



## From Internalization to Social Norms: An Integrative Model of Religious Moderation in Rural Indonesia

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### Abstract

*Religious moderation is critical to fostering social cohesion in rural Indonesian communities, where differences in beliefs and practices can occasionally cause conflict. This study develops and evaluates a model for internalizing religious moderation that incorporates four critical societal elements: family, school, community, and government. The approach supports the fundamental ideals of justice, tolerance, patriotism, and reconciliation. To investigate how these values are nurtured in rural settings, data were collected using a qualitative case study technique, including observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that religious moderation is internalized in three stages: value transformation, in which individuals are introduced to moderation principles; value transaction, in which these principles are practiced and exchanged within social environments; and value trans-internalization, in which moderation becomes a deeply ingrained part of communal life. Furthermore, three essential approaches (understanding, habituation, and role modelling) help establish these values and promote a culture of moderation. By supporting these ideas, societies experience fewer religious conflicts and increased social cohesion, resulting in long-term stability and harmony.*



## A. Introduction

Religious diversity is widely regarded as a foundation of social cohesion and democratic pluralism. Yet, across many societies, diversity does not automatically produce harmonious coexistence. Despite extensive educational initiatives, public campaigns, and policy interventions promoting tolerance, religious polarization and intolerance continue to threaten social stability and intergroup relations (Adam-Troian et al., 2023; O'Brien & Noy, 2021). This paradox is particularly significant in Indonesia, one of the world's most religiously and culturally diverse nations, where pluralism simultaneously serves as a source of social strength and a potential source of tension (Burhanuddin & Khairuddin, 2022; Tabrani ZA et al., 2024). These conditions raise a fundamental question: how do values of tolerance and coexistence evolve beyond moral ideals to become enduring social norms that sustain everyday community life? Within this context, religious moderation has emerged as a strategic framework for strengthening peaceful coexistence and preventing the expansion of exclusivist and radical ideologies (Pradana, 2023; Muchlis, 2018).

In Islamic thought, religious moderation is closely associated with the concept of *wasathiyah*, which emphasizes balance, justice, proportionality, and the rejection of extreme interpretations of religion (Ibrahim, 2022; Afdhillah Amin & Matsum, 2023). This concept is significant because it reconciles theological commitment with civic responsibility, enabling believers to maintain firm religious convictions while engaging constructively with social diversity (Nitschke, 2024; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023; Rodhiyana, 2022). Consequently, *wasathiyah* has become increasingly central to educational, social, and policy discussions concerned with fostering tolerance, mutual respect, and democratic coexistence (Ibrahim et al., 2023; Rozaq et al., 2022; Sapiudin et al., 2022). The growing prominence of this framework reflects a broader recognition that moderation is not merely a theological ideal but a practical mechanism through which values of coexistence can be translated into shared social practices and sustained community harmony in pluralistic societies (Nuraeni et al., 2021; Vanderbilt, 2017).

A growing body of research has examined how religious moderation is promoted through educational institutions, social media, and youth engagement (Anwar et al., 2022; Falaq & Fitriani, 2022). These studies demonstrate that moderation values can be effectively disseminated through formal instruction, institutional programs, and digital communication. Complementary research highlights how character education, religious culture, and pedagogical strategies contribute significantly to strengthening moderate attitudes and

ethical awareness (Saepurahman et al., 2025; Hanif et al., 2024; Magdalena et al., 2024; Nurul 'Aini & Zamroji, 2025). While these contributions are vital, most existing literature focuses on schools, universities, or policy-driven interventions, tending to conceptualize moderation as a programmatic agenda rather than as a socially embedded cultural practice. Consequently, the processes through which moderation values are cultivated, negotiated, and sustained in everyday community life remain insufficiently understood.

This limitation is particularly consequential in rural communities, where social relations are shaped by dense kinship networks, deep-seated collective traditions, and continuous interpersonal interaction. Rural societies possess distinctive forms of social capital that reinforce values through communal rituals, intergenerational learning, and habitual cooperation, rather than through formalized discourse alone (Beach et al., 2019; Soegiono et al., 2019; Y. Wu et al., 2023). In these contexts, moderation functions primarily as a lived moral habit rather than as an abstract policy concept. Yet, despite the strategic importance of rural communities in maintaining national social cohesion, little research has systematically explained how moderation values become deeply embedded within local institutions and collective identities.

To address this gap, this study draws on value internalization theory, which explains how values are gradually absorbed through learning, practice, and social experience (Tabrani ZA et al., 2024; Zheng et al., 2022). Specifically, Ahmad Tafsir's framework conceptualizes this process across three interrelated stages: value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization (Afdhillah Amin & Matsum, 2023; Rodhiyana, 2022). Through this lens, values are first introduced cognitively, then negotiated and practiced socially, and ultimately integrated into individual and collective identities. This perspective is further enriched by value education theory, which emphasizes the interdependence of cognitive understanding, affective commitment, and behavioral habituation in sustaining ethical dispositions (Tabrani ZA et al., 2024; Akpan, 2020; Iwuchukwu, 2015; Nuraeni et al., 2021; Vanderbilt, 2017). Combined, these theoretical frameworks explain how moderation transitions from conceptual awareness to enduring social practice.

However, internalization theory alone does not fully explain how values become institutionalized and socially legitimized. To capture this broader process, this study also employs Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, which posits that social reality is continuously produced, maintained, and normalized through routine interaction and shared meaning (Jovanović, 2021; Nitschke, 2024; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). This perspective is particularly relevant because it conceptualizes religious moderation not only as an

individual developmental process but also as a collectively constructed social reality, one that is reproduced through everyday life, intergenerational transmission, and institutional reinforcement (Marlina et al., 2023; Mustaffa et al., 2021; Vieira & Feldens, 2021).

The principal research gap addressed in this article is the absence of a theoretically integrated and empirically grounded model explaining how religious moderation values are internalized in rural communities as a multi-institutional and socially embedded process. Previous studies have identified important values and transmission channels; however, they have not systematically clarified the sequential stages of internalization, the dynamic interaction among family, school, community, and government, or the exact mechanisms through which moderation becomes a durable facet of collective life. This gap is significant because without such an explanatory model, efforts to strengthen moderation often remain fragmented, programmatic, and disconnected from local sociocultural realities.

The novelty of this study lies in its proposed integrative framework, which combines value internalization theory, value education, and social construction theory to examine how religious moderation is cultivated and sustained within rural Indonesian communities. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on isolated institutional interventions or policy-driven approaches, this study conceptualizes religious moderation as a socially embedded process shaped through the collaborative interaction of families, schools, communities, and government institutions. By adopting this perspective, the study provides a more comprehensive analytical lens for understanding the sociocultural mechanisms through which moderation values are formed and maintained in pluralistic rural settings.

This study aims to develop and empirically examine an integrative model of religious moderation internalization grounded in the sociocultural realities of rural Indonesian communities. Specifically, the study investigates the stages through which moderation values are introduced, practiced, and embedded, as well as the roles played by families, schools, communities, and government institutions in this process. Through this objective, the study seeks to generate a deeper understanding of community-based mechanisms for strengthening religious moderation in pluralistic societies.

## **B. Method**

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how religious moderation values are internalized within rural communities in Indonesia (Morgan,



2022). This approach was selected because value internalization is a complex social process that unfolds through everyday interactions, shared meanings, and institutional practices, phenomena best understood through in-depth, context-sensitive inquiry. By using a multiple-case design, this study compares two rural communities with distinct sociocultural characteristics to identify common patterns that explain how moderation values are cultivated and sustained.

The research was conducted in Dahian Tunggal Village (Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan) and Cigugur Village (Kuningan, West Java). Both sites were selected purposively because of their prominent reputations for strong traditions of interreligious coexistence and their ability to maintain harmonious social relations despite religious and cultural diversity. These characteristics render the two villages particularly informant-rich cases for exploring how religious moderation becomes embedded in community life and transmitted across generations.

Data were gathered from 30 participants, including village leaders, religious figures, teachers, local government officials, and community members. Informants were selected via purposive sampling based on their active roles in religious, educational, and social activities, as well as their direct involvement in transmitting and practicing moderation values. To enrich and contextualize the primary data, the study also examined secondary materials, such as village archives, policy documents, institutional reports, and academic publications. This included key documentation retrieved from the Religious Moderation House at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Palangka Raya.

Data collection was carried out through semi-structured interviews, participant observations, and document analysis. Interviews lasted between 40 and 90 minutes and were conducted in Indonesian and local dialects to preserve contextual meanings and cultural nuances. Observations focused on religious gatherings, educational activities, customary ceremonies, and communal cooperation, allowing the researchers to capture how moderation values are enacted in everyday practice. This documentary evidence was used to corroborate and triangulate the findings from the interviews and observations.

The collected data were analyzed using iterative coding and thematic interpretation. Deductive coding was guided by the concepts of value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization (Afdhillah Amin & Matsum, 2023; Rodhiyana, 2022), while inductive coding allowed unexpected themes to emerge organically from the field data. To ensure rigor, the credibility of the findings was enhanced through triangulation of data

sources, methods, and investigators, alongside member checking with selected participants. Finally, strict ethical principles were maintained throughout the research: all participants provided informed consent, their identities were anonymized using pseudonyms, and all data were handled with strict confidentiality and stored securely.

## C. Results and Discussion

This section presents the empirical findings regarding how religious moderation values are internalized within rural Indonesian communities and discusses their theoretical and practical significance. Drawing on interviews, participant observations, and document analysis conducted in Dahian Tunggal Village (Central Kalimantan) and Cigugur Village (West Java), the findings reveal that religious moderation is not transmitted solely through formal instruction or government mandates; rather, it is cultivated through everyday social interactions, cultural practices, and institutional collaboration. The following analysis identifies the core values that are consistently practiced, the sequential stages through which these values are internalized, and the coordinated roles that families, schools, communities, and government institutions play in sustaining moderation as a socially embedded way of life.

### 1. Results

Field observations, interviews, and document analysis conducted in Dahian Tunggal Village (Palangka Raya, Central Kalimantan) and Cigugur Village (Kuningan, West Java) reveal that religious moderation is deeply embedded in the everyday life of both communities. In these villages, religious and cultural diversity is not perceived as a source of tension, but rather as a normal and accepted condition of communal existence. Social cohesion is maintained through long-standing traditions of mutual respect, mutual interdependence, and collective responsibility. Across interviews, participants consistently emphasized that differences in religious affiliation do not undermine social relationships or weaken their sense of shared belonging. One community member expressed this perspective succinctly:

*We will not be able to dispute or conflict with fellow residents of Dahian Tunggal Village and Palangkaraya just because of differences in religion. We can't possibly be separated just because of our religious differences. (Interview with DD, 2024)*

This statement reflects a broader social orientation in which diversity is interpreted as an organic and accepted facet of community life. In both research sites, moderation is treated

neither as a formal policy discourse nor an institutional slogan, but as a lived practice reproduced through everyday interactions, family socialization, educational processes, and communal traditions. The findings indicate that this process is sustained by a set of core values, unfolds through three interrelated stages of internalization, and is reinforced by the coordinated roles of family, school, community, and government institutions.

The analysis of interview data, observations, and documentary materials identified eight principal values that consistently shape social interaction and religious life in both villages. These values provide the normative foundation through which moderation is practiced and transmitted across generations.

*Table 1. Internalized values of religious moderation in rural communities*

No.	Value	Description
1.	Middle Way ( <i>Wasathiyah</i> )	Accepting and respecting diversity as an inherent aspect of human nature.
2.	Balance ( <i>Tawazun</i> )	Maintaining harmonious relationships with God, fellow humans, and the natural environment.
3.	Tolerance ( <i>Tasamuh</i> )	Coexisting peacefully while respecting religious, customary, and cultural differences.
4.	Straightness and Firmness ( <i>I'tidal</i> )	Upholding justice and truth consistently and fairly.
5.	Equality ( <i>Musawah</i> )	Ensuring equal treatment and participation regardless of religious or social background.
6.	Deliberation ( <i>Syuro</i> )	Resolving problems through mutual consultation and collective decision-making.
7.	Reform ( <i>Islah</i> )	Adapting traditions and practices to contemporary conditions without abandoning core values.
8.	Prioritizing Priorities ( <i>Awlawiyah</i> )	Placing the common good and social harmony above personal or group interests.

These values are not merely conceptual ideals but are routinely enacted in religious activities, social cooperation, and village governance. Their internalization follows a three-stage process: value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization.

The first stage, value transformation, involves the introduction and explanation of moderation principles through family guidance, religious instruction, and community leadership. At this stage, values are transmitted cognitively as individuals learn to comprehend diversity as both a theological and social reality. Religious leaders and parents play a particularly vital role in framing pluralism as *sunnatullah*, a divinely ordained condition that must be embraced rather than resisted. As one religious leader explained: “We explain to the community that diversity is *sunnatullah*.” (Interview with AM, 2024)

This statement illustrates that moderation begins with a conceptual understanding that differences are an inherent part of the divine design. Families reinforce this understanding from an early age by teaching children the importance of tolerance, respect, and peaceful coexistence.

The second stage, value transaction, occurs when these principles are actively practiced and negotiated through direct social interaction. At this stage, moderation values are reinforced through communal cooperation, religious celebrations, educational activities, and everyday encounters. Participants repeatedly described how they respect one another's religious practices and cooperate without attempting to impose their personal beliefs. One informant stated:

*"In daily life, we respect each other's worship and activities. We never interfere or force our beliefs on others."* (Interview with AG, 2024)

Another community member emphasized the practical expression of tolerance:

*"Even though our religions are different, we work together in social activities. There is no pressure or coercion."* (Interview with BS, 2024)

These testimonies demonstrate that moderation is sustained through repeated social interactions in which values are collectively enacted, negotiated, and affirmed.

The third stage, trans-internalization, occurs when moderation values become deeply embedded within community norms and institutional practices. At this stage, values such as justice, equality, and deliberation are no longer consciously taught as isolated principles; rather, they function as shared assumptions that automatically guide social behavior and civic decision-making. A village leader described how deliberation serves as the standard mechanism for resolving communal issues:

*"Every problem in the village is discussed together. Decisions are not made by one person, but through deliberation."* (Interview with MH, 2024)

The findings also indicate that more advanced forms of internalization are reflected in the application of *islah* (reform) and *awlawiyah* (prioritizing priorities). Community members adapt religious and cultural practices to changing circumstances while maintaining their core moral commitments. As one informant noted:

*"We adjust religious activities to today's situation, but the values remain the same."* (Interview with IR, 2024)

Another participant highlighted the absolute primacy of collective harmony: *“What matters most is togetherness and harmony, not personal or group interests.”* (Interview with CS, 2024). These statements demonstrate that moderation values have become integral component of the community’s moral infrastructure, actively shaping how social life is organized and sustained.

*Table 2. Stages, actors, approaches, and outcomes of religious moderation internalization*

<b>Stage</b>	<b>Main Actors</b>	<b>Dominant Approaches</b>	<b>Expected Outcomes</b>
Value Transformation	Family, Religious Leaders, Teachers	Understanding and explanation	Cognitive awareness of moderation values
Value Transaction	Family, School, Community	Habituation and social interaction	Practical application of moderation in daily life
Trans-Internalization	Family, School, Community, Government	Exemplary conduct and institutional reinforcement	Moderation becomes an enduring, embedded social norm

Table 2 synthesizes these empirical findings by illustrating the relationships among the three stages of value internalization, the principal actors involved, the dominant approaches employed, and the outcomes generated at each phase. The framework demonstrates that religious moderation develops progressively, shifting from cognitive comprehension to social practice and, ultimately, to institutionalized norms, supported by increasingly integrated roles of families, schools, communities, and government institutions.

Additional evidence from Cigugur Village shows that residents actively discuss contemporary issues, such as moderation and extremism, as part of their collective efforts to strengthen awareness and critical reflection. One participant explained:

*“We enjoy discussing the development of people’s lives and social issues, including moderation and extremism. It helps us understand more deeply and think critically about the problems that are occurring.”* (Interview with AM, 2024)

Observations further revealed that religious gatherings, communal worship, customary ceremonies, and local cultural performances serve as vital arenas for reinforcing these values. Religious activities are organized flexibly to accommodate work and family responsibilities, demonstrating that structural adaptation does not weaken commitment but instead strengthens participation. Concurrently, traditional rituals, artistic performances, and local crafts are intentionally transmitted to younger generations, ensuring the continuity of cultural practices that support moderation.

The findings also demonstrate that the internalization of religious moderation is sustained by the coordinated roles of four institutional actors. Families serve as the primary setting for early value formation, where children first learn respect for diversity. Schools reinforce these values through formal and informal educational processes. Communities provide the social environment in which moderation is actively practiced through daily interactions, collective rituals, and customary traditions. Finally, government institutions support these multi-layered efforts through policy design, resource facilitation, and public campaigns.

An official from the Ministry of Religious Affairs emphasized the importance of this institutional role: *"In a diverse life, we always emphasize the importance of national unity and togetherness through the values of religious moderation."* (Interview with AS, 2024)

This statement illustrates that government involvement does not supplant community-based initiatives; rather, it provides normative legitimacy and institutional reinforcement for moderation practices that are already embedded in local social life. Public policies, educational programs, and facilitative interventions strengthen the long-term sustainability of moderation by aligning formal state support with the organic cultural and social mechanisms operating within families, schools, and communities.

Taken together, the empirical evidence from Dahian Tunggal Village and Cigugur Village demonstrates that religious moderation is internalized through a gradual, socially embedded process. Core values, such as balance, tolerance, justice, equality, deliberation, reform, and the prioritization of the common good, are introduced through cognitive teaching, reinforced through daily social interaction, and ultimately institutionalized as enduring social norms. This process is sustained through the synergistic roles of family, school, community, and government, illustrating that religious moderation in rural Indonesia is not merely taught as an abstract principle but actively lived as an integral facet of everyday social life.

## **2. Discussion**

The findings of this study indicate that religious moderation in rural Indonesia is most effectively sustained when it is embedded within the social fabric of everyday life rather than treated as a formal doctrine or policy agenda. Empirical evidence from Dahian Tunggal Village and Cigugur Village demonstrates that moderation values are introduced through family socialization and religious instruction, reinforced through repeated social

interaction, and ultimately institutionalized as shared norms that guide communal decision-making and interreligious relations. This pattern suggests that moderation endures precisely because it integrates into the community's moral architecture, shaping how diversity is cognitively understood, socially negotiated, and collectively lived.

This finding supports and extends value internalization theory, particularly the developmental sequence of value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization (Saepurahman et al., 2025; Mustakim et al., 2024; L. Wu et al., 2025). The empirical evidence confirms that internalization is a progressive and socially mediated process rather than a unidirectional transfer of information (Gao & Lu, 2023). Values are first introduced cognitively, then tested and reinforced through interpersonal interaction, and finally absorbed into stable behavioral dispositions and collective norms. The present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that internalization operates concurrently within individuals and broader community structures. In this sense, moderation becomes durable when values are repeatedly enacted, socially validated, and institutionally reinforced.

Furthermore, these findings resonate strongly with value education and character formation theory, which emphasize that moral values become effective when they are cognitively understood, affectively embraced, and behaviorally practiced through habituation and exemplary conduct (Akpan, 2020; Iwuchukwu, 2015; Vanderbilt, 2017). The central roles played by parents, teachers, religious leaders, and respected elders underscore the vital importance of moral modeling in shaping moderate dispositions (Aisyah & Hidayah, 2024; Sholeh et al., 2022; Darmawan & Nugroho, 2025; Nucci, 2017; Shofwan, 2025). This dynamic helps explain why moderation remains resilient in both communities; it is not transmitted solely as an abstract ideal but is actively embodied in the daily practices of trusted figures whose behavior models tolerance, justice, and mutual respect.

At the sociological level, these results provide robust empirical support for Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory (Nitschke, 2024), which posits that social reality is continuously produced and maintained through habitual interaction and legitimization (Jovanović, 2021; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). In both studied villages, religious moderation has evolved into a taken-for-granted social norm reproduced through intergenerational transmission, communal rituals, and institutional reinforcement (Rivauzi et al., 2025; Marlina et al., 2023). This interpretation is vital because it demonstrates that moderation is not merely promoted through formal discourse; rather, it is socially constructed

through recurring practices that gradually transform abstract values into collective expectations and binding moral obligations.

Consistent with prior empirical scholarship, this research confirms that religious moderation is most effective when embedded within lived social practice rather than restricted to formal instruction or policy frameworks (Burhanuddin & Khairuddin, 2022; Falaq & Fitriani, 2022; Sulaeman et al., 2023; Suyanto & Ulfah, 2024). However, the present study advances the literature by demonstrating that the sustainability of moderation is significantly enhanced when value internalization occurs within an integrated ecosystem involving families, schools, communities, and government institutions. This finding underscores the critical importance of institutional synergy, illustrating that the efficacy of any single actor depends heavily on its structural alignment with the others.

Furthermore, the rural context itself functions as a decisive enabling condition. Rural communities are characterized by dense kinship ties, deep-seated collective traditions, and continuous face-to-face interaction, structural elements that intensify normative reinforcement and social accountability (Beach et al., 2019; Soegiono et al., 2019; Y. Wu et al., 2023). These environmental characteristics create a fertile ground for moderation because values are continuously practiced and monitored collectively. This insight challenges the urban-centric and institution-focused assumptions prevalent in much of the existing literature, which frequently treat moderation as a top-down programmatic agenda rather than as organic, community-based social process. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that enduring moderation depends fundamentally on the local social ecology in which values are enacted and normalized.

By integrating value internalization theory, social construction theory, and character education perspectives, this study proposes a multidimensional framework for understanding how religious moderation is formed, maintained, and transmitted within rural sociocultural contexts. The model links micro-level processes of moral development, meso-level institutional interaction, and macro-level cultural structures. Specifically, religious moderation develops through three sequential stages, is reinforced through understanding, habituation, and exemplary conduct, and is sustained by the coordinated roles of family, school, community, and government. This theoretical synthesis constitutes the principal academic contribution of the study, offering a comprehensive explanation of how moderation becomes socially durable. The conceptual structure of this model is illustrated in Figure 1.

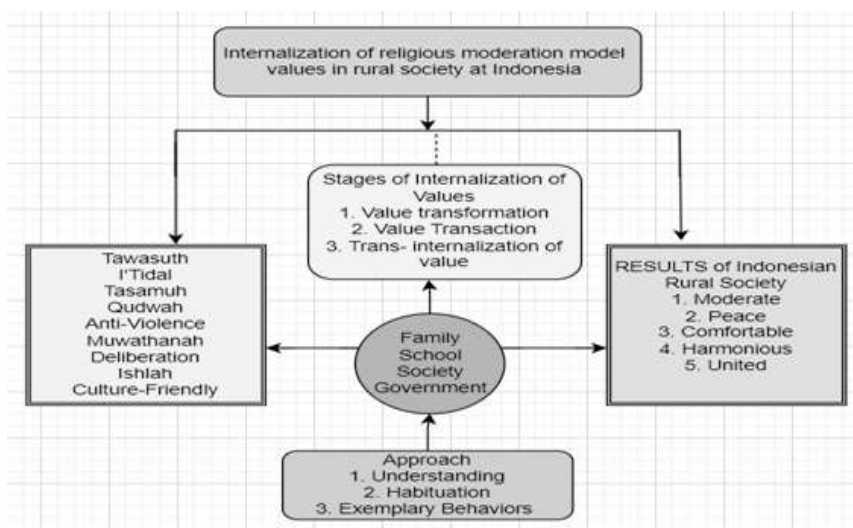


Figure 1. Internalization model-religious moderation values

Figure 1 presents the overarching internalization framework, illustrating that religious moderation is cultivated through three interrelated stages: value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization. These stages are supported by four principal actors: the family, school, community, and government. The figure also highlights three reinforcing approaches—understanding, habituation, and exemplary conduct—that function as operational mechanisms for translating moderation values into lived social practices. Combined, these components explain how moderation evolves from conceptual awareness into stable patterns of collective behavior.

The values represented in this model are highly consistent with findings from prior scholarship emphasizing *tawasuth* (middle way), *i'tidal* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *qudwah* (exemplary conduct), anti-violence, *muwathanah* (patriotism), *musyawarah* (deliberation), *ishlah* (reconciliation), and cultural accommodation (Fahrudin et al., 2021; Hanif et al., 2024; Magdalena et al., 2024; Nurul 'Aini & Zamroji, 2025). However, the distinctive contribution of this study lies not merely in identifying these discrete values, but in demonstrating how they are systematically internalized through a community-based, multi-institutional process.

To highlight the core structure of this framework more succinctly, the central elements of the model are summarized in Figure 2.

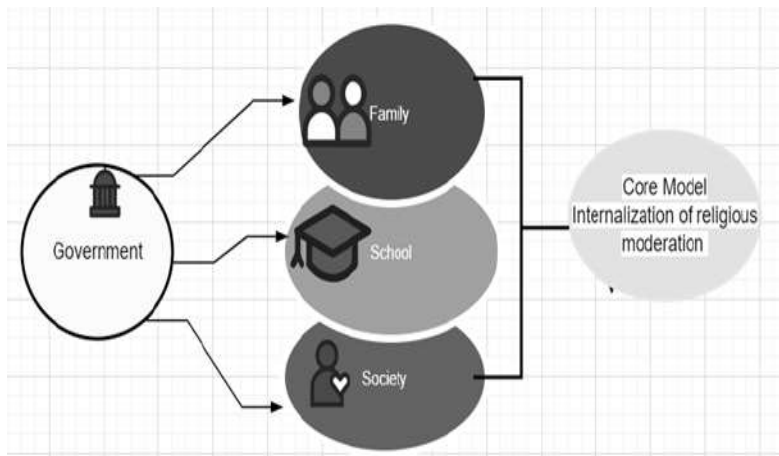


Figure 2. Core internalization model

Figure 2 distills the essential components of the proposed model, emphasizing the dynamic relationships among the three stages of internalization, the four institutional actors, and the three reinforcing approaches. The figure underscores that religious moderation is sustained not by isolated programs, but by the convergence of socialization, habituation, and institutional support across multiple domains of community life. In this manner, the figure serves as a concise visual representation of the study's primary theoretical and practical contributions.

Practically, this model offers an actionable framework for policymakers, educators, and community leaders. The empirical findings suggest that programs designed to strengthen religious moderation should not rely solely on curriculum reforms, public campaigns, or regulatory initiatives. Instead, interventions should empower families as the primary agents of early moral socialization, support schools in integrating moderation into daily educational practices, preserve communal traditions that reinforce social cohesion, and align government policies with local cultural mechanisms. Such an approach ensures that moderation is not merely taught as a normative principle but actively experienced as a lived social reality.

At the global level, this study contributes to international discourse on religious moderation by positioning rural communities not as passive recipients of state agendas, but as active producers of peaceful coexistence. This emphasis on informal social mechanisms, intergenerational transmission, and cultural adaptability offers a vital alternative to the urban-centric and institutionally driven models prevalent in global scholarship (Mustaffa et al., 2021; Vieira & Feldens, 2021). Consequently, the proposed framework is highly



transferable to other pluralistic societies experiencing religious polarization and seeking culturally grounded approaches to peacebuilding and social integration.

In broader theoretical terms, this study demonstrates that religion can function as a shared moral resource rather than merely a potential catalyst of conflict. When interpreted through moderation values and embedded within inclusive institutions, religious commitment becomes a constructive social asset that transforms diversity into solidarity. This perspective enriches ongoing debates on moral development, social construction, and community resilience by demonstrating how religious values can be institutionalized as mechanisms for democratic coexistence and sustainable social harmony.

Despite its theoretical and practical contributions, this study has several limitations. First, because it focuses on two rural communities with long-standing traditions of peaceful coexistence, the findings may not fully reflect urban environments or regions experiencing higher levels of religious tension. Second, while the qualitative case-study approach provides a deep, contextualized understanding, it does not quantitatively measure the relative influence of families, schools, communities, and government institutions. Third, because the study is cross-sectional, it captures the internalization process at a single point in time, meaning it does not empirically track how moderation values evolve over longer generational horizons. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted as a context-specific explanation that offers a robust conceptual framework rather than a universally generalizable model.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that religious moderation in rural Indonesia is internalized through a gradual, socially embedded process involving three interrelated stages: value transformation, value transaction, and trans-internalization. Across Dahian Tunggal Village and Cigugur Village, core values such as tolerance, justice, equality, deliberation, reconciliation, and prioritization of the common good, are introduced through family and religious socialization, reinforced through everyday interactions, and ultimately institutionalized as enduring social norms. Ultimately, the findings show that this process is sustained through the synergistic roles of the family, school, community, and government, supported by three reinforcing approaches: understanding, habituation, and exemplary conduct.

The principal contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative model that combines value internalization theory, social construction theory, and character

education to explain how religious moderation is cultivated and maintained within rural sociocultural contexts. By conceptualizing moderation as an organic, community-based process rather than a solely top-down policy agenda, this study provides both a more robust theoretical explanation of value formation and an actionable framework for policymakers, educators, and community leaders seeking to strengthen social cohesion in plural societies.

Future research is needed to empirically test and refine this model across more diverse settings, particularly within urban communities and regions experiencing higher levels of religious tension. Comparative, mixed-methods, and longitudinal investigations would be exceptionally valuable for determining the relative influence of families, schools, communities, and government institutions, as well as for tracking how moderation values evolve over extended generational horizons.

In essence, the central lesson of this study is that religious moderation endures not because communities are mandated to be tolerant, but because tolerance, justice, and mutual respect are intricately woven into the everyday relationships and institutional practices through which people coexist. When these values are continuously nurtured across generations and reinforced by collaborative institutions, diversity transforms from a potential source of division into a resilient foundation for sustainable social harmony.

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### **Declaration of Competing Interest**

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial or personal interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

### **Declaration of Generative AI**

During the preparation of this manuscript, the authors utilized generative AI to enhance the clarity and readability of the text. The outputs generated by the tool were carefully reviewed and edited by the authors, who assume full responsibility for the content of this article. All substantive intellectual contributions including conceptualization,

analysis, data interpretation, and final decisions regarding content, arguments, and conclusions, were carried out solely by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity, originality, and academic quality of this manuscript.

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