

Moderation-Based Islamic Character Education Integrated into the Elementary School Curriculum

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ABSTRACT: *This research examines the implementation of a character education program based on moderation at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu, where elementary students demonstrate measurable understanding of tolerance, balance, justice, and anti-violence values. The study investigates how curriculum design and multi-method teaching strategies integrate moderation values and identifies the determinants of student character development. Employing a qualitative instrumental case study design within a constructivist paradigm, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, Classroom observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's interactive thematic coding model, with triangulation to ensure trustworthiness. Six thematic factors emerged inductively from the data: teacher quality and commitment, visionary leadership, coherent curriculum design, family partnerships, favorable post-conflict local context, and institutional backing from Muhammadiyah. The multi-method pedagogical approach, combining interactive dialogic teaching, habituation practices, and inclusive environment design, addresses cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social dimensions simultaneously, supporting the progressive internalization of moderation values. These findings offer contextual evidence relevant to SDG 4.7 on education for global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity, and to SDG 16 on peaceful and inclusive societies through its focus on anti-extremism and coexistence education. As a single-site qualitative case study, findings are context-specific and intended to inform rather than prescribe broader practice.*

Penelitian ini mengkaji implementasi pendidikan karakter berbasis moderasi beragama di MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu, dimana siswa tingkat dasar menunjukkan pemahaman terukur tentang nilai-nilai toleransi, keseimbangan, keadilan, dan anti-kekerasan. Penelitian bertujuan mengkaji bagaimana desain kurikulum dan strategi pembelajaran multi-metode mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moderasi serta mengidentifikasi faktor-faktor

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determinan yang berkontribusi pada pengembangan karakter siswa. Menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif instrumental dalam paradigma konstruktivis, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan model pengkodean tematik interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña dengan triangulasi untuk memastikan keabsahan data. Enam faktor tematik muncul secara induktif dari data: kualitas dan komitmen guru, kepemimpinan visioner, desain kurikulum yang koheren, kemitraan keluarga, konteks lokal pasca-konflik yang mendukung, dan dukungan institusional dari Muhammadiyah. Pendekatan pedagogis multi-metode yang menggabungkan pembelajaran dialogis interaktif, praktik pembiasaan, dan desain lingkungan inklusif beroperasi secara simultan pada dimensi kognitif, behavioral, afektif, dan sosial, mendukung internalisasi progresif nilai-nilai moderasi. Temuan ini menawarkan bukti kontekstual yang relevan dengan SDG 4.7 tentang pendidikan kewarganegaraan global dan SDG 16 tentang masyarakat damai melalui penekanan pada toleransi dan pencegahan ekstremisme. Sebagai studi kasus situs tunggal, temuan bersifat kontekstual dan dimaksudkan sebagai referensi, bukan preskripsi universal.

Keywords: *Character Education, Islamic Character, Moderation-Based, School Curriculum.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu implements religious character education grounded in religious moderation as a core feature of its Islamic Religious Education curriculum. The curriculum integrates values of tolerance, balance, justice, and anti-violence to foster inclusive attitudes and appreciation of difference from an early age (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024; Qodir et al., 2023). The learning process employs a multi-method approach, incorporating interactive discussions, case-based learning, and habituation practices such as congregational prayers and Quranic recitation, with outcomes reported to align with the school's moderation objectives, in which students develop cognitive understanding of religious moderation and behavioral dispositions consistent with those values (Rokhim, 2025).

Observational and interview data from the school indicate that students show meaningful development in appreciating internal and external religious diversity while maintaining their Islamic identity. Teachers report that students engage in discussions about religious differences with increasingly open and respectful attitudes. Awareness of anti-extremism values is cultivated through structured habituation, with students demonstrating a growing capacity to respond to contemporary religious issues in nuanced, rather than reactive, ways. These observable patterns raise analytical questions about the pedagogical conditions enabling such outcomes at the elementary level, particularly given theoretical constraints on children's abstract reasoning at this developmental stage (Huda, 2024; Masturin, 2022; Purnamasari, 2026).

This maximal achievement is inseparable from the synergy between comprehensive curriculum design, full commitment from all school elements, and creation of a genuinely inclusive and supportive learning environment. The varied teaching methods

have successfully accommodated diverse students' learning styles, while routine habituation reinforces the internalization of moderation values in daily life. The school environment, deliberately designed to reflect religious moderation values, from student interactions and teacher-student relationships to co-curricular programs, has become a living laboratory where students not only learn about moderation but also experience it directly (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Nisa et al., 2025; Putra & Nur Azah, 2026). Consequently, MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu successfully produces graduates who are not only intellectually and spiritually intelligent but also possess moderate, tolerant religious character and are prepared to become peace agents in an increasingly plural society.

Ideally, according to various literature and perspectives of religious character education experts, achieving a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation at the elementary education level poses significant challenges and requires gradual processes and extended time. The cognitive development of elementary school-aged children, still at the concrete operational stage (Chadijah et al., 2026; Conroy et al., 2013; Imamah, 2023), constitutes a primary constraint in comprehending abstract concepts such as moderation, tolerance, and religious pluralism. However, Vygotsky's framework emphasizes that scaffolded instruction within the zone of proximal development can meaningfully extend what children can achieve with appropriate pedagogical support. Learning religious character values at this level ideally remains focused on basic introduction and simple habituation, not yet on deep understanding and complex application (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024). The complexity of religious moderation, involving a multidimensional understanding of the balance between principle steadfastness and openness to differences, according to experts, can only be comprehensively understood at secondary or higher education levels (Qodir et al., 2023). Curriculum implementation that comprehensively integrates religious moderation also requires highly mature teacher readiness, adequate learning resources, and a supportive ecosystem, elements that are not easily fulfilled simultaneously in elementary education contexts (Habibi et al., 2023). Interfaith dialogue learning in early childhood also poses risks of identity confusion if not handled with extreme care and structure. Furthermore, the internalization of anti-extremism values among elementary school children requires highly sensitive, context-specific approaches, given the complexity of the issue and children's limited understanding at that age (S. Maarif, 2023). Maximal success in religious character education based on religious moderation theoretically requires program continuity from elementary to upper secondary levels with continuous evaluation.

The tension between theoretical constraints on abstract cognition at the elementary level, particularly Piaget's concrete operational stage, and Vygotsky's emphasis on scaffolded learning within the zone of proximal development, and the observed patterns at this school, raises important analytical questions. While cognitive developmental theory suggests that concepts such as moderation, tolerance, and religious pluralism are typically more accessible at secondary or higher education levels (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024), the literature also recognizes that well-designed instructional scaffolding can meaningfully extend children's developmental possibilities. This points to a need for in-depth investigation of the specific pedagogical and contextual factors that may enable moderate learning at the elementary level, which existing studies have not yet comprehensively documented.

The emerging research questions are: how exactly is the religious moderation-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu designed and implemented to generate such profound understanding and internalization of moderation values among elementary-level students, and what determinant factors contribute to this maximal success, particularly within the context of elementary school-aged children's cognitive limitations and taught material complexity. Additionally, it is necessary to identify how applied teaching strategies bridge the gap between children's cognitive development limitations and demands for understanding abstract concepts of religious moderation, and how inclusive learning environments are created and maintained as primary support for the internalization process of these values, thereby serving as a reference model for other educational institutions in developing effective and transformative religious character education (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Bahri et al., 2024).

Recent studies on religious character education and religious moderation have generated important findings forming the foundation for this research. Research on integrating moderation values into Islamic education curricula demonstrates that multi-strategy approaches can enhance students' understanding of tolerance and inclusivity, though most focus on secondary and upper levels (S. Maarif, 2023; Qodir et al., 2023; Waslah et al., 2022). Studies on interactive teaching methods in religious education found that discussions and case studies effectively build conceptual understanding, yet their implementation remains limited to certain contexts and does not explore their long-term impacts on student behavior (Pratama & Qorib, 2024). Research on habituation of religious values in elementary schools reveals that worship routines can shape student character, but these studies have not specifically linked them to comprehensive religious moderation concepts (Habibi et al., 2023). Studies on inclusive learning environments in Islamic education contexts highlight the importance of supportive school ecosystems, yet these studies are more descriptive and less exploratory of the mechanisms for operationalizing such environments.

Furthermore, studies on interfaith dialogue at the elementary education level remain severely limited, with most emphasizing theoretical rather than practical-empirical aspects. Research on extremism prevention through formal education predominantly addresses adolescent and young adult contexts, while studies on elementary school-aged children remain underexplored areas (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024; Qodir et al., 2023). Studies on teacher roles in moderate religious character education demonstrate the importance of teachers' pedagogical and personal competencies, yet have not identified in detail specific strategies making learning effective for young children (M. A. Maarif et al., 2023). Research evaluating character education programs based on Islamic *wasathiyah* values remains limited to short-term output measures, without examining long-term transformative impacts (Muhammad, 2024; Nurdi et al., 2026; Zubaedi, 2023). Consequently, despite numerous studies on partial aspects of religious character education and religious moderation, no comprehensive research specifically explores how an elementary education institution integrates all these elements into one coherent curriculum system producing maximal impacts exceeding theoretical expectations, thus this research emerges to fill this gap by analyzing in-depth best practices occurring at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu as an innovative model contributing theoretically and practically to developing religious moderation-based religious character education in Indonesia.

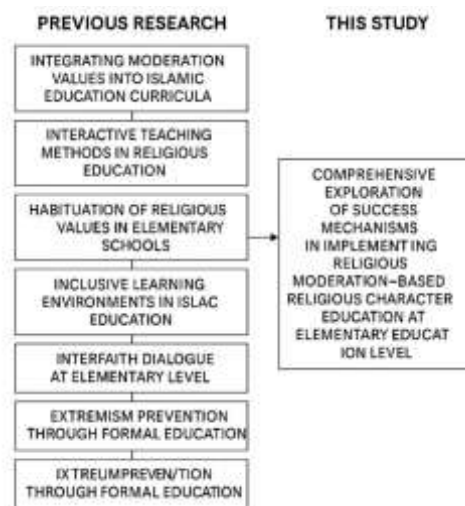


Figure 1. Framework of previous literature

The novelty of this research lies in its holistic examination of how curriculum design, multi-method pedagogical strategies, habituation practices, and the creation of an inclusive environment function together within the specific socioreligious context of MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu. Rather than examining partial aspects in isolation, this study analyzes the integrated educational system as a whole, tracing how each component relates to others in practice. The findings aim to provide contextual evidence for theoretical discussions of moderation education at the elementary level and to offer practical insights for other institutions developing similar programs. This work is framed within the broader goals of SDG 4 on quality education and SDG 16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions, through the formation of young generations with a moderate, tolerant, and anti-violent religious character.

The urgency of this research is extremely high, considering Indonesia's context as a country with high religious diversity, which faces serious challenges related to increasing intolerance, radicalism, and extremism, beginning to target younger generations, even at elementary school age, thus urgently requiring proven effective religious moderation-based religious character education models from early stages to establish the foundations of healthy and moderate religious understanding. The phenomenon of maximal success at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu offers real, empirically tested alternative solutions. Yet, if not documented, analyzed, and scientifically disseminated immediately, valuable knowledge about these best practices can disappear or be difficult to replicate by other educational institutions that require them systematically. Moreover, in the context of accelerating SDGs 2030 target achievement, particularly Goal 4.7 emphasizing the importance of education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of peaceful and non-violent culture, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity, this research becomes highly relevant and strategic by offering concrete models of how education can become effective instruments in building peaceful, inclusive, and just societies, starting from the most fundamental level of elementary education, thus investment in this research will provide significant multiplier effects for national and global efforts in realizing more harmonious and sustainable living.

Based on identified gaps between maximal empirical achievements at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu and theoretical predictions regarding limitations of

religious moderation learning at the elementary education level, this research formulates two central problems requiring in-depth investigation. First, how are the design and implementation of religious moderation-based Islamic Religious Education curriculum at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu systematically constructed to integrate values of tolerance, balance, justice, and anti-violence into learning processes generating profound understanding and strong internalization among elementary-level students, and what determinant factors from pedagogical, psychological, social, and structural aspects contribute significantly to this maximal success within the context of elementary school-aged children's cognitive development limitations. Second, how are multi-method teaching strategies encompassing interactive approaches, religious practice habituation, and creation of inclusive learning environments operationally implemented and synergistically functioning to bridge gaps between religious moderation concept complexity and elementary students' comprehension capacity, and what transformation mechanisms occur in these learning processes generating student attitude and behavior changes that are not merely cognitive but also affective and psychomotor in appreciating diversity, engaging in cross-religious dialogue, and rejecting extremism.

II. METHOD

This research employs a qualitative instrumental case study approach situated within a constructivist epistemological paradigm (Creswell & Creswell, 2017), enabling a comprehensive exploration of the implementation of religious moderation-based character education through participants' lived experiences and contextual understanding (Levitt et al., 2018). The study employs a case study design following Yin (2018) framework, with MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu as the instrumental case to investigate how curriculum design, teaching strategies, habituation practices, and inclusive learning environments synergistically produce maximal learning outcomes that exceed theoretical expectations. Data collection comprises three primary techniques: in-depth interviews with principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students to capture implementation experiences and perspectives; participant observations of teaching-learning processes, religious habituation activities, and daily school interactions to understand implementation dynamics; and document analysis of curriculum materials, lesson plans, assessment instruments, and school policy documents to comprehend systematic planning underlying the program.

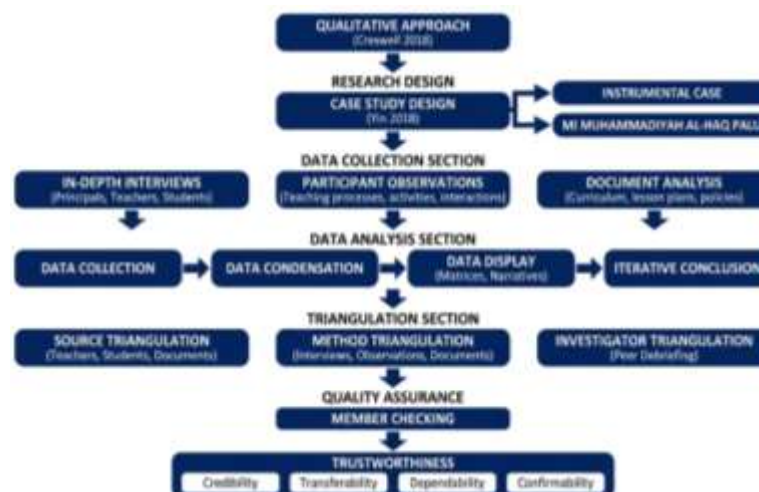


Figure 2. Research method framework

Data analysis follows the interactive model of Miles et al. (2014), involving three concurrent phases: data condensation (through open and axial coding to identify emergent themes), data display through systematic matrices and narratives, and iterative conclusion drawing/verification. Six thematic factors emerged inductively from the coding process. Member checking with key informants and peer debriefing were employed as trustworthiness strategies to ensure the credibility of findings. Data trustworthiness is established through multiple triangulation techniques, including source triangulation by comparing information from teachers, students, and documents; method triangulation by combining interviews, observations, and document analysis; and investigator triangulation through peer debriefing with experts in Islamic education. Additionally, member checking is conducted by returning transcripts and preliminary findings to participants for validation, ensuring interpretations accurately reflect intended meanings and enhancing research credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Design based on Religious Moderation

The curriculum is implemented through three structurally interconnected dimensions that operate simultaneously. The first is formal subject integration, in which traditional Islamic content is reframed through a moderation perspective in every instructional unit. The second is co-curricular and experiential programming, designed to provide students with real-life opportunities to practice moderation values beyond the Classroom. The third is the deliberate construction of school culture and environment that embeds moderation into daily institutional life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024). This three-dimensional structure ensures that students encounter moderation values consistently throughout their school day and across multiple contexts, producing reinforcement through repetition and varied application rather than one-time exposure (Jones & Bouffard, 2012).

Critically, the curriculum is also sequenced developmentally across grade levels. In Grades 1–2, instruction concentrates on foundational prosocial behaviors, kindness, inclusive friendship, and sharing, without yet introducing abstract religious diversity concepts. From Grades 3–4, explicit recognition of intra-Muslim diversity and Indonesia's constitutionally protected religious pluralism is introduced, appropriate to students' expanding cognitive awareness. In Grades 5–6, students engage with historical case studies of religious conflict and cooperation, human rights concepts, and the examples of prominent moderate Indonesian Muslim scholars. This developmental sequencing prevents the common pedagogical failure of presenting concepts that are too abstract for students' current cognitive stage, a concern strongly emphasized in the literature on moral development at the elementary level (Nucci et al., 2014; Walker & Thoma, 2017).

Findings from teacher interviews confirm that the curriculum's integration of moderation values into formal subject matter is intentional rather than incidental. When teaching *aqidah*, for instance, teachers explicitly address legitimate scholarly disagreements within Islamic tradition, helping students understand that doctrinal variation does not constitute a threat to Islamic identity (Brüggemann, 2014). Interviews with the principal and IRE teachers further confirm that co-curricular activities, including weekly moderation discussion forums and structured interfaith learning visits

to churches and Hindu temples in Palu, are planned as experiential extensions of Classroom learning rather than extracurricular additions. Document analysis of school program records verifies these visits are conducted with structured pre- and post-activity reflection tasks that connect the experience to formal curriculum objectives. Additionally, analysis of institutional documents, the school's code of conduct, curriculum planning records, and library acquisition policies, confirms that the school culture dimension is managed through deliberate institutional decisions, including prohibitions on discrimination based on religious practice variation and explicit collection of pluralism-oriented literature for the school library (Gearon, 2013).

The six determinant factors identified through triangulated data analysis as enabling this curriculum's maximal success are: 1) exceptional teacher quality marked by genuine personal conviction in moderation values, not merely pedagogical competence (teacher interviews); 2) visionary and sustained leadership by the school principal, who has embedded the program in institutional structures rather than leaving it dependent on individual champions (principal interview; strategic planning documents); 3) coherent and developmentally appropriate curriculum design ensuring cross-contextual consistency (curriculum document analysis); 4) strong school-family partnership, where regular parent education workshops have converted initial parental uncertainty into active support (teacher interviews; program records); 5) the favorable post-conflict local context of Palu, where community experience of religious violence has generated broad receptivity to tolerance-oriented education (interviews; contextual observation records); and 6) institutional backing from Muhammadiyah, which provides theological legitimacy and organizational resources protecting the program from conservative pressure (document analysis; principal interview). These factors do not operate independently; their synergistic alignment generates outcomes exceeding what any single factor could produce (Epstein, 2018).

The curriculum design and implementation findings at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu provide contextual evidence relevant to existing theoretical frameworks, particularly regarding elementary students' capacity to engage with abstract moderation concepts. While Kohlberg and Hersh argue that elementary-aged children's concrete operational thinking constrains their understanding of tolerance and pluralism (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977), and Lickona emphasizes that this level should focus primarily on basic introduction and simple habituation (Lickona, 1996), the present data suggest that carefully sequenced, scaffolded curriculum integration consistent with Vygotskian principles of guided learning may support deeper comprehension than developmental stage theory alone would predict under optimal conditions. This finding does not refute developmental theory but provides contextual evidence that well-designed pedagogical scaffolding, progressing from concrete friendship behaviors to diversity recognition to conflict analysis, may expand developmental possibilities when enabling conditions align.

The identification of six determinant factors extends Suardi et al. (2026) framework regarding necessary implementation conditions by suggesting that these six factors operate synergistically rather than independently. Teacher quality in this context encompasses not only pedagogical competence but also personal commitment to moderation values, consistent with Berkowitz & Bier (2024) emphasis on educator character in effective character education. The centrality of family partnership and the post-conflict local context suggests that outcomes are significantly shaped by factors beyond the school itself, offering a contextual qualification to the view that

developmental capacity is determined solely by age-based constraints. These findings are also directly relevant to SDG 4.7 (education for global citizenship and cultural diversity) and SDG 16 targets on reducing violence and promoting inclusive participation. Qodir et al. (2023) claim about moderation requiring secondary education warrants contextual qualification: the data suggest that optimal pedagogical and environmental conditions may enable earlier engagement with moderation concepts than developmental stage theory alone would predict.

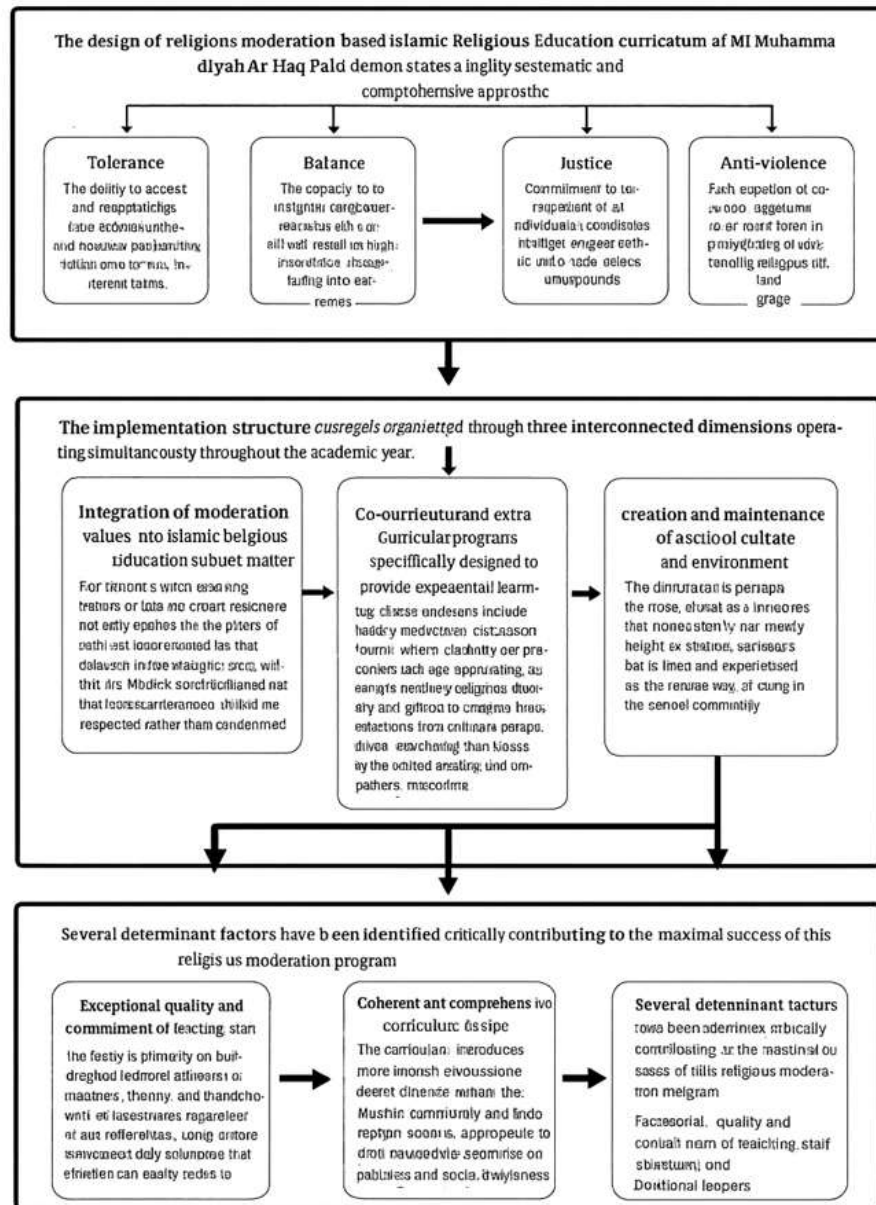


Figure 3. Islamic religious education curriculum design based on religious moderation

Multi-Method Teaching Strategies

The pedagogical approach at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu integrates three mutually reinforcing instructional components, dialogic interactive teaching, structured habituation of religious practice, and inclusive environment creation, that operate simultaneously across cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social dimensions of student

development. The synergistic functioning of these three components produces a student transformation that is deeper and more durable than any single method could achieve on its own (Berkowitz & Bier, 2024; Nucci et al., 2014).

The three components function as a complementary system, each addressing dimensions of learning that the others cannot fully reach. Interactive dialogic teaching develops cognitive understanding of moderation concepts and moral reasoning about religious diversity. Structured habituation translates cognitive understanding into behavioral routines and begins cultivating affective dispositions through repeated meaningful practice. The inclusive environment provides authentic social contexts in which students practice emerging understandings with real consequences, activating social reinforcement mechanisms (Kohlberg & Hersh, 1977; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2006).

Student transformation through this integrated model unfolds in identifiable sequences. Initial transformation manifests primarily at the behavioral level, where students enact inclusive behaviors driven by teacher approval and peer acceptance, without yet having deep internalized it. Intermediate transformation, typically emerging in Grades 4–6, involves increasing autonomy, where students apply moderation values independently and articulate their rationale in their own words. Advanced transformation, achieved by a subset of students, involves full integration of moderation into personal identity, enabling proactive promotion of inclusive norms among peers. This progression is recursive rather than linear: changes in one dimension (e.g., behavioral habit formation) facilitate changes in others (e.g., affective identity formation), producing a reinforcing developmental cycle.

Classroom observation records document that teachers consistently employ structured questioning sequences in dialogic sessions that move students progressively from descriptive comprehension of diversity scenarios toward evaluative moral reasoning, asking not merely what happened but why, whose perspective is missing, and what a moderate response would look like. This externalization of reasoning was identified in teacher interviews as a deliberate strategy: students who hear peers explain their thinking on religious diversity scenarios gain access to alternative perspectives they would not generate independently, accelerating conceptual development.

Regarding habituation, observational records confirm that daily congregational prayers at the school are framed with explicit pre-prayer reflections by teachers connecting Islamic practice to values of compassion, humility, and justice, and are followed by brief group reflection sessions. This transforms habituation from a behavioral routine into a mindful practice, a distinction that teachers articulated directly in interviews. Document analysis of Quranic recitation logs further reveals that passage selection disproportionately emphasizes themes of mercy, diversity as divine design, and peaceful coexistence, confirming that content choices within habituation are deliberate curriculum decisions rather than arbitrary. Teacher interviews also confirm that moral exemplification by school staff is treated as a component of the habituation strategy: teachers are selected and professionally evaluated in part on demonstrated personal commitment to moderation values, not only Islamic knowledge and pedagogical skill (Suroso & Husin, 2024).

For the inclusive environment dimension, institutional document analysis of the school's code of conduct confirms explicit anti-discrimination policies with restorative rather than punitive response procedures. Assessment rubric analysis reveals that behavioral and attitudinal indicators of moderation are formally evaluated alongside academic

performance, creating institutional incentive structures that reinforce curriculum values. Teacher and principal interviews confirm that parent education workshops, conducted regularly to explain the moderation curriculum and its Islamic theological grounding, have been effective in achieving cross-contextual alignment between school and home environments, with teachers reporting deeper and more consistent internalization of moderation among students whose families actively reinforce school messages (Han, 2015).

Regarding transformation outcomes, teacher interviews and observation records confirm the three-stage progression described above. Teachers identified specific students who had visibly shifted from compliant moderation performance in supervised contexts to autonomous advocacy of inclusive norms in unsupervised peer interactions, constituting observable evidence of advanced internalization. Observation records also confirm that the most marked attitudinal shifts were frequently documented following experiential activities, community service programs, and cross-background collaborative projects, rather than during formal Classroom instruction, indicating that embodied practice in real social contexts activates transformation processes that dialogic teaching alone does not fully catalyze. While transformation outcomes varied based on individual student characteristics, family alignment, and peer influences, triangulated data indicate that virtually all students demonstrated meaningful positive movement from their starting points across the elementary years.

The multi-method pedagogical approach documented in this study addresses a recognized gap in character education literature, where methods are typically examined in isolation rather than in combination. The data suggest that interactive methods, habituation practices, and inclusive environment design function complementarily, addressing cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions in ways that no single approach can achieve alone, consistent with Ramayulis (2016) call for varied pedagogical strategies, while specifying how these methods complement each other operationally. Interactive dialogic teaching appears to support reasoning about religious diversity beyond what purely transmission-based instruction yields, consistent with findings about dialogic learning. However, the data confirm that cognitive understanding alone is insufficient without behavioral habituation and environmental scaffolding, as emphasized by Kohlberg & Hersh (1977) and Lickona (1996).

The transformation process documented in this study appears to involve recursive mechanisms across cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social domains, in which progress in one domain facilitates development in others. This pattern is consistent with Zubaedi (2023) emphasis on continuous practice and evaluation. It suggests that transformation unfolds through progressive stages from behavioral compliance to intermediate internalization to deeper identity integration with substantial individual variation based on personal, family, and peer factors. The data indicate developmental progressions are real but not deterministic, and that structured educational conditions may support character development at paces exceeding age-based norms in certain contexts. The relevance to SDG 16 is evident in the documented development of conflict-resolution dispositions and reduction of exclusivist attitudes, civic capacities that directly support peaceful and inclusive societies.

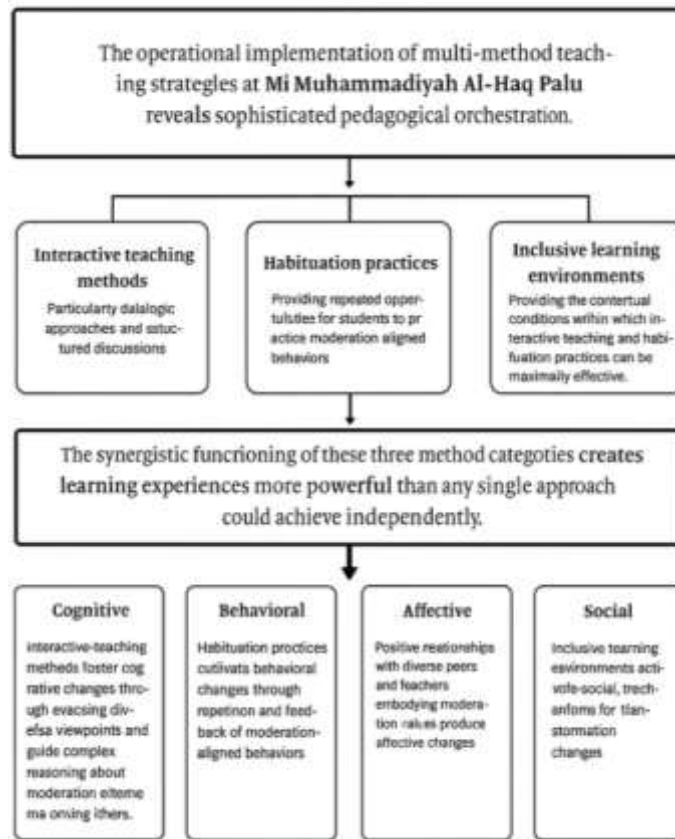


Figure 4. Multi-method teaching strategies

IV. CONCLUSION

This research documents the design and implementation of a comprehensive moderation-based character education approach at MI Muhammadiyah Al-Haq Palu, identifying six inductively-derived thematic factors that appear to contribute to positive student outcomes: teacher quality and commitment, visionary leadership, coherent curriculum design, strong family partnerships, a supportive post-conflict local context, and institutional backing from Muhammadiyah. The multi-method pedagogical approach combining interactive dialogic teaching, thoughtful habituation practices, and inclusive environment design addresses cognitive, behavioral, affective, and social dimensions in complementary ways. The data suggest progressive internalization of moderation values across students' elementary school years, with individual variation based on personal, family, and peer factors. These findings provide contextual evidence of how structured educational conditions may support character development at the elementary level, offering insights relevant to researchers and practitioners working on tolerance and moderation education. As a single-site qualitative case study, findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized without further cross-site or comparative investigation. The absence of pre-post measurement, a comparison group, and longitudinal follow-up represents a methodological limitation that future research should address to more rigorously assess the durability and transferability of the outcomes documented here. These findings contribute to ongoing discussions on SDG 4.7, which calls for education that promotes global citizenship, cultural diversity, and sustainable peace, and on SDG 16, which targets inclusive and just societies free from

violence. This study provides contextual evidence that elementary education, when systematically designed with moderation values at its core, can contribute meaningfully to both goals by cultivating tolerance, anti-extremism attitudes, and interfaith respect from an early age. The findings suggest rather than prove that well-designed educational environments can support character development beyond what conventional age-based expectations might anticipate. Replication studies in diverse sociocultural contexts, using mixed-methods designs with longitudinal and comparative components, are recommended to assess the conditions under which similar outcomes may be achieved more broadly.

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