



DETERMINANTS OF SUCCESSFUL INTERNALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN CHARACTER EDUCATION AT THE PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract:

Background and Purpose: The successful internalization of religious moderation within primary school character education constitutes a multidimensional and contextually embedded process of critical importance for fostering tolerance and social cohesion in pluralistic societies. Despite growing scholarly interest, a rigorous synthesis of the factors determining this success remains absent. This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to identify, critically analyze, and synthesize the key determinants of successful religious moderation internalization in primary school character education programs. *Methods:* Following the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic search of the Scopus database was conducted using Boolean operators combining the terms "religious moderation," "character education," "primary school," and "internalization." After screening 278 initially identified records and applying predefined inclusion/exclusion criteria, 25 peer-reviewed articles were selected for qualitative synthesis. *Results:* Thematic analysis revealed four interrelated determinant clusters: (1) pedagogical approaches and curriculum innovation, including inquiry-based learning, dialogic discussion, storytelling, and local wisdom integration; (2) teacher competence and professional development, encompassing pedagogical proficiency, attitudinal modelling, and sustained training; (3) school climate and external engagement, involving inclusive organizational culture, strong leadership, parental involvement, and community partnerships; and (4) measurement and evaluation, highlighting the need for holistic, validated, multi-domain assessment instruments. *Conclusion:* Effective religious moderation internalization requires coordinated, systemic action across pedagogical, professional, environmental, and evaluative dimensions. Significant research gaps persist in the areas of longitudinal measurement, digitally responsive curriculum design, and cross-cultural comparative studies.

Keywords: religious moderation; character education; primary school; internalization

INTRODUCTION

Character education constitutes a foundational pillar in the formation of individuals possessing integrity, civic virtue, and the capacity to navigate pluralistic societies constructively. In the Indonesian context, the internalization of religious moderation values is particularly essential for cultivating tolerance, sustaining social harmony, and preventing radicalism from taking root during the formative years of primary schooling (Wahyudi & Puspita, 2020). Primary schools occupy a uniquely strategic position as the first formal institutional setting in which children are systematically introduced to moral and spiritual values (Siti & Budi, 2023). Accordingly, the successful internalization of religious



moderation within character education at this level is a complex and urgent issue, all the more so given contemporary challenges such as the proliferation of digital disinformation and intensifying socio-cultural diversity (Nugroho & Wijaya, 2024).

Contemporary research consistently underscores that the success of this internalization process is highly contingent on the synergistic interaction of multiple, interrelated elements. A growing body of empirical literature has demonstrated that innovative and contextually responsive pedagogical approaches occupy a central role in cultivating these values. Inquiry-based learning (Azizah & Putra, 2023), dialogic discussion methods, the use of narrative and storytelling techniques (Jannah & Wulandari, 2024), and the integration of tolerance, respect, and critical thinking through co-curricular activities (Prameswari & Wahyuni, 2021; Saputra & Anggraini, 2020) have all been shown to be effective vehicles for religious moderation education. Curriculum-level considerations are equally salient: the explicit integration of religious moderation elements into subject matter through both dedicated religious education lessons and cross-curricular infusion, as well as the incorporation of local cultural wisdom, represent major areas of focus in the literature (Fajri & Lestari, 2023; Lubis & Siregar, 2023; Rizky & Permata, 2021; Susanti & Handayani, 2022). Experiential learning through community service engagement has also been identified as a potent mechanism for promoting internalized moderation (Putri & Ramadhan, 2023).

Teachers are consistently identified as the central human actors determining the outcomes of internalization processes (Dewi & Hartono, 2022). Their pedagogical competence in facilitating discussions about diversity, their capacity to model moderate behavior authentically, and their substantive understanding of religious moderation principles profoundly shape student learning outcomes (Qonita & Salim, 2022). Sustained professional development programs that not only enhance subject knowledge but also cultivate inclusive, critically reflective, and dialogically oriented teacher dispositions toward religious and cultural diversity are therefore identified as indispensable (Kartika & Pratama, 2021; Taufiq & Lestari, 2021).

Beyond the classroom, the broader school environment constitutes a critical enabling or constraining factor. An inclusive school climate and culture, actively supported by strong institutional leadership, generates the psychological safety necessary for students to genuinely explore and embody moderation values (Gunawan & Sari, 2021). The active engagement of parents (Hasanah & Abdullah, 2022), religious leaders, and local community stakeholders is similarly regarded as essential in reinforcing the moderation messages received in school (Utami & Rahman, 2023). Government policy frameworks also exert a significant structural influence on religious moderation education in public primary schools (Setiawan & Wibowo, 2024), while peer interaction dynamics and conflict resolution competencies contribute meaningfully to moderation development among young learners (Monica & Subroto, 2022).

Although scholarly consensus has crystallized around the importance of the aforementioned factors, a preliminary mapping of the extant literature reveals several significant research gaps that motivate the present review. First, while numerous pedagogical approaches and curriculum innovations have been proposed, the literature lacks a comprehensive synthesis addressing integrated implementation mechanisms and their long-term impacts, particularly in the context of digital threats such as online disinformation (Nugroho & Wijaya, 2024). Second, although the importance of teacher training is widely acknowledged, rigorous longitudinal analyses of the effectiveness and contextual adaptability of such programs across diverse socio-cultural settings remain scarce. Third, the measurement and evaluation of religious moderation internalization presents serious unresolved challenges. Existing instruments are frequently context-specific, under-validated, and predominantly cognitive in orientation, with behavioural and affective dimensions insufficiently captured (Ilyas & Rahayu, 2023). Emerging longitudinal work (Siti & Budi, 2023) has begun to address developmental trajectories, yet challenges in comprehensively measuring long-term impact persist. As a consequence, no systematic and integrative synthesis of the determinants of successful religious moderation internalization currently exists in the literature—one that explicitly addresses evaluation challenges and their potential resolutions.

Predicated on the identified research gaps, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) pursues the following objectives:

1. To identify, critically analyze, and synthesize the determinants of successful religious moderation internalization in primary school character education as reported in peer-reviewed scientific literature.
2. To map the current state of scholarly evidence across the four identified thematic domains: pedagogical approaches, teacher roles, school environment, and evaluation methodologies.
3. To delineate significant research gaps and formulate evidence-informed recommendations for future research, policy development, curriculum design, and educational practice.

RESEARCH METHOD

This section provides a comprehensive account of the methodological approach employed in this systematic literature review, which focuses on the identification and synthesis of determinants of successful religious moderation internalization in primary school character education. The methodology was designed to ensure transparency, objectivity, and reproducibility of findings, in accordance with the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) 2020 guidelines (Gunawan & Sari, 2021; Ilyas & Rahayu, 2023). The review protocol was developed prior to data collection and followed a structured four-phase process: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion.

Literature Search Strategy

A systematic literature search was conducted on the Scopus database,

selected for its comprehensive indexing coverage of high-impact journals in education and the social sciences. Search strings were constructed from the principal conceptual components of the research objectives, integrating the following terms: "religious moderation," "character education," "primary school," "elementary education," "success factors," and "internalization." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were systematically applied to maximize retrieval sensitivity while minimizing irrelevant results. Although no strict publication date restriction was imposed, the search was oriented toward recent scholarship reflecting current developments in the field (Fajri & Lestari, 2023; Nugroho & Wijaya, 2024).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles considered for inclusion in this review were required to satisfy the following predefined criteria, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Article Selection

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
✓ Empirical studies (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods) or systematic literature reviews focused on religious moderation internalization or character education with a moderation emphasis	Articles unrelated to primary school contexts or character education grounded in religious moderation
✓ Research population: students, teachers, or primary school environments	Publication types: books, book chapters, non-peer-reviewed conference proceedings, news reports, or editorials
✓ Addresses factors contributing to or impeding the successful internalization of moderation values	Articles discussing religious moderation as a purely theological construct, without educational or internalization context
✓ Published in peer-reviewed scientific journals	Articles with no full text available, or written in a language other than English or Indonesian
✓ Full text available in English or Indonesian	Studies focused exclusively on secondary, tertiary, or non-formal education levels

Article Selection Process

The article selection process was conducted in four sequential, documented phases consistent with the PRISMA 2020 framework. Figure 1 presents the PRISMA flow diagram summarizing this process.

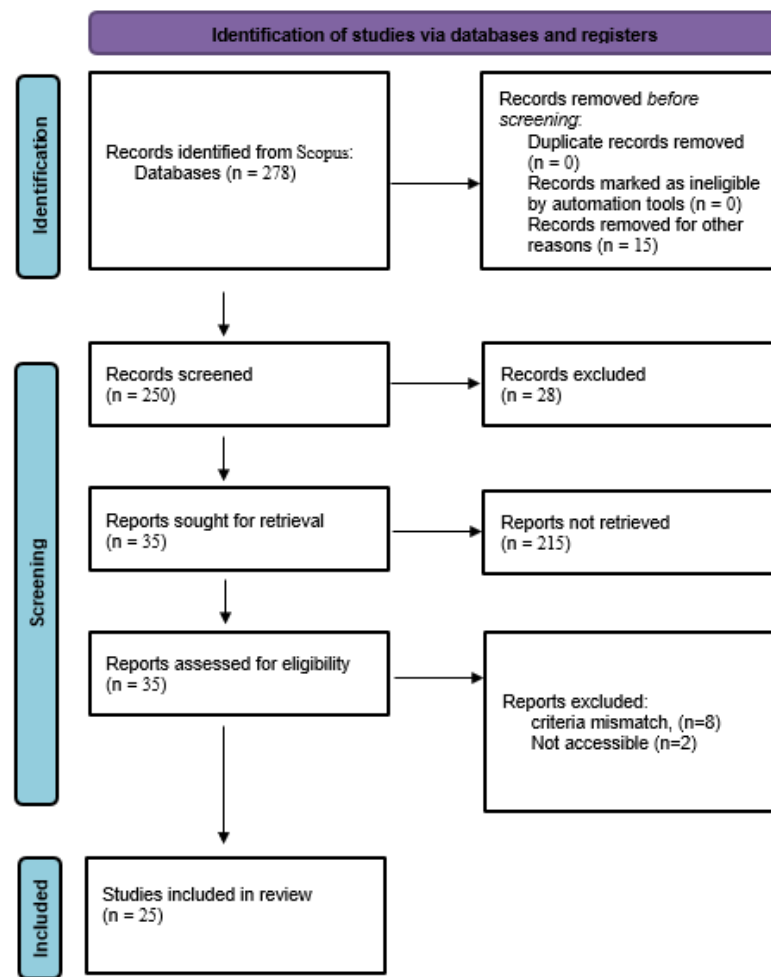


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Article Selection Process

Identification: An initial search of the Scopus database yielded 278 records. No additional records were retrieved from supplementary sources. **Screening:** Following the removal of 28 duplicate records, 250 unique articles were subjected to title-and-abstract screening. Of these, 215 were excluded for failing to meet primary eligibility criteria, including studies focused on non-primary educational levels or lacking explicit treatment of religious moderation. **Eligibility Assessment:** Full texts of the remaining 35 articles were retrieved and subjected to detailed assessment. Ten articles were subsequently excluded: eight due to detailed criteria non-compliance upon full-text review, and two due to inaccessibility of full text (Kartika & Pratama, 2021; Taufiq & Lestari, 2021). **Inclusion:** Twenty-five articles satisfied all eligibility criteria and were included in the qualitative synthesis, constituting the core collection of this review.

2.4 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Relevant data were systematically extracted from the 25 included articles using a standardized extraction form capturing: authorship, publication year, research objectives, methodological design, sample characteristics, key findings, and identified determinants of success (Hasanah & Abdullah, 2022; Prameswari

& Wahyuni, 2021). Extracted data were then subjected to thematic synthesis (Lubis & Siregar, 2023). This involved iterative, close reading of findings across articles to identify recurring patterns, conceptual convergences, and relational structures. Initial codes were systematically clustered and refined into four superordinate themes: (1) Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Innovation; (2) Teacher Role and Professional Development; (3) School Environment and External Engagement; and (4) Measurement and Evaluation of Success. This synthesis process enabled a comprehensive identification of determinants, research gaps, and actionable implications (Siti & Budi, 2023; Utami & Rahman, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the key findings derived from the systematic literature review of 25 articles constituting the core collection, with specific focus on the determinants of successful religious moderation internalization in primary school character education. Thematic analysis revealed four substantively distinct yet deeply interconnected determinant clusters, reflecting the multidimensional and ecologically embedded nature of this phenomenon.

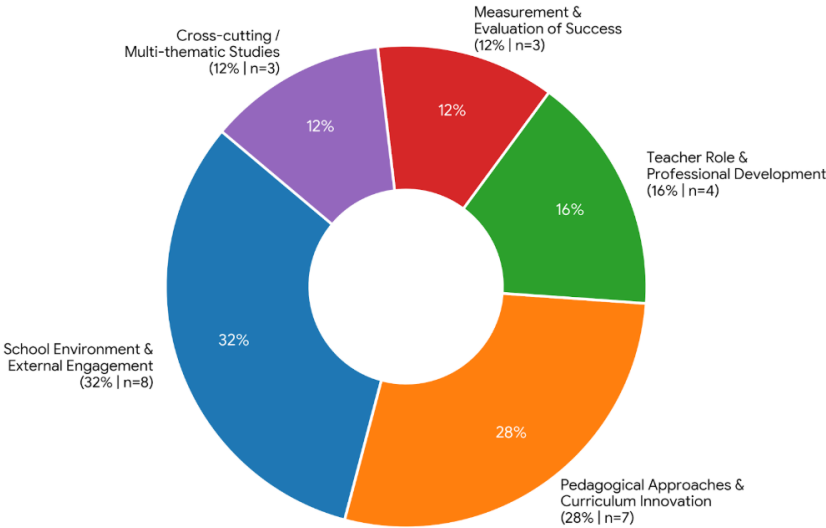
Across all included studies, the successful internalization of religious moderation emerged as a fundamentally synergistic process, contingent upon the coordinated interaction of innovative pedagogical strategies, professionally competent and attitudinally aligned teachers, supportive organizational school environments, and robust community partnerships (Azizah & Putra, 2023; Gunawan & Sari, 2021; Hasanah & Abdullah, 2022). While broad consensus exists regarding the conceptual importance of character education grounded in religious moderation, significant practical and methodological gaps persist—particularly in developing digitally responsive curricula, employing longitudinally valid evaluation methodologies, and designing context-adaptive teacher development programs (Fajri & Lestari, 2023; Kartika & Pratama, 2021; Nugroho & Wijaya, 2024). Table 2 presents a synthesis of key findings organized by thematic category.

Table 2. Summary of Key Findings by Thematic Category

Theme	Key Findings	Representative Studies	Practical Implication
Pedagogical Approaches	Inquiry-based learning, dialogic discussion, storytelling, role-play, and cross-curricular integration are the most effective instructional strategies for building moderation competencies.	Azizah & Putra (2023); Jannah & Wulandari (2024); Susanti & Handayani (2022)	Redesign lesson plans to embed active, participatory, and context-sensitive moderation tasks.
Teacher Competence &	Teacher pedagogical competence in diversity facilitation and	Dewi & Hartono (2022); Kartika & Pratama (2021);	Invest in sustained, reflective, and

Professional Development	attitudinal are the strongest proximal determinants of student moderation outcomes.	modelling (2021)	Taufiq & Lestari	context-responsive teacher professional development programmes.
School Climate & External Engagement	Inclusive culture, instructional leadership, and active community partnerships collectively create the ecological conditions for moderation internalisation.	school strong active	Gunawan & Sari (2021); Hasanah & Abdullah (2022); Utami & Rahman (2023)	Build whole-school moderation cultures and formalise family-community partnership structures.
Measurement & Evaluation	The field lacks validated, holistic instruments. Longitudinal data on sustained moderation development are sparse, and behavioural indicators are underrepresented in existing assessments.	holistic	Ilyas & Rahayu (2023); Siti & Budi (2023)	Develop multi-dimensional assessment tools encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains.

Note. Studies cited represent the most salient contributions within each thematic cluster. Cross-thematic studies appear in the dominant category only.



Figur 1. Distribution of Core Collection Articles by Thematic Category

The distribution depicted in Figur 1 illustrates that 'School Environment and External Engagement' commands the largest share of scholarly attention (32%), a finding that underscores the widely recognized importance of an holistic educational ecosystem. Conversely, 'Measurement and Evaluation of Success'

remains the most underrepresented thematic domain (12%), confirming a persistent methodological gap in the field.

Pedagogical Approaches and Curriculum Innovation

The first thematic cluster illuminates how instructional methods and curriculum design collectively serve as foundational determinants of effective religious moderation internalization. Articles within the core collection converge in emphasizing the superiority of active, participatory, and contextually grounded pedagogical approaches over didactic or passive instructional models. Inquiry-based learning, in particular, has been empirically demonstrated to foster critical thinking and reflective engagement with religious diversity in primary school settings (Azizah & Putra, 2023). Dialogic discussion methods, the strategic use of narrative and storytelling (Jannah & Wulandari, 2024), role-play and simulation activities (Susanti & Handayani, 2022), and the integration of tolerance, empathy, and respect through co-curricular experiences (Prameswari & Wahyuni, 2021; Saputra & Anggraini, 2020) collectively emerge as effective pedagogical vehicles for moderation education.

At the curriculum level, the explicit integration of moderation-oriented content is identified as indispensable. The systematic incorporation of national identity values and religious moderation principles into the primary school curriculum is presented as essential for ensuring programmatic coherence (Fajri & Lestari, 2023). The deliberate embedding of local cultural wisdom within character education emerges as a particularly nuanced and contextually sensitive strategy, recognizing that effective moderation education must be culturally rooted rather than decontextualized (Lubis & Siregar, 2023). The curricular design of structured inter-religious dialogue activities further represents an innovative approach to cultivating intercultural understanding and respect among young learners (Rizky & Permata, 2021). Collectively, these findings affirm that pedagogical innovation and socio-culturally responsive curriculum design constitute the structural foundation upon which successful moderation internalization is built.

Teacher Role and Professional Development

Teachers emerge in the literature as the most proximate and influential human agents in the religious moderation internalization process. Teacher competence and disposition are consistently identified as primary determinants of educational outcomes. Specifically, pedagogical competence in facilitating open and nuanced discussions about religious and cultural diversity, the authentic capacity to model moderate behavior in daily school interactions, and a substantive understanding of religious moderation principles are identified as the most consequential teacher-level factors (Dewi & Hartono, 2022). These findings underscore that effective moderation education is not merely a curricular or programmatic matter, but fundamentally a relational and dispositional one.

The literature consistently advocates for sustained, systematically designed professional development programs. Such programs must extend beyond the transmission of theological or cognitive knowledge about religious

moderation to actively cultivate inclusive, critically reflective, and dialogically competent teacher identities and dispositions (Kartika & Pratama, 2021). Mentorship programs, designed to build the specific capacities of primary school teachers for moderation education, are presented as a particularly promising complementary professional development modality (Taufiq & Lestari, 2021). Critically, studies document that teachers' pre-existing perceptions, attitudes, and personal commitments regarding religious moderation directly shape how they pedagogically operationalize moderation concepts in classroom practice (Qonita & Salim, 2022), highlighting the need for professional development that integrates attitudinal reflection alongside skills acquisition. Investment in comprehensive, ongoing teacher development thus constitutes an absolute prerequisite for successful moderation internalization at scale.

School Environment and External Engagement

The third thematic cluster elucidates how factors extending beyond individual classroom interactions, encompassing the organizational school climate, leadership practices, and extra-institutional partnerships—constitute a critical ecological layer of determinants. An inclusive school climate and a moderation-affirming organizational culture, actively fostered and sustained by committed instructional leadership, create the conditions of psychological safety necessary for students to genuinely explore, internalize, and practice moderation values (Gunawan & Sari, 2021). The role of distributed, visionary school leadership in establishing moderation as a whole-school value, not merely an individual teacher's preoccupation, emerges as particularly consequential. Table 4 provides a comparative analysis of key external engagement mechanisms and their documented outcomes, illustrating the multi-actor ecological system that underpins effective moderation internalization.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of External Engagement Mechanisms in Religious Moderation Internalization

Stakeholder Actor	Key Study	Engagement Mechanism	Primary Outcome
School Leadership	Gunawan & Sari (2021)	Inclusive school climate creation; distributed leadership practices	Safe and affirming environment for religious diversity exploration
Parents / Families	Hasanah & Abdullah (2022)	Home-school value reinforcement; structured parental workshops	Consistent moderation messaging across learning environments
Community Service	Putri & Ramadhan (2023)	Service-learning projects; real-world interfaith interactions	Practical embodiment of tolerance through civic engagement
Government Policy	Setiawan & Wibowo (2024)	National curriculum mandates; teacher certification requirements	Systemic, standardised implementation across public schools
Religious & Community Leaders	Utami & Rahman (2023)	Moral endorsement; community dialogue facilitation	Legitimised moderation narrative beyond the classroom

Peer Groups	Monica & Subroto (2022)	Structured peer mediation; cooperative learning activities	Conflict-resolution competencies and inter-group empathy
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Beyond the immediate school boundaries, the active engagement of parents (Hasanah & Abdullah, 2022), religious authorities, and local community figures is consistently identified as essential for reinforcing and legitimizing the moderation messages that students receive within the school context (Utami & Rahman, 2023). The alignment between home and school moderation messages is particularly important for younger primary-age learners who are still forming their foundational value systems. Structured peer interaction opportunities and the development of conflict resolution competencies contribute meaningfully to moderation development among young learners (Monica & Subroto, 2022). Experiential community service learning provides a powerful venue for transforming abstract moderation principles into lived, embodied experience (Putri & Ramadhan, 2023), while extracurricular activities serve as flexible platforms for character and moderation development beyond formal curriculum constraints (Saputra & Anggraini, 2020). Digital literacy challenges related to online disinformation represent an emerging and underaddressed external threat to moderation internalization (Nugroho & Wijaya, 2024), and government policy frameworks provide the structural scaffolding that determines the reach and consistency of religious moderation education across public primary schools (Setiawan & Wibowo, 2024).

Measurement and Evaluation of Success

The fourth thematic cluster addresses the dimension that, while conceptually critical, remains the least methodologically developed in the extant literature. The measurement of religious moderation internalization presents unique challenges by virtue of its fundamentally complex, multi-domain, and deeply contextual nature. A small number of studies within the core collection explicitly grapple with the development and validation of holistic assessment instruments for character education programs with a religious moderation emphasis, identifying this as a critical and underdeveloped area (Ilyas & Rahayu, 2023). These studies emphasize that effective assessment must move beyond cognitive measures—such as knowledge of moderation principles—to encompass affective dimensions (attitudes, values, and dispositions) and behavioral indicators (observable actions and intercultural competencies).

Emerging longitudinal research has begun to document developmental trajectories in religious moderation competencies among primary school students over time, providing initial evidence that moderation development is a gradual and observable process (Siti & Budi, 2023). However, the field still lacks sufficient longitudinal data to characterize developmental patterns, sensitive periods, or the long-term sustainability of moderation dispositions cultivated during primary schooling. The conceptual foundation for assessment is also addressed in the literature, with the articulation of universal moral values as the evaluative anchor for moderation in character education constituting an

important theoretical contribution (Wahyudi & Puspita, 2020). Collectively, the literature in this theme signals that the field is at an early but critically important stage in developing the evaluative infrastructure necessary to establish an evidence base for what works in religious moderation internalization.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review has synthesized evidence from 25 peer-reviewed articles to comprehensively identify and analyze the determinants of successful religious moderation internalization in primary school character education. The findings reveal that this internalization process is fundamentally multifaceted and systemically embedded, shaped by the dynamic interplay of four interrelated thematic clusters: pedagogical approaches and curriculum innovation, teacher role and professional development, school environment and external engagement, and measurement and evaluation.

First, the review confirms that innovative, contextually responsive pedagogical approaches—including inquiry-based learning, dialogic discussion, storytelling, role-play, and the integration of local cultural wisdom—constitute an essential pedagogical foundation (Azizah & Putra, 2023; Fajri & Lestari, 2023; Jannah & Wulandari, 2024; Lubis & Siregar, 2023). These approaches must be embedded within curricula that are socio-culturally grounded and explicitly oriented toward moderation values (Prameswari & Wahyuni, 2021; Saputra & Anggraini, 2020; Susanti & Handayani, 2022; Wahyudi & Puspita, 2020).

Second, teachers are confirmed as the most proximate and influential determinants of moderation internalization outcomes. Their pedagogical competence in navigating religious diversity, their capacity for authentic behavioral modeling, and their professional dispositions toward inclusivity and reflective practice are central determinants of student outcomes (Dewi & Hartono, 2022; Qonita & Salim, 2022). Systematic, sustained professional development—including mentorship programs—is a non-negotiable infrastructure investment for moderation education at scale (Kartika & Pratama, 2021; Taufiq & Lestari, 2021).

Third, inclusive school climates, strong instructional leadership, and robust engagement with parents, community figures, and religious leaders create the ecological conditions that enable and sustain moderation values across the full spectrum of students' developmental environments (Gunawan & Sari, 2021; Hasanah & Abdullah, 2022; Putri & Ramadhan, 2023; Utami & Rahman, 2023). Structural government policy support further provides the systemic scaffolding necessary for widespread, equitable implementation (Setiawan & Wibowo, 2024).

Fourth, while acknowledgment of measurement complexity is growing, the field's evaluative infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Multi-domain, psychometrically rigorous assessment instruments and longitudinal research designs are urgently required to establish an adequate evidence base for moderation education effectiveness (Ilyas & Rahayu, 2023; Siti & Budi, 2023).

Practical and Theoretical Implications

The findings carry significant implications across multiple levels.

Practically, educational policymakers and school administrators should prioritize the development of explicitly moderation-integrated curricula, supported by comprehensive, sustained, and attitudinally reflective teacher professional development programs. The cultivation of inclusive school cultures and the formalization of structured family-community partnership mechanisms are equally warranted institutional investments. Theoretically, this review enriches understanding of how complex value systems such as religious moderation are internalized during early childhood, highlighting the indispensable roles of pedagogical mediation, relational trust, and ecological coherence across learning environments. It contributes a theoretically integrated framework that may serve as a foundation for future empirical work and educational design research.

Limitations

Several limitations warrant acknowledgment. The core collection is confined to 25 articles retrieved from a single database (Scopus), which – while comprehensive – may not capture all relevant publications in non-indexed regional journals. This restricts the generalizability of synthesized findings. Moreover, the review's focus on primary schooling precludes representation of challenges and dynamics specific to other educational levels. The predominantly qualitative and case-study-oriented methodological profile of the core collection, while providing contextual depth, limits the scope of generalizable quantitative evidence available for synthesis.

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