



Beyond religious instruction: Transformative strategies of Islamic religious education teachers for internalizing religious moderation values in multicultural vocational schools

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Abstract: Strengthening religious moderation has become a national strategic priority in addressing the complexity of religious diversity, growing social fragmentation, and the challenges of digitalization that shape students' religious perspectives. This study aims to comprehensively examine the transformative strategies employed by IRE (Islamic Religious Education) teachers in internalizing religious moderation values within a multicultural school environment, as well as to identify the factors influencing their effectiveness. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study design, this research collected data through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. The findings reveal that the internalization of religious moderation is implemented through systemic, integrative, and sustainable transformative strategies, including teacher role modeling, habituation practices, integration of moderation values into formal learning processes, dialogical approaches, and the optimization of religious activities. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the success of value transformation is shaped by the interplay of institutional, social, and pedagogical factors, encompassing school policy support, leadership capacity, teachers' professional competence, family engagement, and students' social environmental characteristics. Nevertheless, the pervasive influence of digital media and the diversity of students' prior understanding of religious moderation remain significant challenges that require adaptive and context-sensitive pedagogical frameworks. This study contributes to the advancement of religious moderation scholarship by providing a contextual analysis of IRE teachers' transformative strategies in fostering religious moderation values within vocational education, while highlighting the dynamic factors that shape its implementation.

INTRODUCTION

Amid increasing social fragmentation, identity polarization, and the rapid proliferation of digital information, religious education faces increasingly complex challenges. Its role is no longer limited to the transmission of religious knowledge but has expanded toward shaping students' perspectives, attitudes, and social interactions based on principles of moderation within a pluralistic society. This challenge is particularly significant as students represent one of the groups most actively engaged with digital media (Yusnita et al., 2023), making them more susceptible to



fragmented, exclusive, or even radical religious narratives when such exposure is not accompanied by adequate religious literacy (Sirry, 2024). Recent studies indicate that religious understanding among students in Islamic educational institutions remains vulnerable to ideological rigidity and radical tendencies (Jazilurrahman et al., 2025), highlighting the urgent need for strengthening religious moderation through educational processes.

Religious moderation refers to a perspective, attitude, and religious practice that emphasizes balance, respect for human dignity, and the pursuit of social harmony while rejecting radicalism and extremism (Haningsih, 2022). In the Indonesian context, religious moderation has been positioned as a national strategic agenda aimed at preserving social cohesion amid religious diversity and the growing influence of radical ideologies. Its core values, contains national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and appreciation of local tradition, are fundamentally grounded in the Islamic principles of *tawazun* and *tawasuth* (Rizkon, 2024). The implementation of these principles requires individuals to engage in a contextual interpretation of religious teachings by harmonizing sacred texts with contemporary social realities, enabling religion to function as a constructive force for addressing societal challenges rather than becoming a source of conflict and division.

The internalization of religious moderation values is a continuous process that involves value transformation, value transaction, and value transinternalization, where moderation becomes embedded in students' character (Misnan et al., 2025). In this process, teachers do not merely transmit textual religious knowledge but also provide contextual understanding to foster moderate religious perspectives among students (Jazilurrahman et al., 2025). At the transinternalization stage, values such as balance and tolerance are reflected in students' daily behaviors and become internal resilience against rigid and radical ideological influences.

In this context, IRE teachers play a strategic role in shaping students' moderate religious character (Arifin et al., 2026). The successful internalization of religious values in educational institutions is highly dependent on educators' capacity to design and implement appropriate pedagogical strategies (Biantoro & Rahmatullah, 2025). The role of IRE teachers extends beyond classroom instruction; it encompasses a comprehensive educational process involving emotional engagement, teacher exemplarity, and the development of a supportive religious atmosphere within the school environment (Judrah et al., 2024). Therefore, IRE teachers are required to adopt innovative approaches in transforming complex Islamic teachings into meaningful and accessible messages that resonate with contemporary adolescents living within rapidly changing digital and informational environments (Sari et al., 2025). In this regard, teacher exemplarity represents a fundamental instrument in value internalization, as teachers' attitudes and behaviors function as a

form of hidden curriculum that is continuously observed and interpreted by students (Sinaga, 2025).

Vocational schools possess distinctive characteristics compared to general secondary schools, particularly due to their curriculum orientation toward vocational competencies, practical skills, and preparation for the professional world (Martaningsih et al., 2019). Students in vocational education frequently engage with diverse industrial and social environments, requiring a strong character foundation that enables them to maintain religious identity while embracing inclusivity and diversity (Falah & Ahid, 2025). However, the limited allocation of IRE instructional hours in vocational schools presents a significant challenge for teachers in maximizing the internalization of religious moderation values amid intensive workshop activities and vocational training. This condition requires IRE teachers to develop creative, adaptive, and efficient learning strategies to ensure that moderation values can be meaningfully integrated despite limited instructional time (Bisanti et al., 2024).

Preliminary observations at SMKN 3 Bima City (SMK Negeri 3 Kota Bima), indicate that the school represents a dynamic educational environment characterized by diverse student backgrounds and regional identities. Although religious life within the school generally reflects a harmonious condition, potential forms of identity-based tension and adolescent group egoism remain challenges that require strategic educational intervention. Without adequate guidance through the values of moderation, such dynamics may contribute to exclusive religious attitudes. The socio-religious context of Bima City, which has a strong religious character and dynamic community interactions, further emphasizes the importance of strengthening religious moderation values among students. Consequently, IRE teachers are expected to integrate moderation principles into the vocational school culture so that graduates possess inclusive, tolerant, and moderate identities when entering increasingly diverse professional environments.

Previous studies have explored the internalization of religious moderation values through various educational approaches, including strengthening learning materials, developing instructional resources, and implementing conventional learning practices in school settings (Habibie et al. 2021; Fauziah et al., 2024; Ma'arif et al., 2024; Suhendi et al., 2021). Other studies have emphasized the importance of student engagement in learning processes (Muaz & Ruswandi, 2022), family support (Wahid, 2024), and the development of religious school culture as influential factors in strengthening religious moderation (Koto & Pratiwi, 2024). These findings demonstrate that the internalization of religious moderation is not a linear process but rather a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction of pedagogical, social, and cultural dimensions.

Nevertheless, existing studies have primarily focused on conceptual discussions or general program implementation, while empirical evidence on the transformative strategies employed by IRE teachers in everyday pedagogical practice remains limited. Moreover, the context of vocational education, particularly in socio-culturally distinctive regions such as Bima, has received little attention despite its need for religious education that fosters moderate, adaptive, and socially responsible attitudes alongside professional competencies.

Addressing this research gap, the present study provides a distinct perspective by examining the transformative strategies implemented by IRE teachers in internalizing religious moderation values within the context of vocational education. Rather than merely identifying instructional techniques, this study investigates how teachers adapt their strategies to students' characteristics and how these practices are shaped by institutional, social, and contextual factors within the school environment. Accordingly, this research expands the discourse on religious moderation from a primarily normative perspective toward a contextual understanding of teachers' transformative pedagogical practices.

This study aims to critically explore the strategies employed by IRE teachers in internalizing religious moderation values at SMKN 3 Bima City and to identify the supporting and inhibiting factors influencing their implementation. Theoretically, this research contributes to the advancement of literature on religious moderation pedagogy by offering empirical insights into its application within vocational education, a context that remains insufficiently examined. Practically, the findings are expected to provide a contextual framework for developing IRE learning strategies that align with local cultural characteristics, vocational education demands, and the broader goal of cultivating moderate religious character as an essential competency for social participation and professional life.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. A descriptive qualitative approach is intended to explore and interpret participants' meanings, experiences, and perceptions regarding a particular phenomenon in depth (Waruwu, 2024). This approach was selected because it enables the researchers to provide a comprehensive and contextual understanding of the transformative strategies employed by IRE teachers in internalizing religious moderation values as they naturally occur within the educational setting.

Data were collected through triangulated techniques, including observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis, to ensure the credibility, validity, and comprehensiveness of the findings. This study can be categorized as field research, as it required the researchers' direct engagement with the research site to obtain empirical data through observation and interaction

with relevant participants. The research was conducted at SMKN 3 Bima City, beginning in December 2025, with informants selected through purposive sampling based on their relevance to the research objectives. The participants consisted of the school principal, curriculum coordinator, student affairs coordinator, two IRE teachers, and ten students. The data analysis process employed in this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

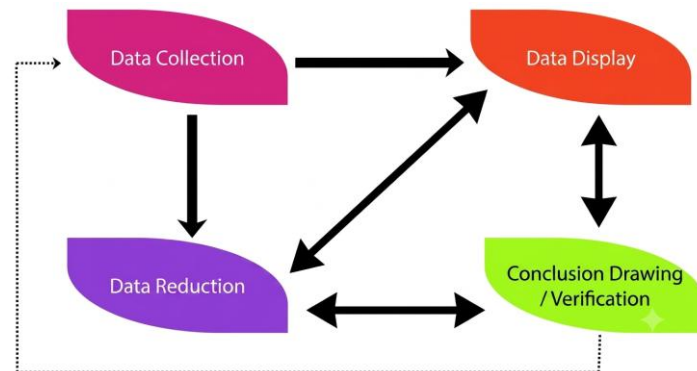


Figure 1. Components of Data Analytics Pipeline (Miles et al., 2014)

Data were analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, consisting of four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data were collected through observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The collected data were then reduced by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the transformative strategies of IRE teachers and the factors influencing their implementation. The reduced data were presented descriptively to identify key themes, including strategies, supporting factors, and challenges. Finally, conclusions were drawn through systematic interpretation of the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of transformative IRE teacher strategies in fostering religious moderation at SMKN 3 Bima City. The following image presents a visualization of the research location based on mapping using [Google Maps](https://www.google.com/maps).

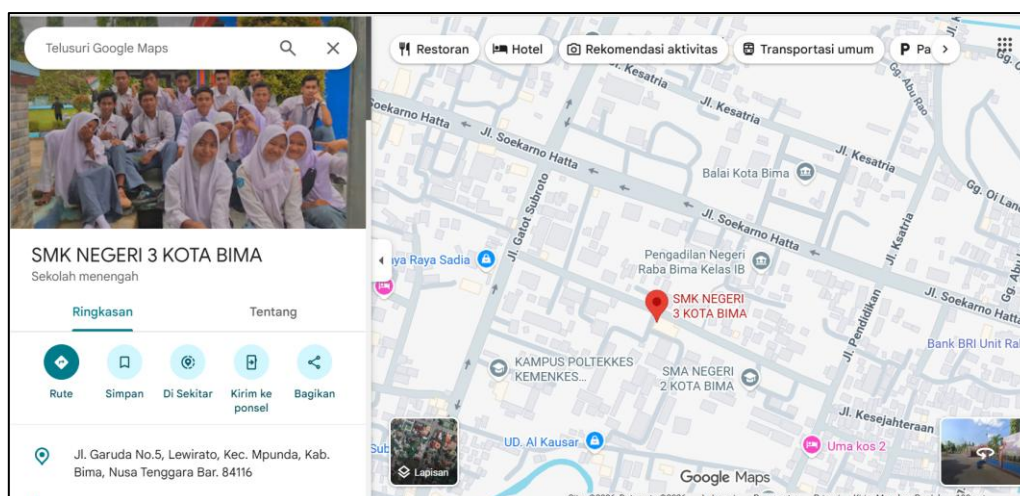


Figure 2. Visualization of The Research Location

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformative Strategy of IRE Teacher for Internalizing Religious Moderation Values in Multicultural Vocational Schools

The findings of this study reveal that IRE teachers at SMKN 3 Bima City employ various systematic, structured, and comprehensive strategies to internalize religious moderation values among students. Five transformative strategies were identified, namely teacher exemplarity, habituation, integration of moderation values into formal learning, dialogical approaches, and the strengthening of religious extracurricular activities. These strategies reflect a holistic approach in which religious moderation is not only taught as conceptual knowledge but also practiced as part of students' daily educational experiences. The following section presents a summary of the five transformative strategies implemented by IRE teachers in fostering students' understanding and practice of religious moderation.

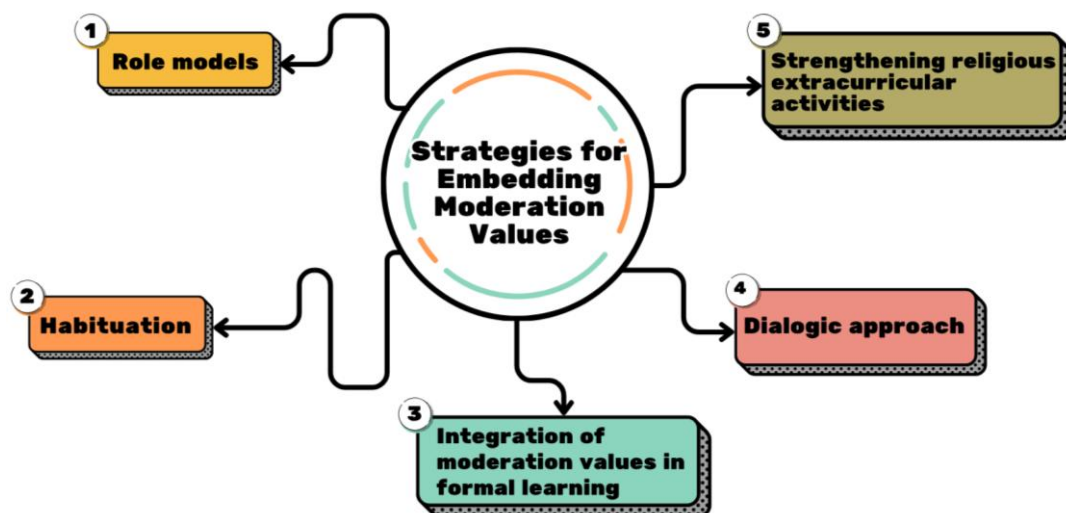


Figure 3. Transformative Strategy of IRE teachers in Instilling the Values of Religious Moderation

The first strategy identified is role models, in which IRE teachers function as role models who consistently demonstrate tolerant, moderate, and respectful attitudes toward differences in various social interactions. This exemplary behavior serves as a fundamental mechanism in shaping students' character, as the educational process involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also the internalization of values through observation and behavioral imitation. This finding is reflected in the teacher's statement below.

"I consistently try to demonstrate how a Muslim should interact with people who have different perspectives or beliefs. For instance, when addressing differences in religious views, I emphasize to students that diversity is a natural part of social life and does not need to become a source of conflict. I also strive to maintain respectful communication, avoid making quick judgments, and prioritize a polite and constructive approach in every interaction. In my view, students

learn more effectively from what they observe than from what they simply hear. Therefore, if teachers do not consistently provide concrete examples of moderate attitudes, it will be difficult for students to genuinely understand and practice religious moderation in their daily lives.” (SLV Interview – Teacher, 09-02-2026).

Teacher exemplarity serves as a strategic bridge between the cognitive and affective dimensions of religious moderation. Students’ understanding of tolerance, justice, and respect for diversity is not limited to conceptual knowledge but is transformed into attitudes and behaviors through the concrete examples demonstrated by teachers in daily interactions. Therefore, the effectiveness of religious moderation internalization is determined not only by what teachers teach but also by how consistently they embody these values in practice. This confirms that teacher exemplarity represents an effective strategy for contextualizing and strengthening religious moderation values.

The second strategy is habituation, which refers to the reinforcement of values through consistent practices embedded in students’ daily school activities. This strategy is reflected in activities such as collective prayers, respectful greetings, and congregational worship that cultivate values of togetherness, equality, and social responsibility. The following figure illustrates the habituation practices implemented by teachers in guiding students to perform congregational prayers.



Figure 4. Student Congregational Prayer Activities at SMKN 3 Bima City

Figure 4 shows the implementation of congregational prayer activities which were attended by students in an orderly and organized manner. This activity not only represents the dimension of spirituality in religious practice, but also reflects the process of internalizing the values of moderation through collective experience. In this context, students learn about discipline, togetherness, and the principle of equality where all students stand in one row without any distinction in social background or individual status. This habituation functions as a strategic

means in shaping the moderate character of students gradually and sustainably. This is reinforced by the following statement of IRE teachers.

“Every morning before the lesson starts, we get students used to reading prayers together, greeting teachers and friends politely, and keeping the classroom atmosphere conducive. Simple habits like these may seem small but if done continuously, they will slowly shape the character of the student. We also often remind ourselves of the importance of respecting our friends, not mocking, and not discriminating. In activities such as congregational prayers, students also learn about togetherness, discipline, and equality, as all stand in one row regardless of background. From there, the values of moderation have actually begun to be naturally embedded in them.” (DVI Interview – Teacher, 29-01-2026).

Based on the interview information above, the habituation made by teachers in instilling the value of religious moderation in students reflects a strong tolerance education. Tolerance education at SMKN 3 Bima City received full attention and support from the principal which is reflected in the following statement.

“From the beginning, our school has been committed to ensuring that education does not focus solely on cognitive development or vocational competencies. Beyond academic and professional skills, we aim to develop students with strong character, particularly in respecting differences and fostering peaceful coexistence. Although the majority of our students are Muslim, we consistently emphasize that the presence of peers from different religious backgrounds represents a social reality that should be accepted with openness and respect. For us, religious moderation is not merely a formal program documented in school policies, but has become an integral part of the school culture that is continuously cultivated through various activities both inside and outside the classroom. We also encourage teachers to serve as role models in demonstrating moderate attitudes, as students tend to internalize and imitate the behaviors they observe in their daily interactions.” (JN Interview – Head Master, 29-01-2026).

The third strategy applied by IRE teachers is to integrate the values of religious moderation into the learning process in the classroom. The integration is not carried out through the delivery of moderation material as a stand-alone topic, but is systematically internalized into each IRE learning material. Teachers consistently associate the substance of the material with the values of *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *tawasuth*, so that students not only understand religious concepts normatively, but are also able to relate them to the reality of life they are facing. This is as conveyed by the following IRE teachers.

“When teaching material about fiqh, for example, I not only convey the laws textually but also invite students to understand the wisdom behind them. I often associate the material with their daily living conditions such as how to behave with friends who have different opinions or backgrounds. I also opened a discussion room so that students could express their views. From there, I directed that Islam teaches balance and not exaggeration in responding to

something. In this way students not only understand religion as a rule but also as a guideline of life that brings grace to all." (SLV Interview – Teacher, 09-02-2026).

In addition, based on the results of the observations made, it is known that the integration process takes place through a contextual approach. Teachers raise various social phenomena that are close to students' lives, such as differences of opinion, cultural diversity, and the dynamics of social life, then invite students to analyze these phenomena based on the perspective of religious moderation values. Thus, the value of moderation is not positioned as memorization material, but as a frame of thought that guides students in understanding and responding to social problems proportionately.

The fourth strategy is the application of a dialogical approach, which is to build open, participatory, and empathetic communication between teachers and students. This approach provides space for students to express questions, opinions, and doubts without fear, so as to minimize the emergence of narrow or extreme religious understanding. This was narrated by one of the students based on the following statement.

"Our IRE teachers never directly blame us when we ask about things that are sensitive or that are different from the norm. Instead, he invited us to discuss, listen to our opinions and then give explanations slowly. We feel valued and are not afraid to ask questions. Sometimes he also gives real examples that are easy to understand so that we can see how the teachings of the religion are applied in daily life. From there, we came to understand better that religion teaches peace, not division." (AF Interview – Student, 29-01-2026).

In its implementation, teachers provide equal opportunities for all students to express their views without worrying about being blamed or judged. When differences of opinion arise, the teacher does not immediately give a right or wrong assessment, but directs students to put forward arguments based on postulates, moderate Islamic values, and consider the context of pluralistic social life. Teachers also use actual issues that are close to students' lives as discussion material so that they are used to seeing a problem from various perspectives before drawing conclusions.

On the other hand, a dialogical approach is not only applied during the learning process, but also in daily interactions outside the classroom. Teachers build familiar and empathetic communication so that students feel comfortable to consult about religious and social issues they face. This open relationship creates learners to be more critical in asking questions and more open to accepting different views. An open teacher-student relationship is a form of success in the implementation of the dialogical approach carried out by teachers as stated below.

"We apply the dialogical approach not only in the classroom, but also outside of learning. We build open communication so that students feel comfortable asking questions and discussing religious and social issues. When

there are differences of opinion, we invite them to dialogue and see different points of view, so that they are more critical and able to appreciate differences.” (DVI Interview – Teacher, 29-01-2026).

The fifth strategy is the optimization of religious activities as a medium for internalizing the value of religious moderation. Various activities such as strengthening faith and piety, *tadarus Al-Qur’an*, and other worship habits are used as a means of forming inclusive and moderate religious character. This activity is designed in a targeted manner to not only increase religious understanding but also foster an attitude of tolerance, togetherness, and respect for differences. This is reflected in ZR’s statement as curriculum coordinator below.

“We realize that extracurricular activities have a great influence on the formation of students’ character. Every religious activity in our school is directed not only to increase religious understanding but also to instill the values of togetherness, tolerance, and love for the homeland. We always ensure that the material presented in these activities is within the moderation corridor and does not contain elements that lead to an exclusive attitude or feeling the most righteous. We also encourage the coaching teachers to continue to guide students so that the activities carried out really have a positive impact on the development of their attitudes and behaviors.” (ZR Interview – Curriculum Coordinator 09-02-2026).

Activities such as strengthening faith and piety, reciting the Al-Qur’an, joint prayer, and worship habits are carried out on a scheduled basis with the assistance of teachers. During the activity, teachers reinforced the importance of respecting differences, cooperating, maintaining order, and avoiding the attitude of feeling the most right. Teachers also accustom students to help each other, share roles, and interact positively so that the values of religious moderation are practiced directly in religious activities. This makes the school not just a cognitive learning environment, but a laboratory for real action in the application of religious moderation values, as shown in Figure 5 below.

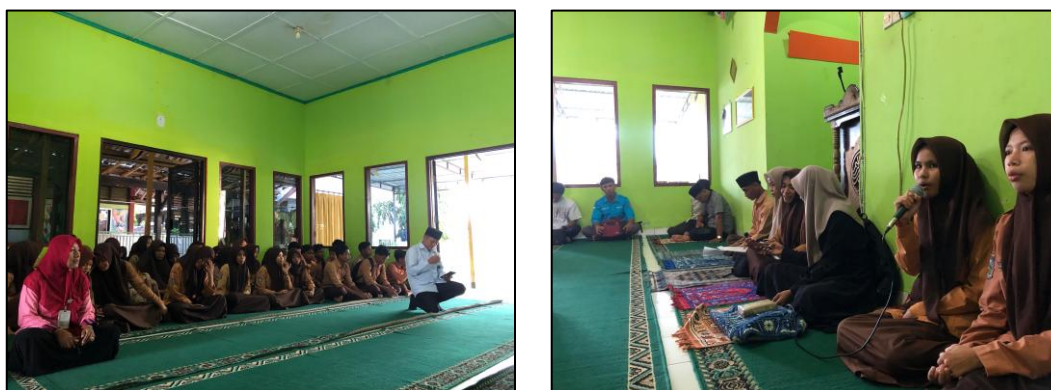


Figure 5. Living Laboratory for The Practice of Religious Moderation Values

Figure 5 illustrates that religious habituation activities at SMKN 3 Bima City are implemented inclusively, involving active student participation. These activities reflect the school’s institutional commitment to fostering a supportive educational ecosystem while serving as a

practical space for students to internalize religious moderation values through daily social interactions. This finding is further reinforced by the following statement from the school principal.

"We always emphasize to all schools, both teachers, education staff, and students, to maintain mutual respect. We don't want any form of attitude that degrades the beliefs of others, no matter how small. Every time a difference of opinion or potential conflict arises, we get used to resolving it through deliberation. This process is important because students not only learn to solve problems but also learn to listen, understand other people's points of view, and make decisions wisely. We also often insert messages of moderation in ceremonial activities, learning, and even in everyday informal interactions. That way the value of moderation does not feel forced but grows naturally in students." (JN Interview – Head Master, 29-01-2026).

The strategies implemented by IRE teachers are not limited to classroom-based instruction but are reinforced through value habituation and religious practices embedded within the school environment. This finding demonstrates that the internalization of religious moderation values is carried out through a holistic process that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. Overall, the findings indicate that IRE teachers at SMKN 3 Bima City move beyond the transmission of religious knowledge by actively fostering students' moderate, inclusive, and socially responsible character. The combination of teacher exemplarity, habituation, integration of moderation values into formal learning, dialogical engagement, and religious activities contributes to a sustainable process of value internalization. This finding supports Azwa et al. (2025), who emphasize that effective Islamic Religious Education requires the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains to ensure that religious values are not merely understood conceptually but are reflected in students' everyday behaviors.

Teacher exemplarity emerges as a fundamental strategy in this process, demonstrated through respectful interactions, non-discriminatory attitudes, inclusive communication, tolerance toward diverse perspectives, respect for others' religious practices, and consistency between teachers' words and actions. The consistent embodiment of these values by IRE teachers at SMKN 3 Bima City highlights the importance of teacher role modeling in strengthening religious moderation, particularly in the digital era. This finding is consistent with previous studies emphasizing that teacher exemplarity and school religious culture are significant factors in shaping students' moderate religious attitudes (Muaz & Ruswandi, 2022; Koto & Pratiwi, 2024).

Furthermore, these findings reinforce Armayanti & Nasution (2026) argument that religious moderation in educational settings requires a comprehensive approach involving exemplary behavior, continuous habituation, and the development of an inclusive school culture. However, this study extends previous perspectives by demonstrating that dialogical approaches and the

integration of moderation values into formal learning constitute important dimensions in transforming religious moderation from a conceptual framework into lived educational practice.

The findings also align with Hasan & Ansori (2024), who describe religious moderation as a way of understanding, practicing, and expressing religion based on principles of justice, balance, and respect for human dignity. In the context of SMKN 3 Bima City, religious moderation is not merely positioned as an institutional program but has become an integral part of the school culture that is continuously reproduced through daily educational interactions. This finding strengthens Madzkuri et al. (2025), who argue that strengthening religious moderation requires a holistic educational approach based on exemplarity, habituation, and the cultivation of an inclusive learning environment. Similarly, Arisinah et al. (2025) emphasize that the internalization of religious values requires simultaneous integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions to enable students to actualize these values in real-life contexts.

Therefore, the success of religious moderation implementation is strongly influenced by the consistency of the educational ecosystem in providing contextual, participatory, and character-oriented learning experiences. The findings further highlight the strategic position of IRE teachers as transformative agents who shape moderation-based learning practices in vocational education. Unlike previous studies that have largely focused on learning materials, instructional development, and conventional implementation models (Habibie et al. 2021; Fauziah et al., 2024; Ma'arif et al., 2024; Suhendi et al., 2021), this study emphasizes the transformative pedagogical role of teachers in adapting religious moderation strategies to students' characteristics and the vocational school context. The following section summarizes the transformative strategies employed by IRE teachers in internalizing religious moderation values.

Table 1. Transformative Strategies for Internalizing the Values of Religious Moderation

Strategy	Forms of Activities and Values of Religious Moderation
Role Models	Teacher exemplarity is demonstrated through both instructional practices and character development, reflected in non-discriminatory attitudes, the use of polite and inclusive language, tolerance toward diverse perspectives, respect for others' religious practices, and consistency between teachers' words and actions.
Habituation	The habituation of religious moderation values is carried out consistently in daily life through joint prayer, the culture of greeting each other politely, and the implementation of worship in congregations that emphasize the value of togetherness and equality.
Integration in formal learning	The values of religious moderation are systematically integrated and internalized into each IRE learning material. IRE materials are integrated consistently with the value of <i>tasamuh</i> , <i>tawazun</i> , and <i>tawasuth</i> , so that students not only understand religious concepts normatively but also more contextually.
Dialogical approach	Building empathetic and responsive communication by providing space for students to express questions, opinions, and doubts without fear, so as to minimize the emergence of narrow or extreme religious understanding.

Optimization of religious activities	Creating a laboratory for the application of scheduled moderate values through strengthening faith and piety, reciting the Al-Qur'an, joint prayer, and other religious activities.
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Supporting and Inhibiting Factors Influencing IRE Teachers' Transformative Strategies in Internalizing Religious Moderation Values

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of IRE teachers' transformative strategies for internalizing religious moderation values at SMKN 3 Bima City is shaped by various dynamic factors, functioning both as enabling and constraining elements. These factors significantly influence the effectiveness, consistency, and sustainability of the religious moderation internalization process within the school environment.

The first enabling factor identified is strong institutional support through school policies. The principal and school management demonstrate a high level of commitment to strengthening religious moderation by developing adaptive, participatory, and character-oriented policies. This support is reflected not only in formal institutional regulations but also in the provision of opportunities for teacher innovation and the availability of supporting facilities. This condition is illustrated in JN's statement below.

"We provide the widest possible space for IRE teachers to innovate learning. This means that teachers are not only fixated on conventional methods but are also encouraged to develop approaches that are more contextual and in accordance with the current conditions of students. Our support is not only in the form of written policies, but also in the provision of facilities and infrastructure that support moderate religious activities. We also always evaluate the running program so that if there are things that need to be improved, they can be followed up immediately. Hopefully, these moderation values will really become part of the school culture, not just a momentary program." (JN Interview – Head Master, 29-01-2026).

The second supporting factor is the heterogeneity of the school environment which functions as social capital in supporting the process of internalizing the value of religious moderation. The diversity of students' social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds creates a dynamic and contextual interaction space, allowing students to learn directly in managing differences. The harmonious relationship of students across religions and cultures is shown in the following figure.



Figure 6. Harmonious relationship between students across religions and cultures

Figure 6 shows the dynamics of social interaction between students that take place in harmony. This condition reflects that a heterogeneous environment is not a source of conflict, but rather functions as an effective social learning medium in fostering tolerance and mutual respect. This is strengthened by the following statement of one of the students.

“My peers come from diverse regions and backgrounds, including both urban and rural areas. Initially, there was a sense of discomfort because we were unfamiliar with one another, and our habits and ways of interacting were not always the same. However, over time, we gradually learned to understand and appreciate each other’s differences. Teachers also frequently remind us not to mock or underestimate others. Through this process, we have learned that differences should not become a source of conflict but rather an opportunity to complement and learn from one another. Now, we feel more comfortable because we are able to share experiences and gain new perspectives from each other” (AF Interview – Student, 14-01-2026).

The third supporting factor is the adequate professional competence of IRE teachers. IRE teachers demonstrate a balanced integration of pedagogical skills and religious knowledge, accompanied by a strong commitment to continuous professional development through various capacity-building activities. Observation findings indicate that IRE teachers actively participate in training programs beyond regular school hours, enabling them to design innovative, relevant, and contextually grounded learning experiences.

The fourth supporting factor is the active involvement of students’ parents in supporting character development programs. The establishment of intensive communication between the school and families contributes to the continuity of religious moderation value internalization across both educational and home environments. This finding is reflected in the statement from NH, the student affairs coordinator.

“Character education cannot be achieved solely through school-based efforts; it requires continuous support from the family environment. Therefore, we regularly conduct meetings with students’ parents to communicate ongoing programs, including religious moderation initiatives. During these meetings, we discuss the role of parents in guiding and reinforcing students’ character development at home. We expect that the values promoted at school can be aligned

with those practiced within the family environment, allowing the process of character formation to be strengthened more effectively.” (NH Interview – Student Coordinator 19-01-2026)

The implementation of religious moderation value internalization strategies is influenced by various factors that affect their effectiveness. The first inhibiting factor is the influence of social media and digital platforms in shaping students’ religious understanding. Easy access to online religious content exposes students to diverse information, including narratives that may promote exclusivity and intolerance. Therefore, IRE teachers are required not only to deliver religious knowledge but also to guide students in critically evaluating and filtering information from digital spaces. This shows that the internalization of moderation values is shaped not only by school-based education but also by students’ broader digital environment.

The second inhibiting factor is the diversity of students’ initial understanding of religious moderation. Students enter secondary education with different levels of knowledge influenced by their educational backgrounds, family environments, social experiences, and exposure to religious information. This condition requires teachers to apply adaptive pedagogical strategies, gradual reinforcement, and continuous habituation to develop students’ moderate religious perspectives. Thus, the success of value internalization depends not only on teachers’ strategies but also on students’ readiness and prior experiences. This is reflected in NS’s statement below.

“Before entering this school, I did not really understand religious moderation. All I know is that it is only limited to carrying out worship without understanding how to behave differently from others. After studying here, especially from IRE lessons and religious activities, I began to understand that in religion it should not be excessive and must respect others. The process is not straightforward but slowly I started to understand and try to apply it in my daily life.” (NS Interview – Student, 14-01-2026).

Overall, the findings indicate that the successful implementation of religious moderation internalization strategies is highly influenced by the synergy among school leadership, teachers, families, and the wider social environment. Institutional support, teacher competence, parental involvement, and a diverse social environment function as important enabling factors in strengthening value internalization. This finding supports Pohan et al. (2025), who emphasize that religious moderation education requires systemic and collaborative support from multiple stakeholders. However, this study further highlights the importance of continuously developing teacher competence, particularly amid concerns regarding teachers’ potential exposure to radical religious narratives at the secondary education level (Basyirah & Fuad, 2023). Similarly Yusuf et al. (2024), confirms that the effectiveness of religious education is shaped not only by classroom practices but also by supportive social environments and stakeholder involvement.

Meanwhile, the influence of digital media represents a significant challenge in the internalization process. The accessibility of online religious content requires teachers to guide students in critically evaluating, filtering, and verifying information obtained from digital spaces, considering that digital media may also facilitate the dissemination of radical narratives beyond the school environment (Rohmiyati et al., 2023). Therefore, teachers play a crucial role as facilitators and mentors in strengthening students' digital religious literacy.

Another inhibiting factor is the diversity of students' initial understanding of religious moderation. This finding aligns with Husni et al., (2023), who argue that knowledge of diversity is positively associated with religious moderation awareness. Differences in students' social experiences and exposure to diversity discourses contribute to variations in their initial understanding before receiving reinforcement through formal education.

However, this finding differs from (Anugrah et al., 2024) who reported that school-based religious habituation significantly improved students' moderation attitudes. These differences indicate that the effectiveness of religious moderation education is strongly influenced by the broader educational ecosystem, including school culture, teacher strategies, and the consistency of moderation practices. Thus, variations in students' initial understanding should not be viewed as a failure of religious education but rather as an indication of the need for systematic and sustainable moderation-based learning processes.

Therefore, IRE learning at the secondary level should move beyond the transmission of religious moderation concepts by implementing transformative strategies that reconstruct students' understanding through dialogical, contextual, and experience-based approaches. The following table presents a summary of the enabling and constraining factors influencing the implementation of transformative strategies for internalizing religious moderation values.

Table 2. Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in the Implementation of Transformative Strategies for Internalizing Religious Moderation Values

Appearance	Main Finding
Supporting factors	School policies as a form of leadership support, environmental heterogeneity as multicultural social capital, professional competence of teachers, and the active role of the family.
Inhibiting factors	The influence of social media and the internet, the heterogeneity of students' initial knowledge about the concept of religious moderation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the internalization of religious moderation values in schools occurs through systemic, integrative, and sustainable transformative strategies. These strategies are implemented through five key approaches: teacher exemplarity, habituation, integration of

moderation values into formal learning, dialogical engagement, and the optimization of religious activities. The effectiveness of these strategies is shaped by the interaction of institutional, social, and pedagogical factors. Institutional policy support, leadership commitment, teacher professional competence, social diversity, and family involvement serve as enabling factors, while digital media influence and variations in students' initial understanding of religious moderation remain significant challenges requiring adaptive pedagogical responses. These findings affirm that religious moderation cannot be cultivated through a merely doctrinal approach but requires transformative educational practices that facilitate dialogue, social experiences, and meaningful religious engagement.

Conceptually, this study contributes to the understanding of religious moderation internalization as a process of value transformation involving the development of students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors through the integration of learning practices, school culture, and social interactions. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation requires collaborative, contextual, and sustainable educational models capable of fostering an inclusive, tolerant, and adaptive religious understanding among students within the complexity of multicultural society in the digital era.

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