



Transformation of the Strategy for Internalizing Religious Moderation Values to Strengthen Students' Nationalist Character

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This article aims to describe and provide an in-depth analysis of the transformation of strategies for internalizing religious moderation values in strengthening students' nationalist character. The study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design.

Methodology: The research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil from September 1 to October 30, 2025. Data were collected using the snowball sampling technique, with both primary and secondary data sources. Data collection methods included in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.

Main Findings: The findings reveal that the internalization of religious moderation to strengthen students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo is carried out through the integration of moderation values into Aswaja and Civics education, seminars on religious moderation in national life, the commemoration of Independence Day and National Santri Day, teacher role modeling that reflects moderate and nationalist values, and regular flag-raising ceremonies.

Novelty/Originality of this study: The novelty of this study lies in its emphasis on the transformative internalization of religious moderation values as a central mechanism for strengthening students' nationalist character at Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo. It advances a conceptual framework explaining students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformation in translating religious moderation values into a sustained nationalist disposition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social changes and the development of digital technology have had a significant impact on the mindset, behavior, and identity construction of the younger generation. Various educational reports indicate an increase in religiously based intolerance, identity polarization, and a decline in national awareness among students [1]. Phenomena such as refusal to collaborate across religious lines, hate speech in digital spaces, and indifference to national symbols and values illustrate the weak internalization of nationalist character. This condition suggests that the character education implemented so far has not successfully fostered robust, inclusive, and adaptive nationalism [2].

Religious moderation, as a paradigm of tolerant, balanced, and constitutionally compliant religiosity, holds substantial potential to serve as the foundation for developing nationalist character. However, its implementation in educational institutions often remains normative, symbolic, and fails to engage students' practical consciousness [3]. Activities labeled as religious moderation are still largely limited to seminars, slogans, or textual delivery of materials without methodological transformation in learning. Religious practices sometimes even become trapped in exclusivism, thereby hindering the development of tolerance and pluralism. This situation underscores the necessity for a deeper, contextual, and transformative strategy for the internalization of religious moderation values [4], [5].

Indonesia's national identity is built upon the foundation of religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity. When the younger generation is unable to manage such diversity, the risks of identity polarization, radicalism, and a crisis of nationalism increase significantly [6]. In this context, religious moderation is not merely a religious discourse but also a strategic instrument for fostering inclusive nationalism. However, without an appropriate internalization strategy, the values of religious moderation cannot transform into a sense of national commitment embedded within students [7]. The need to formulate transformative strategies becomes increasingly urgent in the face of transnational ideological challenges and the proliferation of extremist content on social media [8].

Recent reports highlight a significant increase in religion-based intolerance among Indonesian students, particularly in schools and madrasahs that inadequately integrate national values and religious moderation into the learning process [9]. Surveys conducted by Alvara Research Center indicate that a segment of senior high school students exhibits ideological tendencies misaligned with Pancasila values and shows sympathy toward transnational ideologies. This trend reflects a weakening of nationalism, a critical pillar of national cohesion [10].

In recent years, this decline in nationalist spirit has been observed across various educational contexts, including madrasahs, manifested through rising intolerance, dissemination of religious radicalism, and a diminishing sense of patriotism and commitment to pluralism [11]-[13]. Further evidence from the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) and the National Counter-Terrorism Agency (BNPT) suggests that some students and university students are attracted to transnational ideologies that contradict Indonesian national values (BNPT in 2021). Research by the Wahid Foundation in 2020 also reports persistently high levels of religion-based intolerance among students, even within Islamic educational institutions [14].

The Ministry of Religious Affairs, emphasizes that the proliferation of exclusive religious expressions in public spaces threatens national identity and commitment to Pancasila [15]. As primary sites for value socialization, schools and madrasahs bear a fundamental responsibility to develop models for internalizing religious moderation that foster both tolerance and a strong, inclusive, and nationally-oriented character [16]. Strengthening nationalist character among the younger generation is therefore essential to support multidimensional nation-building, as inclusive national values, loyalty to the state, and a spirit of unity are foundational to Indonesia's social and political stability [17].

At the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level, exemplified by Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah, students are at a critical developmental stage for understanding and internalizing the principles of religious moderation (KM, 2025). During early adolescence, students actively seek to construct their personal and religious identities, a process that is highly susceptible to environmental and social influences. As formal educational institutions, schools play a pivotal role in fostering moderate, tolerant, and open-minded attitudes among students, thereby shaping their cognitive and moral orientation toward diversity.

Despite ongoing efforts at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah to promote nationalism through the integration of religious moderation values, significant challenges persist in achieving effective internalization. Observations indicate that many students demonstrate limited appreciation of diversity, low participation in national flag ceremonies, and insufficient respect for national symbols. These findings suggest that students' sense of nationalism remains underdeveloped, highlighting a gap between formal instruction and the practical embodiment of national and civic values.

External factors further exacerbate this condition. Globalization, pervasive social media use, and divergent political viewpoints contribute to fragmented perceptions of national identity among students, while excessive engagement with smartphones diminishes focus on civic responsibilities. Given these challenges, it is imperative for Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah to implement systematic strategies to cultivate students' nationalist character through the deliberate internalization of religious moderation values, thereby promoting a balanced integration of religiosity and civic consciousness.

The educational sector requires a holistic approach to value internalization that integrates curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. Teachers, as the primary facilitators of learning, need innovative strategies to link moderate religiosity with Pancasila-based nationalism [18]. Transforming internalization strategies should encompass curriculum design, dialogical teaching methods, teacher role modeling, and the development of an inclusive school ecosystem. Schools and madrasahs must function as constructive spaces for

diversity dialogue, fostering students who are not only knowledgeable but also possess a strong national character [19].

A central strategy in this context is the internalization of religious moderation values, which entails cultivating religious principles that are tolerant, inclusive, and contextually aligned with the spirit of nationalism and humanity [20]. This strategy has gained urgency in Indonesia due to increasing ideological challenges faced by the younger generation, including rising intolerance, social polarization, and the spread of extremist identity-based ideologies. Current educational realities reveal a significant gap between the pluralism values taught and students' behavior, which often reflects religious identity polarization. Therefore, approaches that go beyond knowledge transfer are needed—approaches that actively shape students' consciousness to integrate diversity values with national commitment [21].

The transformation of internalization strategies aims to implement pedagogical practices that are dialogical, contextual, and adaptive, fostering tolerance, non-violence, and constitutional loyalty as the core of national character. Embedding these values requires alignment across classroom learning, school culture, and teacher role modeling [22]. Islamic educational institutions, such as Madrasah Aliyah, play a pivotal role in harmonizing religious and national values, thus strengthening character building in students [23]. Internalized moderation values—tolerance, justice, balance, and patriotism—enable students to become religious and nationalistic individuals, committed to unity, state sovereignty, and societal diversity [24].

In practice, internalization can be implemented through curriculum integration, school culture, religious activities, and teacher exemplars, effectively preventing the development of radical, exclusive, and anti-national ideologies among students [25]. Madrasah Tsanawiyah, as institutions with a distinctive Islamic educational character, have a strategic role in aligning Islamic values with national values, ensuring that students understand religious teachings comprehensively while developing a strong commitment to the integrity of the Republic of Indonesia, tolerance, and unity in diversity [26]. This holistic transformation of internalization strategies contributes significantly to forming students' national character, particularly in Indonesia's pluralistic socio-cultural context.

The internalization of religious moderation values has increasingly been recognized as a critical component in student character development within educational settings. Lutfia [22] demonstrated that moderation values—*tawasuth* (balanced), *tasamuh* (tolerant), and *i'tidal* (proportional)—can be effectively internalized through an integrated approach encompassing classroom instruction, school activities, and community service, thereby fostering Pancasila-based nationalist character. Similarly, Rejeki [22] emphasized a holistic internalization strategy, spanning planning, implementation, and evaluation, involving teachers, students, and parents, which proved effective in strengthening students' national character.

Other studies corroborate these findings, highlighting the potential of moderation values as a foundation for inclusive character and patriotic sentiment. Fitriyah et al. [20] indicated that such values, when applied through both curricular and extracurricular activities, enhance students' tolerance, nationalism, and non-violence behaviors. Saputra et al. [27] further demonstrated that moderate religious learning strategies effectively cultivate both tolerant and nationalist attitudes. These studies collectively underscore the relevance of religious moderation in shaping students' ethical, social, and civic dispositions.

Existing studies indicate a research gap in the limited examination of the transformation of religious moderation values, particularly the gradual shift from conceptual understanding to deep internalization that substantively reinforces students' nationalist character. Prior research has largely emphasized implementation strategies and outcomes, while insufficient attention has been given to the transformative process through which religious moderation values are internalized and embedded in students' attitudes and behaviors. Accordingly, this study addresses this gap by examining how religious moderation values are internalized, transformed, and actualized in students' nationalist dispositions at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo as a constituent element of national character formation.

The novelty of this study resides in its emphasis on the transformative internalization of religious moderation values as a central mechanism for strengthening students' nationalist character. Rather than merely documenting internalization practices, this study advances a conceptual framework that explicates the cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformation through which religious moderation values are internalized and enacted as a sustainable form of nationalist character. Consequently, this study offers a dual contribution: theoretically, it proposes a transformative model of religious moderation value internalization; and practically, it provides empirically grounded insights for the development of context-responsive national character education capable of addressing the challenges of sociocultural diversity in Indonesia, particularly within the educational context of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil, Probolinggo.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach, as its primary focus was to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena, situations, and events. This approach is particularly appropriate for explaining how and why

certain phenomena occur, specifically concerning the transformation of strategies for internalizing religious moderation values in shaping students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah. Furthermore, the study emphasized text-based data, including interviews, observations, and document analysis. Such data sources enabled the researcher to obtain rich and detailed insights from the perspectives of the participants.

The research adopted a case study design with the aim of exploring in depth the phenomenon of transforming strategies for internalizing religious moderation values in the development of students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah. This design allowed the researcher to comprehensively understand the dynamics, contextual conditions, and influencing factors of the case in a holistic manner.

This study adopted a qualitative research design to examine the transformation of religious moderation value internalization in strengthening students' nationalist character. The research was conducted at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek, Krucil, Probolinggo, with students serving as the primary subjects of the internalization process. Data collection took place from 1 September to 30 October 2025, enabling an in-depth observation of the gradual internalization of religious moderation values through both intracurricular and extracurricular school activities.

Informants were selected using a snowball sampling technique due to the contextual and exploratory nature of the study, which required rich and in-depth data. The process began with the identification of key informants who held strategic roles within the madrasah and subsequently expanded through recommendations from initial participants until data saturation was reached. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews and non-participant observations involving the head of the madrasah, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, coordinators of religious programs, and students directly engaged in the internalization process.

Secondary data were collected through document analysis of curricula, institutional programs, activity reports, and relevant scholarly literature. Data credibility and trustworthiness were ensured through methodological triangulation by integrating interview, observation, and documentation data. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, allowing for systematic interpretation and validation of research findings.

Data were collected using three complementary techniques: participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation was conducted to examine instructional activities, school culture, teacher–student interactions, and religious practices at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah, enabling the researcher to capture contextual insights into the internalization of religious moderation values.

In-depth interviews were carried out using a qualitative exploratory approach. Informants were purposively selected and included the head of the madrasah, Islamic Religious Education teachers, homeroom teachers, and selected students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo who were directly involved in learning and character development processes. This technique was used to explore the transformation of religious moderation internalization strategies and their implications for strengthening students' nationalist character.

Document analysis was employed to support and validate the findings through systematic examination of official madrasah documents, including vision and mission statements, lesson plans, religious activity journals, and student character evaluation records. The documents were qualitatively analyzed to identify the integration of religious moderation values—such as *tawasuth*, *tasamuh*, and *i'tidal*—within institutional policies and educational practices. This technique also served as data triangulation to enhance the validity and credibility of the findings.




DATA COLLECTION METHODS		
DATA COLLECTION METHOD	PURPOSE / FOCUS	PARTICIPANTS / SOURCES
 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION	Examine classroom learning, school culture, teacher-student interactions, and	Teachers, students, and school environment
 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS	Explore internalization strategies and their influence on nationalist character formation	Madrasah principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, class guardians, selected
 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS	Triangulate and support findings through institutional evidence	Madrasah's vision and mission, lesson plans, religious activity journals, student assessment reco

Figure 1. Data Collection Methods

Data analysis in this study employed the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles and Huberman, which was conducted simultaneously and continuously from the data collection stage through to conclusion drawing. The analytical process consisted of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

Data reduction was carried out by summarizing, selecting, and focusing the data obtained from observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation that were relevant to the transformation of strategies for internalizing religious moderation values in shaping students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive-narrative and thematic forms to facilitate the identification of patterns and relationships among the data. The final stage involved drawing conclusions accompanied by an ongoing verification process through source and method triangulation to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

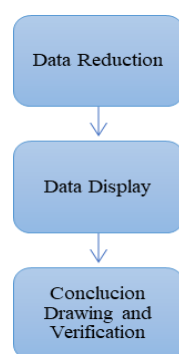


Figure 2. Methodological Framework

Data trustworthiness was ensured through the application of the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through source and method triangulation involving the head of the madrasah, teachers, and students, using observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, and was strengthened through member checking to ensure consistency between the data and field realities.

Transferability was ensured by providing a rich contextual description of the strategies for internalizing religious moderation values and strengthening students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah, allowing readers to assess the applicability of the findings to comparable educational settings. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of all research stages, while confirmability was ensured through the use of an audit trail and the verification of empirical evidence, thereby ensuring the scientific accountability of the findings.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings and discussion of the study are presented based on data obtained through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis regarding the transformation of strategies for internalizing religious moderation values in shaping students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo. These findings are then analyzed and interpreted in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks. The research findings and discussion are outlined as follows:

3.1. Integration of Religious Moderation Values in Aswaja and Civic Education (PPKn) Learning

The integration of religious moderation values at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah constitutes a strategic institutional response to sociocultural plurality and the growing need for national cohesion. As a religious-based educational institution, the madrasa embeds foundational values—tolerance, justice, inclusivity, and balanced reasoning—through structured instruction in Aswaja and Civic Education (PPKn), as well as through continuous behavioral habituation in daily school activities. This integrative effort reflects the institution's vision to develop students who are not only religiously grounded but also capable of engaging constructively within a diverse national community.

In practice, the learning process transcends conventional knowledge transmission and shifts toward a transformative pedagogical model aimed at cultivating moderate, reflective, and dialogical learners. Teachers operationalize this transformation through dialogic teaching, participatory learning strategies, and consistent role modeling of moderate behavior within the school environment. These practices substantively align with Lickona's character education framework, which contends that "*good character consists of knowing the good, desiring the good, and doing the good—habits of the mind, heart, and action*" [28]. Accordingly, the cultivation of moderation is holistically developed through moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action.

The internalization process also resonates with the principles of multicultural education formulated by James A. Banks [29]. Banks conceptualizes multicultural education as a comprehensive reform movement

designed to restructure the educational environment so that students of diverse cultural backgrounds can experience equitable learning opportunities. In alignment with this paradigm, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah not only integrates diversity-related content but also fosters an inclusive, dialogical, and non-discriminatory learning climate. Students are encouraged to articulate perspectives, engage in intergroup dialogue, and appreciate difference as a social asset rather than a threat. This approach reflects a systematic effort toward *prejudice reduction*, a central component of multicultural pedagogy, and simultaneously strengthens the operationalization of religious moderation as an educational ethos within the madrasa [17].

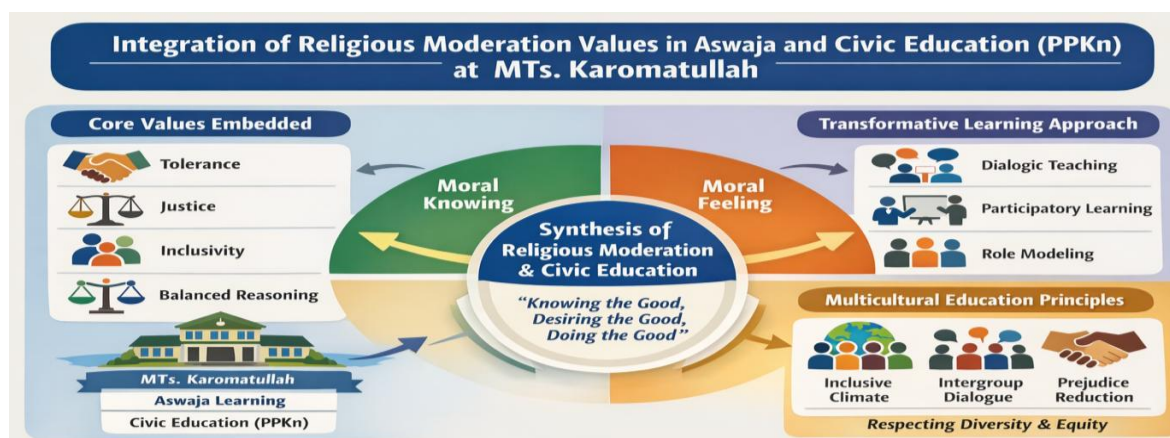


Figure 3. Integration of Religious Moderation Values in Aswaja and Civic Education (PPKn) Learning

3.2. Implementation of a Religious Moderation Seminar in the Context of National Life

The implementation of a seminar on *Religious Moderation in National Life* at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah constitutes a concrete form of character education developed through contextual and participatory approaches, as highlighted in. This seminar serves as a strategic platform for strengthening the internalization of religious moderation values, particularly in shaping students' critical, inclusive, and nationally oriented ways of thinking, as noted in.

This educational initiative aligns with the principles of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL), wherein students are encouraged not only to acquire theoretical knowledge but also to interpret and apply it within real-life contexts. Johnson emphasizes that "contextual learning occurs when students connect the content of academic subjects with the context of their daily lives" [30]. In this regard, the seminar functions as a relevant and meaningful learning environment that responds to contemporary challenges and the socio-cultural realities surrounding students.

From the perspective of Lickona's character education framework, such seminars constitute an essential medium for cultivating the three core pillars of character: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, as elaborated in [31]. By engaging in listening sessions, discussions, and critical questioning, students do not solely gain moral knowledge but also undergo an affective process of value internalization. Lickona argues that "effective character education includes a meaningful curriculum, engaging pedagogy, and a caring school community" [10]. An interactive seminar addressing issues such as tolerance and social harmony contributes to the formation of a caring and responsible school environment.

Furthermore, drawing on Bandura's social learning theory, this seminar strengthens attitude formation through modeling and vicarious learning. Bandura asserts that "much of human learning occurs in a social environment, through observing the behavior of others and the consequences of that behavior" [32]. Accordingly, the religious moderation seminar at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah is not merely an ancillary activity but an integral component of character education rooted in Islamic values that reflect the principle of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

3.3. Strengthening National Identity through the Commemoration of Independence Day and National Santri Day (HSN)

The commemoration of Independence Day and National Santri Day at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah is not merely a ceremonial activity but is deliberately designed as a medium for internalizing the values of religious moderation that encompass the cognitive, affective, and social dimensions of students. Through activities such as flag ceremonies, national-themed competitions, Islamic art performances, and the "Santri for the Nation" bazaar, the madrasah provides contextual and holistic value-based learning experiences. Values such as tolerance, social responsibility, and respect for diversity are not only verbally taught but are directly experienced and embodied by students in an atmosphere of togetherness and pluralism.

This approach aligns with Thomas Lickona's character education theory, which posits that character education is a conscious and systematic effort to help learners understand, internalize, and practice moral values

in their daily lives [33]. Students' concrete experiences in commemorating national and religious events reflect the integration of *knowing the good, feeling the good, and doing the good*. This ensures that value learning does not stop at conceptual understanding but is manifested in students' attitudes and daily behaviors [34].

From a multicultural education perspective, the approach adopted by Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah is consistent with James A. Banks' principles. Banks asserts that multicultural education aims to create educational equity and empower all learners to actively participate in a pluralistic society [35]. The school's activities, which provide inclusive opportunities for all students to perform and express their creativity without discrimination, serve as a concrete embodiment of these principles. This fosters students' development into fair, inclusive individuals who are prepared to live in a diverse society.

Thus, the commemoration of Independence Day and National Santri Day at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah represents a living practice of character education and religious moderation. Through participatory, reflective, and contextual strategies, the values of tolerance, justice, and nationalism are instilled comprehensively in students.

Table 1. Strengthening National Identity through the Commemoration of Independence Day and National Santri Day (HSN)

Aspect	Description
Core Purpose	Internalizing religious moderation values while strengthening students' national identity through national and religious commemorations.
Key Activities	Flag ceremonies, national-themed competitions, Islamic art performances, and the "Santri for the Nation" bazaar.
Values Internalized	Tolerance, social responsibility, respect for diversity, justice, togetherness, and nationalism.
Pedagogical Approach	Contextual, participatory, and experiential learning integrating cognitive, affective, and social dimensions.
Theoretical Alignment	Lickona's character education (knowing–feeling–doing the good) and Banks' multicultural education principles.
Educational Impact	Development of inclusive, nationally conscious students prepared to live in a pluralistic society.

3.4. Flag Ceremony Activities as a Strategic Mechanism for Strengthening Students' Nationalist Character

The implementation of the flag ceremony at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah has undergone a substantial pedagogical transformation, shifting from a conventional formal routine into a strategic platform for cultivating nationalist and moderate religious character among students. This transformation reflects the institution's commitment to optimizing school rituals as meaningful spaces for value internalization that align with contemporary character-education frameworks. According to teacher, the ceremony has been intentionally redesigned to serve as a structured intervention for reinforcing students' civic awareness, religious tolerance, and national identity.

Operationally, the ceremony is utilized as an integrative medium to communicate balanced messages encompassing patriotic values and inclusive Islamic teachings. The supervisory officer's address consistently highlights the importance of maintaining social cohesion, demonstrating respect for national symbols, and upholding tolerant religious practices in the multicultural context of Indonesia. This practice is consistent with the guidelines of the Ministry of Education and Culture, which stipulate that character education must be organically embedded within all school activities, including regular ceremonies, to ensure sustainability and meaningful reinforcement [36].

The pedagogical approach employed by the madrasah is also aligned with the paradigm of Moderate Islamic Education formulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The *Moderasi Beragama* framework emphasizes that fostering religious moderation requires experiential learning processes capable of shaping students' mindsets, attitudes, and behavioral patterns within pluralistic social settings [37]. The ceremonial space thus becomes a contextual learning environment where students are exposed to lived experiences of unity, mutual respect, and civic responsibility. This perspective resonates with contextual teaching and learning (CTL) principles, which underscore the integration of learning content with students' real-life social realities [38]. Correspondingly, values conveyed during the ceremony—such as harmony in diversity, constructive engagement with differing perspectives, and the cultivation of social ethics—reinforce students' character formation [39].

In sum, the flag ceremony at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah functions as an effective pedagogical instrument for internalizing the values of nationalism and religious moderation. Its contribution extends beyond symbolic representation and is embedded in transformative educational practices involving direct experience,

disciplined habituation, and modeling by teachers as role exemplars. Such integrative and experiential approaches demonstrate the ceremony's capacity to influence students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, thereby strengthening their identity as moderate and nationalist young citizens.

Table 2. Flag Ceremony Activities as a Strategic Mechanism for Strengthening Students' Nationalist Character

Dimension	Description
Pedagogical Function	The flag ceremony is transformed from a formal routine into a contextual pedagogical platform for internalizing nationalism and religious moderation.
Core Values	National identity, respect for national symbols, social cohesion, religious tolerance, unity in diversity, and civic responsibility.
Implementation Strategy	Integration of patriotic messages and inclusive Islamic teachings through supervisory speeches, symbolic rituals, and disciplined habituation.
Pedagogical Framework	Aligned with character education policy, the Moderasi Beragama framework, and Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL).
Learning Process	Experiential and contextual learning that exposes students to lived practices of unity, mutual respect, and social ethics.
Educational Impact	Strengthening students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions as moderate and nationalist citizens.

3.5 Teacher Exemplary Conduct as a Moderate–Nationalist Role Model

This study identifies teacher exemplary conduct as the most influential strategy in transforming the internalization of religious moderation values and strengthening students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah. Teachers function as central moral agents whose behaviors, attitudes, and daily interactions provide a living model for students. The effectiveness of this strategy aligns with the principle that character is more convincingly transmitted through observable behavior rather than verbal instruction, as emphasized by Muslich, who notes that children primarily learn from what they see rather than what they hear [40]. Thus, teacher modeling becomes a pivotal mechanism in embedding moderate religious perspectives and fostering national identity.

The implementation of this approach is theoretically grounded in Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which asserts that individuals construct behavior through processes of observation, imitation, and reinforcement [41]. At Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah, teachers consistently exhibit attitudes of openness, respect for diversity, and inclusive communication, thereby positioning themselves as influential figures whose conduct is readily emulated by students. Teachers not only deliver subject matter but also embody the values of tolerance, civic responsibility, and balanced religiosity in their daily routines. Their ability to model composure, fairness, and constructive engagement with differing viewpoints provides students with a practical framework for navigating pluralistic social contexts [42]. This indicates that religious moderation and nationalist values are internalized not through formal instruction alone but through sustained interpersonal interaction.

From the standpoint of Islamic educational philosophy, the teacher's role as *uswah hasanah* (a figure of exemplary conduct) reflects an authoritative method of value transmission modeled by the Prophet Muhammad. Zamroni [43] argues that teachers who demonstrate consistency between words and actions are more successful in shaping students' dispositions and character than those who rely exclusively on didactic approaches [44]. In this context, teachers who demonstrate politeness, emotional maturity, nationalism, and a balanced religious outlook become effective agents of character formation. Their consistent respect for national symbols, disciplined behavior, and participation in civic and religious activities provide students with concrete examples of how national identity and religious devotion can coexist harmoniously.

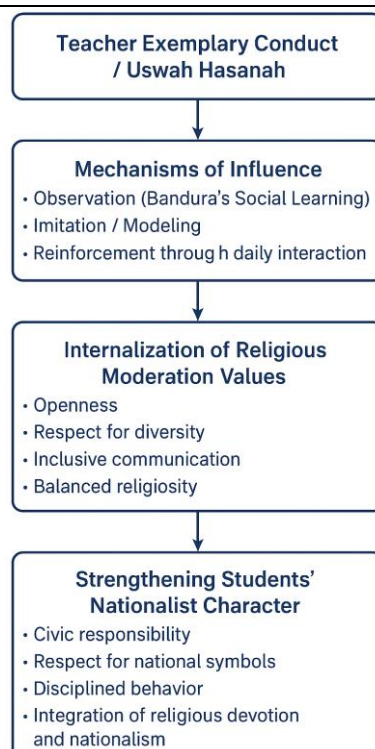


Figure 4. Teacher Exemplary Conduct as a Moderate–Nationalist Role Model

This strategy also aligns with the Religious Moderation Framework promoted by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. The 2019 national guideline emphasizes the crucial role of teachers in shaping students' religious outlooks, encouraging educators to embody an Islam that is compassionate, inclusive, and non-extremist [45]. By maintaining consistent exemplary conduct, teachers help students understand that nationalism and religiosity are mutually supportive [46]. The integration of teacher modeling into daily school culture thus serves as a transformative mechanism, cultivating not only moderate religious attitudes but also a strong sense of national belonging among students. As a result, teacher exemplarity emerges as a strategic foundation for strengthening moderate–nationalist identity within the broader framework of educational transformation.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the transformed strategies for internalizing the values of religious moderation are substantively effective in strengthening students' nationalist character. These strategies cultivate a sustained orientation toward diversity, tolerance, and civic responsibility through structured habituation processes that foster inclusive dispositions and respect for social pluralism within the school environment [47].

Theoretically, the framework of religious moderation in Islamic education—rooted in Azyumardi Azra's notion of Nusantara Islamic cosmopolitanism—emphasizes a moderate, open, and diversity-affirming outlook as a core educational ethos [48]. This orientation aligns with the pluralistic paradigm advanced by KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), who underscores the imperative of safeguarding minority rights and constructing national identity on the principles of mutual recognition and intergroup harmony [49]. Consequently, the internalization of moderation values serves as a strategic pedagogical mechanism for cultivating a balanced synthesis of religious commitment and nationalist consciousness among students.

This educational orientation also resonates with multicultural Islamic education, which envisions a pedagogical integration of religious doctrines with the empirical realities of a heterogeneous society. M. Quraish Shihab affirms that Islam embodies the values of compassion and universal solidarity, reinforcing the role of education as an instrument for nurturing tolerance and empathetic engagement [50]. Correspondingly, Western perspectives—such as James A. Banks's theory of multicultural education and Diane L. Lynchona's ethics-based pedagogical model—highlight the significance of fostering dual identities that harmonize national loyalty with respect for diversity [51]. Thus, both theoretical and empirical evidence affirm that the internalization of religious moderation values provides a robust foundation for developing nationalist character grounded in religious, ethical, and multicultural principles.

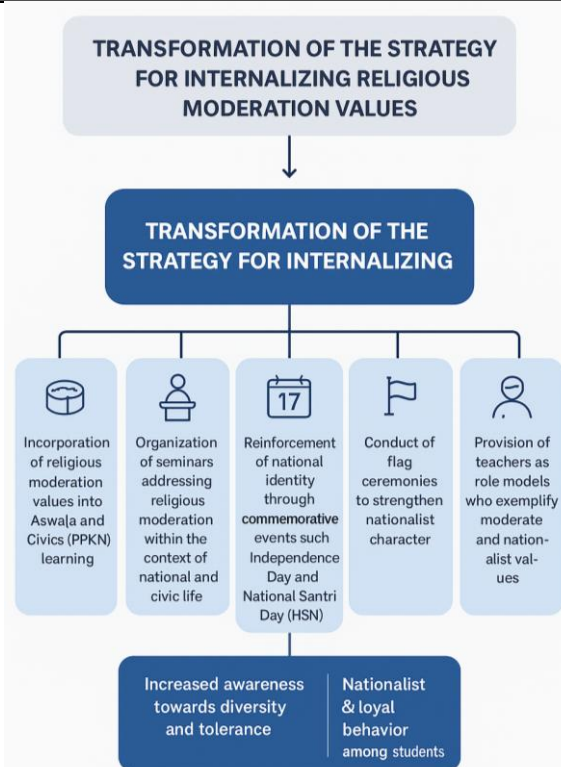


Figure 5. Transformation of the Strategy for Internalizing Religious Moderation Values

This study contributes theoretically by conceptualizing the internalization of religious moderation values as a transformational process that extends beyond normative transmission toward the formation of students' nationalistic consciousness, attitudes, and behaviors. The findings strengthen the discourse on character education by positioning religious moderation as a pedagogical strategy that systematically reinforces national identity within a multicultural educational context. Practically, the study provides empirical insights for madrasahs and policymakers to design integrated internalization strategies through classroom instruction, school culture, and educators' role modeling, ensuring that nationalistic character formation is contextually grounded and sustainable.

Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its focus on a single institutional setting, namely Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. The qualitative research design also limits the ability to quantitatively measure the extent of students' nationalistic character development, while the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts the examination of long-term impacts. Future research is therefore recommended to employ comparative and multi-site designs, integrate mixed-methods approaches, and conduct longitudinal studies to further examine the sustainability and broader applicability of transformational religious moderation internalization in strengthening students' nationalistic character.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions presented above, this study indicates that the transformation of strategies for internalizing religious moderation effectively contributes to the development of students' nationalist character at Madrasah Tsanawiyah Karomatullah Betek Krucil Probolinggo. This transformation is implemented through several integrated approaches, including: the incorporation of religious moderation values into Aswaja and Civics (PPKN) learning; the organization of seminars addressing religious moderation within the context of national and civic life; the reinforcement of national identity through commemorative events such as Independence Day and National Santri Day (HSN); the conduct of flag ceremonies to strengthen nationalist character; and the provision of teachers as role models who exemplify moderate and nationalist values.

The internalization strategy proves effective in cultivating students' nationalist character through an interconnected and multidimensional approach. Religious moderation values are systematically embedded in the curriculum via Aswaja and Civics instruction, which emphasizes tolerance, patriotism, and appreciation for diversity. Furthermore, seminars on religious moderation enhance students' awareness of the significance of sustaining social harmony and responsible citizenship within the broader national context.

This strategy is further reinforced through cultural and symbolic practices, including national commemorations and routine flag ceremonies, which cultivate a sense of national pride and collective

responsibility. Additionally, the exemplary conduct of teachers who embody both moderate and nationalist principles provides a tangible model for students to emulate. Through this comprehensive and systematic approach, the internalization of religious moderation values successfully fosters students' religiosity, tolerance, and commitment to national identity, demonstrating a viable pathway for integrating religious ethics with civic education in contemporary schooling contexts.

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