study Program Students on the Islamic Education Curriculum in Indonesia. *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, 7(1), 578–594. <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i1.7146>

- Amzalag, M., & Gross, Z. (2025). Ultra-Orthodox parents' perspectives on applying learning technologies in elementary schools. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 0(0), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2025.2471105>
- Anwar, K. (2021). Pancasila Village, Multicultural Education and Moderation of Diversity in Indonesia. *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 4(2), 221–234. <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v4i2.1238>
- Banks, J. A. (2015a). The Dimensions of Multicultural Education. In *Cultural Diversity and Education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Banks, J. A. (2015b). The Dimensions of Multicultural Education. In *Cultural Diversity and Education* (6th ed.). Routledge.
- Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational Leadership* (2nd ed.). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781410617095>
- Baykut, S., Erbil, C., Ozbilgin, M., Kamasak, R., & Bağlama, S. H. (2022). The impact of the hidden curriculum on international students in the context of a country with a toxic triangle of diversity. *The Curriculum Journal*, 33(2), 156–177. <https://doi.org/10.1002/curj.135>
- Becvar, R. J., Becvar, D. S., & Reif, L. V. (2023). *Systems Theory and Family Therapy: A Primer*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Harvard University Press.
- Carney, S. (2022). *Reimagining our futures together: A new social contract for education: By UNESCO, Paris, UNESCO, 2021, 186 pages, ISBN 978-92-3-100478-0* (Vol. 58, Issue 4). Taylor & Francis.
- Castle, J. J., & Stepp, K. K. (2021). Partisanship, Religion, and Issue Polarization in the United States: A Reassessment. *Political Behavior*, 43(3), 1311–1335. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-020-09668-5>
- Deterding, N. M., & Waters, M. C. (2021). Flexible Coding of In-depth Interviews: A Twenty-first-century Approach. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 50(2), 708–739. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124118799377>
- Ebabuye, T., & Asgedom, A. (2023). A phenomenological study of the lived experience of minority students: The paradox of equitable education and school practices. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 8(1), 100673. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2023.100673>
- Hadiyanto, A., Putri, K. Y. S., & Fazli, L. (2025). Religious moderation in Instagram: An Islamic interpretation perspective. *Heliyon*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42816>
- Honneth, A. (2014). *The I in We: Studies in the Theory of Recognition*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Huang, W.-H., & Chen, H.-L. (2026). Developing a Disaster Literacy Curriculum for Young Children: Integrating Social Learning Theory and the Zone of Proximal Development. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 54(4), 3201–3225. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-025-02049-9>
- Jailani, M., Dewantara, J. A., & Rahmani, E. F. (2023). The awareness of mutual respect post-conflicts: Ethnic chinese strategy through social interaction and engagement in West Kalimantan. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 33(1), 17–34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2021.1990170>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. SAGE.
- Maisaroh, I., Stiawati, T., & Mahpudin, M. (2025). State Intervention in Religious Moderation through the “Kampung Moderasi Beragama” Policy: Evidence from Serang City. *Society*, 13(3), 1099–1117. <https://doi.org/10.33019/society.v13i3.930>
- Mancini, T., & Imperato, C. (2026). Ethnic-Racial Identity, Interethnic Contact, and Reddit Community Identification Relate to Monoculturals’ Intercultural Sensitivity. *Identity*, 0(0), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15283488.2026.2662563>
- Midgley, G., & Rajagopalan, R. (2021). Critical Systems Thinking, Systemic Intervention, and Beyond. In G. S. Metcalf, K. Kijima, & H. Deguchi (Eds.), *Handbook of Systems Sciences* (pp. 1–51). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0370-8_7
- 1
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J. (2014). *Qualitative Data Analysis*. SAGE.
- Mulyana, R. (2023). Religious moderation in Islamic religious education textbook and implementation in Indonesia. *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 79(1). <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V79i1.8592>
- Mzulwini, S., Kgoetane, C. H., Zantsi, S., & Manasoe, B. (2026). A predictive analytics framework for South Africa’s land redistribution: Assessing systematic predictive factors of agricultural productivity and equity. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2026.1801008>
- Nelson, J., Meyer, K., & Orchard, J. (2025). The Case for Shared Religious Education. *Religions*, 16(3), 335. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16030335>
- Pentón Herrera, L. J., & Becker, A. (2026). The Hidden Curriculum of Gender Identity in L2 Classrooms: Considerations for Teachers and Textbooks. *TESOL Quarterly*, 60(1), 446–462. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.70039>
- Pettigrew, T. F. (2021). Advancing intergroup contact theory: Comments on the issue’s articles. *Journal of Social Issues*, 77(1), 258–273. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12423>
- Qusairi, A., Fikri, H., & Akbar, M. (2025). Integrating Tradition and Modernity: Educational Management Strategies. *Nidhomiyah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.38073/nidhomiyah.v6i1.1946>

- Rahman, Y., Walid, K. A., & Humaidi, H. (2022). Critical thinking and religious moderation: Instilling religiously moderate values through the teaching of Islamic philosophy in Indonesia. *Journal Of Indonesian Islam*, 16(1), 49–74. <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.49-74>
- Rannikmäe, M., Holbrook, J., & Soobard, R. (2020). Social Constructivism—Jerome Bruner. In B. Akpan & T. J. Kennedy (Eds.), *Science Education in Theory and Practice* (pp. 259–275). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-43620-9_18
- Rapp, A. C., & Corral-Granados, A. (2024). Understanding inclusive education – a theoretical contribution from system theory and the constructionist perspective. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(4), 423–439. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1946725>
- Rossouw, N., & Frick, L. (2023). A conceptual framework for uncovering the hidden curriculum in private higher education. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2191409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2023.2191409>
- Scarpa, M. P., & Trickett, E. J. (2022). Translating ecology: Similarities and differences in the ecological images of Bronfenbrenner and Kelly. *Translational Issues in Psychological Science*, 8(2), 185–196. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tps0000315>
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational Culture and Leadership*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sealy, T., Ibrahim, Z., Zulian, P. B., & Rasid, I. M. (2022). South and Southeast Asia: Deep diversity under strain. *Religion, State and Society*, 50(4), 452–468. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2022.2126258>
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information*, 22(2), 63–75. <https://doi.org/10.3233/EFI-2004-22201>
- Siddik, M. F., Qorib, M., & Lubis, R. R. (2025). Integration of Multicultural Values in Islamic Education Learning at Schools. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 15(1), 89–105. <https://doi.org/10.38073/jpi.v15i1.2646>
- Solahudin, D., Komala, E., Ruswandi, U., & Arifin, B. S. (2023). Implementation of Religious Moderation Values in the Learning of Islamic Education. *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 7(1), 62. <https://doi.org/10.35723/ajie.v7i1.331>
- Tajik, O., Golzar, J., & Noor, S. (2025). Purposive Sampling. *International Journal of Education & Language Studies*, 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.22034/ijels.2025.490681.1029>
- Wieland, A., Stevenson, M., Melnyk, S. A., Davoudi, S., & Schultz, L. (2023). Thinking differently about supply chain resilience: What we can learn from social-ecological systems thinking. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*, 43(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOPM-10-2022-0645>