Reforma: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran
Faculty of Teacher Training and Education
Universitas Islam Lamongan
https://jurnalpendidikan.unisla.ac.id/index.php/reforma

May 2016 Vol. 16, No. 1
e-ISSN: 2621-4172
p-ISSN: 2503-1228
pp. 85-108

Internalizing Islamic Moderation Values (*Tawazun* and *Tasamuh*) in Character Education: A Case Study of an Indonesian Elementary School

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Received: 18 May 2026; Revised: 08 June 2026; Accepted: 12 June 2026; Published: 14 June 2026

Abstract

As global ideological polarization intensifies, integrating religious moderation into primary education has emerged as a critical imperative for cultivating harmonious pluralistic societies. While macro-institutional policies on moderate character formation are well-documented, empirical evidence detailing the micro-pedagogical actualization of these values within elementary classrooms remains critically scarce. This study investigates the operationalization of moderation principles through a qualitative case study approach, utilizing Thomas Lickona's tripartite moral framework. Triangulated data were collected from purposeful sampling of educators and grade VI students at an Indonesian madrasah, and subsequently processed through rigorous thematic analysis using NVivo software. The findings demonstrate a highly structured progression from cognitive instruction via historical reasoning, to affective cultivation through emotional validation, and finally behavioral habituation via collaborative peer interactions. However, the efficacy of this pedagogical architecture is occasionally compromised by socio-cognitive dissonance stemming from exclusionary domestic environments and a structural deficit in teachers' Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). This study provides a replicable, micro-pedagogical blueprint for global character educators, asserting that sustainable moral development requires transitioning from abstract theological indoctrination to the creation of active, democratic classroom ecosystems supported by parental synergy.

Keywords: Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah; Ethical development; Pedagogical content knowledge; Qualitative thematic analysis; Sociomoral reasoning.

How to Cite: Albab, U., Ahadiyah, W., & Primadani, M. (2026). Internalizing Islamic moderation values (Tawazun and Tasamuh) in character education: A case study of an Indonesian elementary school. *Reforma: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran, 16*(1), 86–108.

https://doi.org/10.30736/reforma.v16i1.1379

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of global education, character development has emerged as a fundamental priority alongside cognitive achievement (Harahap, 2025; Hussien et al., 2021; Macdonald, 2022). The rapid advancement of digital technology and global interconnectedness brings unprecedented exposure to diverse cultures and ideologies (Prasetia et al., 2021; A. Setiawan et al., 2025). Consequently, students today navigate a complex social environment that frequently tests their moral compass and ethical boundaries (Hargittai et al., 2024). Educational institutions are thus compelled to equip young learners with robust character anchors to prevent moral disorientation

(Nucci & Ilten-Gee, 2021). Preparing students to engage constructively with a pluralistic society requires an educational paradigm that emphasizes universal human values.

Amidst this dynamic global context, the urgency of fostering religious moderation has become increasingly prominent in international educational discourse (Ainissyifa et al., 2024; Idris et al., 2021). Societies worldwide are currently grappling with rising ideological polarization, intolerance, and social fragmentation (Bogush, 2020). These concerning trends challenge the foundational principles of peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in multicultural environments (Zouari & Shtudiner, 2024). International educational frameworks advocate for the integration of moderate perspectives to counteract radicalism and promote inclusive social harmony. Consequently, schools carry the critical responsibility of nurturing a generation capable of bridging ideological divides through rational and empathetic dialogue.

Within the realm of Islamic educational philosophy, the concept of *Wasathiyyah* (religious moderation) offers a robust framework to address these global challenges (Fitri & Suyanto, 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2025; Warsah & Istan, 2025). *Wasathiyyah* inherently promotes an equilibrium between spiritual devotion and social responsibility, rejecting both ideological extremism and moral apathy. At the core of this moderate paradigm lie two interrelated values: *tawazun*, which denotes psychological and intellectual balance, and *tasamuh*, which signifies genuine tolerance and compassion (Miftah, 2023; Supriadi et al., 2023). These values guide individuals to maintain their religious convictions while actively respecting the diverse beliefs and practices of others (Febbyanto & Anam, 2026; Sofyaningrum & Maulana, 2022). Cultivating these principles within an educational setting transforms students into agents of peace who can navigate differences constructively.

The actualization of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* holds profound significance particularly within the complex sociodemographic fabric of Indonesia (Hakim et al., 2025; Muttakin, 2024). As a nation characterized by vast ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, Indonesia relies on the continuous reinforcement of pluralistic values to sustain national cohesion (Aziz, 2025; Mizani, 2022). Recent educational policies in the country have explicitly integrated religious moderation into the national curriculum to mitigate the risks of ideological segregation. However, realizing this vision requires translating abstract moderation concepts into tangible pedagogical practices. Educational institutions must therefore design localized strategies that seamlessly weave these values into the daily social interactions of their students.

Elementary education, particularly at the Madrasah Ibtidaiyah level, serves as the most critical foundational stage for this character formation (Mukti, 2023; Sugiarti & Ozay, 2022). Children in their formative years possess a high degree of cognitive and emotional malleability, making it the optimal period for internalizing core ethical principles (Salim et al., 2021). The moral schemas developed during this stage significantly dictate their future social behavior and ideological inclinations. In Islamic elementary schools, character education transcends mere moral instruction, integrating spiritual consciousness with daily social conduct. Therefore, effectively

embedding moderation values at this level establishes a resilient psychological foundation against future exposure to exclusionary ideologies.

To systematically analyze the internalization of these moral values, the comprehensive character education model proposed by Thomas Lickona provides a highly relevant theoretical lens (Hanafi & Murtadho, 2025; Husniyah, 2024; Sulong & Taridi, 2025). Lickona posits that authentic character development necessitates the cohesive integration of three essential dimensions: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Hanafi & Murtadho, 2025). Moral knowing involves the cognitive understanding of ethical principles, enabling students to logically distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate behaviors (Sulong & Taridi, 2025). Moral feeling encompasses the emotional capacity to empathize with others and cultivate a genuine desire to act ethically. Finally, moral action represents the behavioral manifestation of the previous two dimensions, translating theoretical knowledge and emotional motivation into consistent daily habits.

Recent international literature frequently underscores the adaptability of Lickona's framework within diverse educational contexts, including Islamic learning environments. For instance, recent studies demonstrate that the tripartite model aligns seamlessly with traditional Islamic epistemological principles concerning knowledge, faith, and righteous deeds (Abdalla, 2025; Lickona & Davidson, 2023). Scholars emphasize that bridging Western character education models with Islamic pedagogical traditions provides a structured methodology for teaching complex spiritual values. Furthermore, contemporary research highlights the efficacy of this integration in developing holistic educational environments that support both cognitive and emotional intelligence. Consequently, Lickona's framework remains an authoritative standard for evaluating the depth and effectiveness of moral instruction in religious schools.

Concurrently, the academic discourse surrounding religious moderation in Indonesia has expanded significantly over the past few years. Recent studies often explore the normative definitions and macro-institutional implementations of moderation values, such as the redesign of university curricula or national policy evaluations (Murtadlo, 2021; Nata & Mudlofir, 2025). These investigations consistently affirm that structural support from educational leadership is paramount for fostering an inclusive institutional culture. Moreover, existing literature frequently examines moderation through the lens of specific pedagogical techniques, such as active debate or extra-curricular program transformations (Sakiratuka et al., 2023). However, these discussions tend to remain concentrated at the conceptual or higher education levels, often overlooking the nuanced dynamics of basic education.

A brief bibliometric mapping of the Scopus database over the last five years reveals a distinct pattern regarding this research domain. While publications on "religious moderation" and "character education" have surged, the intersection of these themes within elementary educational settings remains noticeably sparse religious moderation bibliometric (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024; Wardi et al., 2026; Zaluchu et al., 2025). The bibliometric data indicates that the vast majority of character

education studies involving religious moderation focus on secondary schools, higher education institutions, or macro-level policy analyses (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024). Specifically, research that empirically connects the localized Islamic values of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* with Lickona's behavioral framework is virtually absent in reputable international journals. This bibliometric evidence firmly establishes a significant academic void concerning the micro-level pedagogical execution of these critical values in primary classrooms.

This identified gap in the literature necessitates a more granular investigation into the day-to-day realities of character formation. Although theoretical frameworks on religious moderation are conceptually robust, empirical evidence detailing how teachers actively negotiate and instill these values during routine classroom activities is critically lacking. Previous studies largely fail to capture the subtle pedagogical moments where tolerance and balance are practically applied, such as mediating minor student conflicts or facilitating collaborative tasks (Mubin et al., 2026; Rohayani & Sukandar, 2026; Sahrir et al., 2022). Understanding the actualization of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* requires moving beyond formal policy analysis to closely observe the lived experiences of teachers and students. Without such empirical grounding, educational strategies for religious moderation risk remaining abstract and detached from classroom realities.

Addressing this empirical necessity requires examining educational environments that actively attempt to synthesize traditional religious values with modern pedagogical demands. An Islamic elementary school affiliated with the Nahdlatul Ulama tradition provides a highly relevant context for such an investigation, given its institutional commitment to Aswaja (Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah) principles. In these specific environments, educators face the practical challenge of translating the broad concepts of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* into age-appropriate learning experiences. The socio-cultural dynamics within the classroom serve as a natural laboratory for observing how foundational character traits are nurtured amidst diverse student backgrounds. By documenting these localized practices, researchers can extract valuable pedagogical insights that have broader applicability for global character education.

To bridge the existing research gap, this study proposes a focused qualitative analysis of the actualization process of moderation values in a specific elementary classroom setting. By employing a case study approach at MI Idzharul Ulum, the research aims to meticulously document how *tawazun* and *tasamuh* are systematically integrated into learning activities. The study utilizes Thomas Lickona's character internalization theory as the primary analytical framework to dissect the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral progression of the students. Through this methodological design, the research moves beyond abstract assertions to provide concrete, observable evidence of moral development in action. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that successfully transform normative religious guidelines into tangible student character.

Ultimately, the primary objective of this research is to comprehensively delineate the strategies and challenges of shaping moderate student character at the foundational educational level. By revealing the practical application of Lickona's tripartite model within an Islamic elementary context, the study seeks to offer a replicable blueprint for character educators. The findings are expected to significantly enrich the contemporary literature on religious moderation by providing the much-needed micro-pedagogical perspective that is currently absent. Furthermore, this research aspires to inform educational policymakers and practitioners in designing more effective, contextually grounded strategies for fostering tolerance and balance. Through these contributions, the study reinforces the vital role of elementary education in building a resilient, harmonious, and inclusive global society.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study research design to explore the complex phenomenon of character internalization within its natural setting (Daryanes et al., 2023; Muzari et al., 2022). A case study approach is highly appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident, allowing for an in-depth investigation (Nanda et al., 2023). This design enabled the researchers to capture the lived experiences, interactions, and pedagogical strategies embedded in the daily routines of the school. Following the methodological framework proposed by Yin (2018), the study treated the specific educational institution as a bounded system. Consequently, this holistic inquiry prioritized descriptive depth over statistical generalization to provide an authentic portrayal of moral education.

The case study architecture specifically focused on unpacking how abstract religious tenets are operationalized within active classroom environments. By investigating the bounded phenomenon through multiple lines of evidence, the study maintained high ecological validity. This structural orientation aligns with contemporary qualitative paradigms that prioritize understanding the subjective meanings participants attach to their social realities (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The flexible yet rigorous nature of the case design allowed the researchers to adapt to emergent insights during the fieldwork period. Ultimately, this exploratory framework served as an analytical bridge connecting broad institutional policies with specific interactive classroom behaviors.

Research Context and Participants

The research was conducted at MI Idzharul Ulum Bakalan Pule, located in the Tikung district of Lamongan, East Java, Indonesia. This institution was purposefully selected because of its unique position as an Islamic elementary school operating under the institutional auspices of the Nahdlatul Ulama organization. The school explicitly integrates traditional Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) values into its formalized vision, mission, and everyday pedagogical frameworks. Studying this particular context offered rich insights into how moderate Islamic principles are socialized among young learners in a highly localized Indonesian setting. The specific

geographic and cultural setting provided an authentic baseline for evaluating the practical execution of national religious moderation initiatives.

Rather than adopting a conventional quantitative sampling technique, this study utilized purposeful sampling to select key informants who could provide information-rich data (Patton, 2015). The primary participants consisted of the madrasah principal, the head teacher responsible for Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in Grade VI, and the Grade VI students themselves. The principal provided critical insights regarding institutional policy development, school culture cultivation, and macro-level administrative support systems. Concurrently, the Grade VI IRE teacher offered a micro-level pedagogical perspective on instructional design, curriculum adaptation, and direct classroom management strategies. The Grade VI students, chosen because of their advanced cognitive readiness compared to lower grades, participated to reveal peer-to-peer behavioral dynamics and value internalization.

Data Collection and Instrument Development

Data collection was executed through an immersive triad of qualitative methods comprising semi-structured interviews, non-participant observations, and comprehensive documentation analysis. To ensure that the instrumentation was reproducible and methodologically sound, the interview and observation protocols underwent a rigorous multi-stage development process. The initial drafting of the interview guides was directly mapped onto the conceptual dimensions of Thomas Lickona's character internalization framework. These draft protocols were subsequently subjected to expert judgment by two senior scholars specializing in Islamic pedagogy and qualitative research methodologies. Based on the expert feedback, technical ambiguities were resolved, and question phrasing was adjusted to suit the cognitive and emotional level of elementary school participants.

Following the expert review phase, a pilot simulation of the interview protocol was conducted with an IRE teacher from a neighboring school who shared similar demographic and institutional characteristics. This exploratory pilot phase served as a practical test to evaluate the clarity, flow, and comprehensibility of the semi-structured questions. Feedback from this simulation indicated that certain abstract religious concepts required more conversational phrasing to elicit deeper reflections from participants. The research team consequently designed contextualized prompts and illustrative everyday scenarios to accompany the primary interview questions. This meticulous preparation ensured that the final instrument functioned reliably as a high-fidelity tool for capturing rich qualitative insights during formal fieldwork.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted individually in a private, neutral school setting to encourage open, uninhibited communication. Each interview session with the principal and teacher lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with explicit prior consent. Student interviews were conducted in small focus groups to reduce anxiety and leverage peer interaction dynamics for richer qualitative responses. Parallel to this, non-participant observations were conducted over a period of two months to capture spontaneous classroom interactions during

IRE lessons. The observation protocol specifically focused on documenting behavioral indicators related to balance (*tawazun*) and tolerance (*tasamuh*) during collaborative group assignments and discussions.

The final layer of data collection involved a thorough documentation review to triangulate the verbal and behavioral data obtained from fieldwork. The analyzed documents included the school's official curriculum plans, specific IRE lesson syllabi, instructional materials, and student behavioral assessment rubrics. Evaluating these artifacts allowed the researchers to assess the degree of alignment between written educational objectives and actual classroom execution. This systematic triangulation of data sources effectively countered individual respondent bias and enhanced the overall credibility of the research findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The resulting textual dataset formed a comprehensive and multi-dimensional repository that captured both the structural and interactive elements of the school's moral ecosystem.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

To process the extensive volume of qualitative textual data generated from interviews, observations, and field notes, the study utilized computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. The entire dataset was transcribed verbatim, carefully anonymized to protect participant privacy, and imported into NVivo software for systematic data organization and tracking. Data analysis was executed by synthesizing the thematic analysis framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) with the interactive qualitative analysis model proposed by Miles et al. (2014). This combined approach allowed for a highly dynamic analytical process consisting of continuous data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The researchers began with data familiarization by repeatedly reading the transcripts to generate a holistic understanding of the participants' narratives.

The initial phase of open coding involved breaking down the raw text into distinct conceptual units based on explicit semantic meanings. These foundational codes were subsequently refined through an iterative categorization process within NVivo to eliminate analytical redundancies. The structural organization of the codebook directly mapped out how the school's structural policies translated into operational learning activities. Pattern coding was then employed to cluster these initial codes into broader, conceptually comprehensive categories representing thematic nodes. Each thematic node was clearly defined with specific inclusion and exclusion criteria to maintain high internal consistency across the entire dataset.

The qualitative coding architecture was systematically organized around the core components of Lickona's character framework, namely moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. For instance, statements detailing students' cognitive comprehension of tolerance were coded under 'moral knowing', while observed cooperative behaviors during conflict resolution were categorized under 'moral action'. This thematic refinement process involved continuous iterative movements between the raw data segments and the evolving coding tree within NVivo. The final analytical stage moved beyond mere description to interpret how these themes interconnected to form a cohesive system of character development. By adhering to

this structured qualitative coding protocol, the analytical workflow remained fully transparent and verifiable for future scholarly replication (Miles et al., 2014).

To ensure the rigorous scientific quality of this qualitative inquiry, specific trustworthiness criteria were strictly enforced throughout the research process. Credibility was achieved not only through source triangulation but also by conducting member-checking sessions, where preliminary findings were shared with the teacher and principal for validation. Dependability was maintained through the creation of a detailed audit trail that documented every methodological decision, code definition, and analytical shift made during the study. Confirmability was safeguarded by practicing continuous self-reflexivity among the research team to minimize personal preconceptions from coloring data interpretation. Lastly, transferability was enhanced by providing a dense, contextualized "thick description" of the madrasah environment, enabling future researchers to evaluate the applicability of these findings to similar educational contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

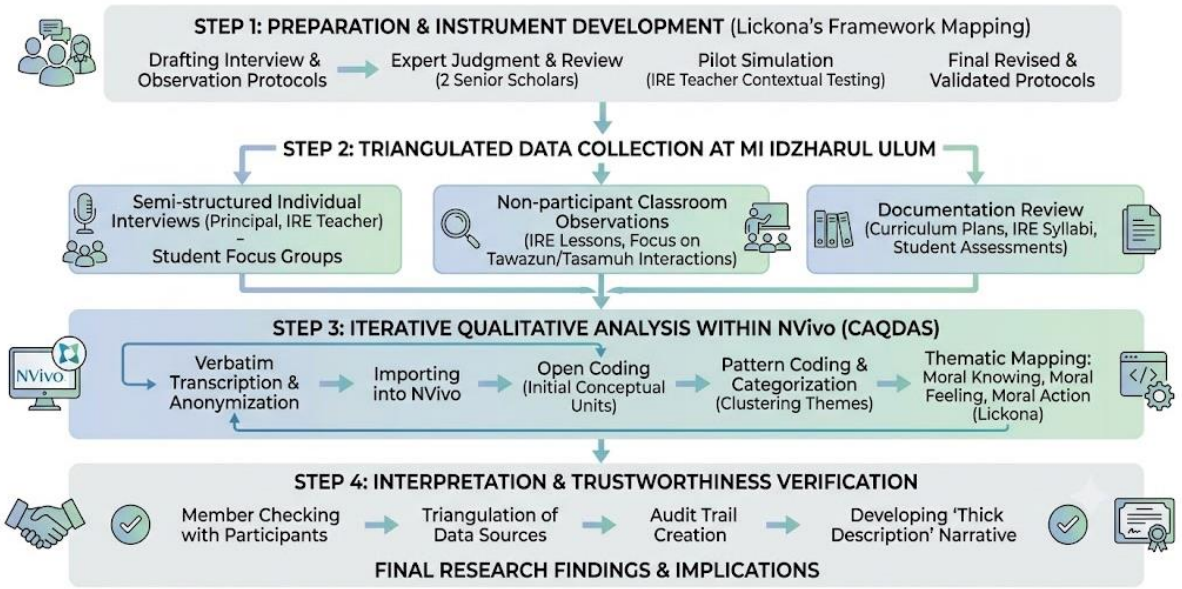


Figure 1. Qualitative case study procedure of actualizing tawasun and tasamuh values

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Thematic Overview of Moderation Values Internalization

The qualitative data analysis yielded three primary thematic clusters directly corresponding to Thomas Lickona's tripartite character framework. To provide a rigorous structural overview of how these concepts are operationalized, the researchers mapped the pedagogical activities into a comprehensive thematic matrix. Table 2 illustrates the distribution of observed educational practices and student responses across the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Rather than treating these dimensions as isolated educational events, the data reveals a highly interconnected progression from cognitive instruction to daily habits. This

structural mapping provides a foundational analytical lens for understanding how the school systematically translates abstract Aswaja values into tangible daily realities.

Table 2. Thematic Matrix of Tawazun and Tasamuh Internalization at MI Idzharul Ulum

Lickona's Dimension	Pedagogical Strategy (Teacher's Action)	Observed Student Indicator (Learning Outcome)	Primary Value Addressed
Moral Knowing (Cognitive)	Integration of values in Islamic Cultural History (SKI) narratives; Case-based class discussions.	Ability to articulate the definitions of balance and tolerance; Recognizing diversity as a natural reality.	*Tawazun* (Balance)
Moral Feeling (Emotional)	Post-lesson emotional reflections; Providing verbal praise/rewards for inclusive behavior.	Displaying empathy towards peers; Demonstrating genuine respect for divergent opinions without hostility.	*Tasamuh* (Tolerance)
Moral Action (Behavioral)	Facilitating collaborative group assignments; Mediating peer conflicts; Routine school cultural habits.	Active cooperation in diverse groups; Displaying sportsmanship; Resolving minor disputes amicably.	*Tawazun* & *Tasamuh*

The findings presented in the matrix demonstrate that robust efforts have been made to integrate the values of balance and tolerance actively and contextually. These moral values are implemented not merely through the formal delivery of instructional materials but also through consistent teacher role models. Furthermore, daily school activities and spontaneous social interactions among students serve as highly vital platforms for character building. By categorizing these specific elements, it becomes immediately evident that moral education is deeply woven into the institutional fabric rather than treated as an isolated subject. This holistic educational strategy ensures that the young students receive consistent moral messaging across all aspects of their learning experience.

Strong institutional support serves as the foundational catalyst for executing this comprehensive character education strategy effectively. Based on the collected qualitative data, crucial support from the madrasah principal explicitly manifests in the form of school policies firmly based on Aswaja values. These administrative policies structurally mandate that all teaching staff actively incorporate moderation principles within their respective subject areas. Consequently, the teachers feel highly empowered and institutionally supported to prioritize character development alongside traditional academic achievements. Without this clear administrative directive, the systematic integration of tolerance and balance across different classrooms would likely remain highly fragmented and inconsistent.

To deeply understand the nuanced perspectives of the educators executing these policies, comprehensive interviews were conducted within the school environment. Figure 1 captures one of these collaborative qualitative interview

sessions, visibly highlighting the open and communicative atmosphere among the teaching staff. During these qualitative discussions, the teachers openly expressed a profound sense of moral and spiritual responsibility to internalize these values holistically. The relaxed yet highly professional setting of the interview allowed the educators to freely share their practical pedagogical experiences without any hesitation. This highly collaborative environment among the teachers themselves essentially models the exact values of mutual respect and balanced dialogue they aim to teach the students.



Figure 1. *Interview with MI Idzharul Ulum teacher*

The valuable insights gathered from these qualitative interviews directly inform how overarching school policies are translated into daily instructional methods. The interviewed teachers consistently emphasized that their primary duty is not merely to transfer theoretical knowledge, but to actively instill virtuous values. They fully recognize that elementary-aged children absolutely require concrete examples rather than abstract theological lectures to grasp complex moral concepts. Therefore, the teachers actively and continuously adapt their lesson plans to include real-world scenarios that resonate deeply with the students' daily lives. This crucial pedagogical bridge between institutional policy and classroom practice forms the stable basis for the subsequent stages of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development.

Cognitive Foundations: Establishing Moral Knowing

The initial stage of character formation at MI Idzharul Ulum involves deliberately building a strong cognitive foundation through formal classroom instruction. Students are cognitively introduced to the critical importance of balance (*tawazun*) and tolerance (*tasamuh*) explicitly through Islamic Cultural History (SKI) materials. The dedicated SKI teachers actively instill the value of *tawazun* by verbally conveying the importance of maintaining balance when addressing historical differences. By grounding these moral concepts in established historical facts, the educators actively prevent the students from viewing tolerance as an entirely modern, alien concept. Consequently, the students logically understand that respecting diversity is a practice deeply rooted in the foundational historical traditions of their faith.

Moving seamlessly beyond the simple rote memorization of historical dates, the instructional strategy explicitly connects these historical events to contemporary life values. The teachers strategically utilize historical narratives and values found within the Quran to illustrate how differences in human opinion and teachings have always existed. During these engaging narrative sessions, educators carefully explain the logical reasoning behind why extreme or rigid interpretations inevitably lead to unnecessary social conflict. This analytical approach highly empowers the young students to utilize their critical thinking skills to analyze the negative consequences of intolerant behavior. As a direct result, the cognitive internalization process successfully equips the students with the basic intellectual tools needed to reject extremist ideologies naturally.

The specific value of *tasamuh* is further solidified cognitively through interactive pedagogical methods, particularly through structured class group discussions. Rather than simply delivering passive lectures, teachers regularly present their students with hypothetical social dilemmas that require collaborative problem-solving efforts. During these dialogic classroom sessions, students are strongly encouraged to express their varying viewpoints while strictly adhering to the fundamental rules of mutual respect. The classroom teacher acts primarily as a neutral mediator, ensuring that the intellectual exchange remains balanced, fair, and highly constructive. This interactive cognitive exercise definitively proves that the classroom actively operates as a safe space for ideological exploration and rational debate.

Observational data provides incredibly clear visual evidence of this active cognitive engagement within the actual physical learning environment. Figure 2 distinctly illustrates the typical daily learning activities in the classroom, where students are seen attentively participating in the instructional process. The physical arrangement of the classroom, with students seated closely together at shared desks, naturally facilitates constant peer-to-peer communication and collaborative learning. In such dynamic active learning settings, students are routinely required to cognitively process differing ideas quickly and respond with appropriate verbal respect. These daily academic interactions form the essential intellectual groundwork absolutely required before the students can develop a genuine emotional attachment to the values.



Figure 2. *Learning activities in class*

Assessing the overall effectiveness of this cognitive stage reveals a highly notable improvement in the students' basic moral reasoning capabilities. Interview data confirms that the grade VI students can now clearly articulate the definitions of balance and tolerance using their own simple, everyday vocabulary. They vividly demonstrate a firm cognitive recognition that human social diversity is an inevitable reality rather than a problematic issue that needs to be solved. This intellectual clarity is an absolute prerequisite for Thomas Lickona's subsequent developmental stages, thoroughly ensuring that their future tolerant behaviors are intentional. Therefore, successfully establishing moral knowing provides the crucial mental map that actively guides the young learners toward ethical and balanced social conduct.

Emotional Cultivation: Nurturing Moral Feeling

Transitioning completely seamlessly from cognitive comprehension, the school's pedagogical approach actively targets the emotional engagement of the young learners. Mere intellectual understanding of the concept of tolerance is entirely insufficient if it is not accompanied by a genuine emotional desire to act respectfully. Recognizing this, teachers deliberately provide continuous daily opportunities for their students to develop deep empathy and genuine concern for their fellow classmates. This intentional emotional cultivation ensures that the students do not just blindly memorize the concept of *tasamuh*, but actually feel a deep personal connection to it. By directly addressing the affective learning domain, the educators successfully transform abstract religious mandates into heartfelt, permanent personal convictions.

One of the primary pedagogical mechanisms utilized to nurture this moral feeling is the consistent implementation of post-lesson reflective sessions. Immediately after concluding a historical narrative or a lively group discussion, teachers frequently ask their students to pause and evaluate their own personal emotions regarding the topic. These highly guided reflection periods gently allow the children to properly process feelings of empathy toward those who might have experienced historical discrimination or conflict. Validating these complex emotional responses helps the young students realize that their personal feelings are an incredibly important component of their religious identity. Consequently, the classroom environment successfully fosters a remarkably high degree of emotional intelligence perfectly alongside their traditional academic achievements.

Furthermore, the strategic psychological use of positive reinforcement plays a massive role in cementing these highly desirable emotional states. Qualitative classroom observations vividly revealed that teachers consistently and publicly reward behavior that demonstrates genuine tolerance and inclusivity among the student body. Interestingly, these rewards are rarely material; instead, they usually consist of specific verbal praise or public recognition of a student's highly empathetic actions. Receiving this positive social validation directly boosts the young students' self-esteem and creates a remarkably strong emotional incentive to repeat the tolerant behavior continuously. Over time, this consistent emotional pedagogical scaffolding

creates a deeply ingrained psychological preference for harmonious and respectful social interactions.

The broader emotional climate of the classroom is also heavily sustained by the active, continuous role modeling provided directly by the educators themselves. Elementary students are incredibly perceptive and quickly absorb the subtle emotional cues visibly displayed by their teachers during moments of stress or disagreement. Field observations consistently documented teachers demonstrating profound emotional self-control and absolute fairness, thereby physically embodying the core value of *tawazun*. When students regularly witness their teachers treating divergent opinions with profound respect, it significantly reduces their own internal anxieties about being judged. This authentic adult modeling is arguably the single most powerful psychological tool for successfully transmitting moral feeling in an elementary school setting.

The cumulative psychological impact of these emotional cultivation strategies is highly visible in the students' overall emotional well-being and confidence. Focus group interview discussions with the students clearly indicated a very high level of emotional safety and a strong sense of belonging within the classroom. They verbally reported feeling highly comfortable expressing their honest personal opinions because they fully trust their peers and teachers will listen empathetically. This significant reduction in classroom social anxiety is a direct, measurable result of successfully internalizing the emotional dimension of religious moderation. Ultimately, nurturing moral feeling creates a highly compassionate psychological baseline that naturally and intrinsically drives students toward ethical behavioral actions.

Behavioral Manifestation: Executing Moral Action

The ultimate and most visible culmination of the entire character internalization process vividly manifests in the concrete behavioral actions of the students. Through highly consistent school habits and structured daily activities, students are naturally accustomed to acting in a highly balanced and tolerant manner. The qualitative observational data successfully captures exactly how the previously established cognitive and emotional foundations are directly translated into collaborative group assignments. During these structured group tasks, the students actively practice *tasamuh* by listening patiently to their peers and respectfully accommodating differing ideas. This highly seamless transition from academic theory to social practice definitively proves that the instructional design effectively motivates authentic moral action.

Specific behavioral indicators of this highly successful integration are most frequently observed during spontaneous moments of minor interpersonal friction among the students. When normal childhood disagreements inevitably arise, the students increasingly demonstrate the impressive ability to resolve minor conflicts between peers independently and amicably. Crucial moral values such as actively respecting opinions, displaying good sportsmanship, and making wise, balanced decisions begin to form gradually but very noticeably. Instead of immediately resorting to verbal hostility, the students thoughtfully employ the mediational skills

they directly observed from their teachers to reach compromises. These highly tangible behavioral shifts provide incredibly compelling empirical evidence that the character education program is yielding highly measurable results.

Beyond the physical confines of the formal classroom, the broader school culture actively institutionalizes these inclusive behaviors through routine, mandatory activities. A robust school culture that perfectly reflects the principle of moderation is actively cultivated through communal practices such as daily congregational prayer. Additionally, the school administration frequently organizes mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) activities that require students to physically work together toward a common goal. These highly structured communal environments serve as highly practical social laboratories where students can safely rehearse, refine, and solidify their tolerant behaviors. By deeply embedding these actions into the daily institutional routine, the school essentially ensures that moderate behavior becomes an automatic, subconscious habit.

Despite the highly successful behavioral integration observed within the school premises, the empirical interview data also uncovered several notable structural challenges. The frustrating persistence of students returning to family backgrounds that simply do not support tolerance remains a highly significant inhibiting factor. When students unfortunately return to domestic environments that do not actively model inclusive attitudes, it occasionally leads to highly visible regressions in their classroom behavior. This stark ideological contrast between school expectations and home realities often creates severe cognitive dissonance for the highly impressionable young learners. Honestly acknowledging this systemic challenge is absolutely crucial, as it clearly reveals that achieving sustainable moral action fundamentally requires incredibly strong parental synergy.

Another highly critical structural barrier identified during the comprehensive qualitative analysis relates directly to professional development opportunities for the educational staff. There is a highly noticeable lack of regular, formalized teacher training concerning the specific pedagogical application of Aswaja values in modern learning environments. Without continuous institutional professional development, dedicated teachers must often rely solely on their personal intuition rather than evidence-based pedagogical strategies to handle complex classroom dynamics. Systematically addressing this specific limitation is absolutely essential to ensure that all educators are equally equipped to facilitate the crucial moral action stage effectively. Providing targeted teacher training would significantly enhance the school's overall institutional capacity to shape moderate, tolerant, and balanced student characters consistently.

Discussion

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that the successful internalization of moderation values—specifically *tawazun* (balance) and *tasamuh* (tolerance) cannot be achieved through unidirectional theological transmission alone. Instead, the data reveals that MI Idzharul Ulum's success is fundamentally rooted in the systematic application of Thomas Lickona's tripartite character framework. This

holistic approach effectively bridges the psychological gap between abstract religious dogmas and the concrete social realities that elementary students navigate daily. Unlike traditional indoctrination methods that frequently yield only superficial compliance, the cohesive integration of moral knowing, feeling, and action fosters genuine moral comprehension (Fahrurrozi et al., 2025; Umam, 2021). This phenomenon aligns with contemporary character education theories asserting that moral values must be comprehensively experienced across cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains to become permanent identity markers (Lickona, 1992; Nata & Mudlofir, 2025).

During the foundational stage of moral knowing, the strategic utilization of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) narratives proves highly effective because it directly aligns with the students' cognitive developmental stage (Benite, 2020). According to Piaget's theory of cognitive development, children in late elementary school remain in the concrete operational stage, requiring tangible examples to process abstract philosophical concepts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Therefore, when educators present specific historical accounts of early Islamic figures practicing tolerance, the students do not perceive these lessons as restrictive, arbitrary rules. Rather, they actively reconstruct the understanding that respecting diversity is a rational heritage of human civilization, not merely a modern secular invention. Establishing this robust cognitive construct serves as a vital intellectual shield, protecting the young learners from narrow, extremist religious interpretations in their future endeavors.

Furthermore, the observed effectiveness of case-based discussions during the cognitive phase indicates that cultivating *tasamuh* absolutely requires critical, open dialogic spaces (Ary et al., 2023; Chadidjah et al., 2021). When students are systematically trained to analyze social dilemmas within the classroom, they gradually learn to dismantle the natural in-group biases and prejudices typical of childhood psychology. The active deconstruction of these inherent biases is exceptionally crucial, given the high probability of students encountering intolerant narratives through unrestricted social media or external environments (Murtadlo, 2021). By acting strictly as a neutral facilitator, the teacher successfully constructs a psychologically safe environment where students can voice doubts without the paralyzing fear of theological judgment. This specific pedagogical dynamic fundamentally distinguishes the classrooms at MI Idzharul Ulum from highly conservative educational models, where critical questioning is frequently silenced under the guise of blind obedience.

Transitioning into the domain of moral feeling, the research findings sharply highlight the absolute necessity of emotional validation in transforming academic knowledge into authentic empathy (Dekker et al., 2023; Ulita et al., 2024). The impressive capacity of the students to genuinely respect their peers' divergent opinions does not emerge spontaneously; it is the direct psychological product of structured post-lesson reflections. This phenomenon is highly consistent with affective development theories, which posit that empathetic awareness must be actively exercised for individuals to internalize the perspectives of others (Hoffman,

2023; Abdalla, 2025). When teachers routinely prompt students to evaluate their personal feelings regarding historical conflicts, the children are gently forced to step outside their natural developmental egocentrism. This targeted emotional validation effectively prevents the manifestation of "false positive tolerance," a deceptive condition where students merely appear tolerant to please authority figures while internally harboring prejudice.

Another critical determinant explaining the successful cultivation of empathy is the profound psychological impact of continuous teacher role modeling within the classroom's social ecosystem. Drawing upon Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, it is evident that children process complex moral behaviors significantly faster through direct observation than through explicit verbal instruction (Yang et al., 2020). When students visually witness their educators mediating classroom conflicts with absolute fairness and profound *tawazun*, they subconsciously absorb and replicate those specific emotional regulation mechanisms. This highly consistent behavioral modeling effectively dismantles the students' psychological resistance, as they clearly see that religious moderation is a tangible, practical reality rather than an impossible ideal. Consequently, the educator in this institutional setting transcends the traditional role of a curriculum deliverer, effectively evolving into a living prototype of a moderate human being.

The developmental progression toward moral action is further solidified through the mandatory implementation of collaborative learning structures during daily group assignments. The observational data, which indicates a marked increase in sportsmanship and inclusive peer interactions, can be scientifically explained through the lens of Gordon Allport's Contact Hypothesis. This sociological theory postulates that intergroup prejudice and friction can be drastically reduced when individuals are compelled to cooperate toward common goals under conditions of equal status (Allport, 1954; Harismawan et al., 2023). Within the observed classrooms, group tasks deliberately force students from varying socio-economic or cognitive backgrounds to communicate intensively and rely on one another positively. This continuous, functional interaction gradually erodes individualistic tendencies and naturally cultivates an inclusive awareness, which constitutes the deepest behavioral essence of *tasamuh*.

Beyond specific classroom dynamics, the cultivation of macro-school routines, such as daily congregational prayers and mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*) activities, functions as an essential sociological laboratory. These communal practices are not merely executed as mechanical religious rituals; they are intentionally designed as powerful sociological instruments to bind group cohesion. Echoing John Dewey's progressive perspective of the school as a miniature society, these structured routines provide a continuous stage for students to practice democratic and inclusive citizenship (Dewey, 2022; Machado & Nahar, 2023). Through the daily repetition of these inclusive social actions, the students' brains biologically form neurological pathways that transform moderate behavior into an automatic, subconscious reflex. Therefore, when these students inevitably face interpersonal disputes in the real

world, their very first instinctive response is balanced negotiation rather than aggressive confrontation.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive results, a profound analysis of the identified inhibiting factors provides highly critical insights into the limitations of institutional educational interventions. The discovery regarding students' behavioral regression caused by misalignment with their family environments can be comprehensively understood through Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. This systemic theory asserts that a child's character development is permanently influenced by the quality of interactions between various microsystems, particularly the intense push-and-pull between school and home (Conacher et al., 2022; Manesh Patil, 2024; Schneiderbauer et al., 2023). When the values of *tasamuh* taught intensively at school clash violently with exclusive or intolerant narratives at home, the student experiences severe cognitive dissonance and moral confusion. This conflict of value authorities frequently nullifies the effectiveness of character education, as children naturally tend to prioritize the ideological guidance of their primary parental figures.

This contextual alienation between the madrasah's progressive values and domestic realities demands a much more revolutionary, holistic mitigation strategy from educational administrators. The empirical evidence loudly confirms that religious moderation education will never achieve absolute success if the school positions itself as an isolated ivory tower. Educational institutions are urgently required to initiate comprehensive parental involvement programs designed specifically to synchronize the moral frequencies between educators and guardians (Mahdiyyah & Jasminto, 2025; Salim et al., 2021). Without building this synergistic, cross-environmental communication bridge, the young learners will remain perpetually trapped in an ideological ambiguity that severely threatens their psychological foundation. Establishing a tightly knit tripartite collaboration among students, teachers, and parents is an absolute prerequisite for designing a character education architecture that is genuinely antifragile against radicalism.

Analyzing the specific demographic context of Indonesia, the implementation of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) values at MI Idzharul Ulum proves to possess a remarkably high strategic advantage. The philosophical values of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* within the madrasah tradition naturally intersect with the deep-rooted socio-cultural principles of the local archipelago, such as the wisdom of *tepo seliro* (mutual consideration). This profound cultural resonance is psychologically advantageous because it significantly reduces the students' cognitive load when digesting the complex moral teachings provided (Azra, 2017). Unlike the forced adoption of foreign educational curricula that frequently alienate students from their own cultural roots, this localized approach actively strengthens their national identity. Contextualizing abstract religious dogmas directly into everyday cultural practices is undoubtedly the primary secret behind the smooth moral internalization process at this elementary school.

The secondary structural challenge regarding the lack of routine training for teachers on the pedagogy of religious moderation is a critical finding requiring immediate systemic resolution. The observed failure of some educators to effectively mediate heated classroom debates empirically proves that merely mastering theological content through memorization is entirely insufficient for modern teaching. Educators in the contemporary era are absolutely required to master advanced Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) to successfully transfer noble values without appearing judgmental or overly preachy (Mala et al., 2025; B. Setiawan, 2023). When teachers are not adequately equipped with state-of-the-art conflict resolution and facilitation methods, they are highly vulnerable to reverting to traditional, punitive teaching patterns when facing student resistance. Consequently, securing immediate financial and administrative commitment for the continuous professional development of teaching staff is currently the most vital investment for sustaining character education quality.

When critically reflected upon and compared with preceding premium literature, the findings of this micro-scale qualitative study successfully fill a massive void in the religious moderation discourse. The majority of macro-level studies published over the last five years have generally been preoccupied solely with measuring formal regulations at the university level or evaluating national government policies (Al-Anshori et al., 2022; Sakiratuka et al., 2023). The empirical evidence gathered from MI Idzharul Ulum elegantly shatters the pessimistic academic assumption that religious moderation education is simply too philosophical for young children to comprehend. On the contrary, the intricate process of dismantling prejudice and instilling principles of fairness at an early age proves exponentially more effective because their cognitive schemas remain uncontaminated by extremist doctrines. This powerful conclusion alerts global academics that interactive, micro-level execution within the classroom is vastly more meaningful than the mere publication of policy manifestos in government documents.

In conclusion, the systematic integration of the Western character education model pioneered by Thomas Lickona with the localized Islamic epistemology based on Aswaja proves to be exceptionally robust. The dynamic, linear progression moving from the stage of moral knowing, through moral feeling, and culminating in moral action operates remarkably parallel to the Islamic Theological Trilogy: the understanding of *Iman* (faith), the internalization of *Ihsan* (excellence), and the practice of *Islam* (submission). This striking cross-cultural paradigm compatibility provides rigorous scientific legitimacy that modern pedagogical science can be harmoniously married to the wisdom of traditional madrasah education. Ultimately, the relentless struggle to actualize *tawazun* and *tasamuh* at the elementary education level is no longer merely an administrative school requirement, but a crucial endeavor to save the nation's civilization. This fundamental educational strategy is firmly believed to be the primary master key ensuring that the next generation can safeguard the diversity of the global order with a balanced mind and sincere empathy.

CONCLUSION

This research set out to demystify the micro-pedagogical processes involved in instilling religious moderation values at the foundational level of Islamic elementary education. Moving beyond the traditional assumption that moral character is shaped purely through passive theological indoctrination, this study empirically confirms that the actualization of *tawazun* and *tasamuh* requires a deeply integrated, tripartite pedagogical architecture. By effectively synthesizing Thomas Lickona's character education framework with localized Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah (Aswaja) principles, the findings reveal that authentic tolerance is not merely memorized as a rule. Rather, it is cognitively mapped through critical historical reasoning, emotionally validated through guided empathy, and sociologically habituated through collaborative daily actions.

Theoretically, this study expands the contemporary discourse on religious moderation by providing a rare micro-level classroom perspective, proving that Western psychological models of moral development can harmoniously operationalize traditional Islamic epistemology (Lickona & Davidson, 2023). For educational practitioners and global policymakers, these findings offer a prescriptive blueprint: character education mandates must drastically shift from abstract curriculum additions to structural pedagogical transformations. Educational institutions must systematically equip teachers with advanced Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK) focused on conflict mediation and emotional validation (Shulman, 1986). By doing so, they ensure that primary classrooms function as dynamic, democratic social laboratories rather than passive echo chambers of religious dogma.

RECOMMENDATION

Despite providing critical insights into the intricate mechanics of moral internalization, this qualitative inquiry is not without its methodological and contextual boundaries. First, the research was conducted within a single, homogeneous educational institution explicitly affiliated with a specific theological tradition, which already structurally supports the investigated values. Consequently, the pedagogical dynamics of actualizing these moderation principles in secular public schools or highly heterogeneous urban demographics remain unmapped. Second, the observational timeframe was inherently restricted to formal school hours and physical premises. This limitation prevented a comprehensive measurement of how deeply the students' inclusive behaviors persist when they transition into contradictory domestic environments or navigate unmonitored digital spaces.

To address these existing academic gaps, future research is strongly recommended to adopt a longitudinal study design that meticulously tracks the persistence of students' moderate attitudes as they transition from elementary to secondary education. Furthermore, subsequent inquiries should employ cross-case comparative methodologies—such as contrasting the pedagogical strategies of state-run public schools with various private religious institutions—to accurately determine the transferability of this tripartite character framework across diverse

socio-cultural landscapes. Finally, there is an urgent need for intervention-based research exploring the efficacy of structured parental involvement programs. Investigating how to actively harmonize school-based moral instruction with domestic parenting paradigms will provide the ultimate roadmap for fortifying young learners against the encroaching threats of ideological extremism globally.

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