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Internalizing Religious Moderation Through School Culture: A Multiple-Case Study Of Indonesian Islamic Primary Schools

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Abstract

This study examined how school culture supports the internalization of religious moderation values in two foundation-governed Islamic primary schools in Subang Regency, Indonesia. Using a qualitative multiple-case study design, the research involved 24 purposively selected participants, including foundation chairs, principals, teachers, and students. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, then analyzed within each case and compared across cases. Both schools used classroom instruction, teacher role modeling, and recurring activities to provide opportunities for students to practice religious moderation. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's stated values guided collaborative learning, anti-bullying initiatives, and activities introducing regional traditions. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, pesantren traditions shaped regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, and social activities. In both schools, principals and teachers translated institutional priorities into everyday practices. The comparison yielded two conceptual models, the Foundation Values–Based Model and the Pesantren Tradition–Based Model. These models explain how schools with a similar governance structure can draw on different institutional traditions to support value internalization. The evidence was strongest for the opportunities schools provided for students to practice these values, while evidence of students' own understanding varied across the dimensions of religious moderation

Keywords: religious moderation, value internalization, school culture, Islamic primary schools, multiple-case study

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity makes primary schools one of the first settings in which children learn to live with difference. They do so when they work with peers, navigate disagreements, and observe how teachers treat individual students. Raihani (2011) proposed a whole-school approach to tolerance education that encompasses school policy, leadership, teaching, and student activities. A systematic review by Aflahah et al. (2023) likewise identified teacher capacity, student participation, the organization of teaching and learning, and a supportive educational environment as important to strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia.

Presidential Regulation No. 58 of 2023 on Strengthening Religious Moderation defines religious moderation in terms of perspectives, attitudes, and practices that guide religious life in a shared society, grounded in fairness, balance, and adherence to Indonesia's constitutional commitments (Art. 1, item 1). This study uses four indicators developed by the Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2019), the research and training agency of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. The indicators are national commitment, tolerance, nonviolence, and openness to local culture. They provide a framework for examining how students put religious moderation into practice in everyday school life.

The central focus of this study is how students internalize the values of religious moderation. Internalization is the process through which students understand a value, have opportunities to put it into practice, and begin to use it to guide their actions. Deci et al. (1994) distinguish between accepting a value as one's own and complying under pressure. This distinction matters when interpreting student behavior. Participation in a flag ceremony, for example, is observable, while understanding what national commitment means to students calls for attention to how they describe the experience and how they treat peers from different backgrounds. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) found that intergroup contact is generally associated with lower prejudice. Verkuyten and Yogeeswaran (2017) further explain that tolerance involves allowing room for beliefs or practices even when one disagrees with them.

School culture provides the setting in which this process can be examined. Schein and Schein (2017) distinguish three levels of organizational culture: observable artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. In this study, school activities, routines, and interactions provide observable evidence that can be examined in relation to the foundations' stated values, school policies, and the meanings that members of the school community attach to these

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practices. Research on school climate also highlights the importance of relationships, safety, and the institutional environment in shaping students' experiences (Thapa et al., 2013). Together, these perspectives help explain how school activities create opportunities for students to encounter, interpret, and practice particular values.

Previous research has documented challenges in translating educational goals into practice. Raihani (2018) found discrepancies between multicultural education policies and their implementation in several Indonesian schools. In primary education, Muslih et al. (2024) reported that Islamic religious education teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia adapted their approaches "according to the conditions of their respective schools" (p. 477) and encountered difficulties in communicating religious moderation to students. Noptario et al. (2024) reported differences in religious moderation scores in a study comparing the P5 program in primary schools with the P5-PPRA program in Islamic primary schools (madrasah ibtidaiyah). At the tertiary level, Hanafi et al. (2022) examined how students developed an understanding of religious moderation through the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. These studies raise a question about how values introduced through lessons and programs come to guide students' everyday interactions.

This question is examined at SD Panatagama Islamic School and SDIT Miftahul Ulum in Subang Regency, Indonesia. Both are private Islamic primary schools governed by foundations. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's vision and values are reflected in school routines, social activities, and activities that introduce students to local culture. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, traditions associated with pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) shape daily life through regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, and practices that emphasize respect for teachers. The issue in both settings is how these routines help students understand and practice religious moderation in everyday interactions. This issue can be examined through how students work with peers from different backgrounds, respond to disagreements, and engage with local traditions. The two settings offer a basis for investigating how foundation leaders, principals, and teachers connect existing school practices with the development of these dispositions.

Research on Islamic school governance has identified founders, principals, and teachers as influential actors in decision-making in Indonesian madrasahs (Parker & Raihani, 2011). Research on pesantren has also shown how local cultural values can support multicultural education (Burga & Damopolii, 2022) and has documented initiatives to strengthen religious moderation alongside challenges to their implementation (Athoillah et al., 2024). Taken together with studies of teaching and school programs, this literature leaves open a question about how

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foundation leaders, principals, and teachers draw on different institutional traditions to embed religious moderation in the everyday culture of Islamic primary schools, and how students experience and interpret those practices.

The study's original contribution is a cross-case analysis of two foundation-governed schools in which school culture draws primarily on different sources: the foundation's stated values in one case and pesantren traditions in the other. The analysis connects foundation policy, school leadership, teacher role modeling, and students' experiences to develop two conceptual models of value internalization. The study aims to describe the forms of school culture in both cases, analyze how students internalize values across the four dimensions of religious moderation, and explain how foundation leaders, principals, and teachers develop and sustain the school cultures that support this process.

This inquiry is important because school programs show what activities are provided, while understanding how students interpret and adopt the values those activities are intended to foster requires evidence from their everyday experiences. The study is expected to clarify how school culture supports value internalization in Islamic primary education. Its findings can also help foundation leaders, principals, and teachers assess how institutional aims, school routines, and opportunities for students to practice religious moderation align

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Setting

This study employed a qualitative multiple-case study design to examine how students internalized the values of religious moderation through everyday school practices (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018). Each school constituted one case. The study was conducted at SD Panatagama Islamic School and SDIT Miftahul Ulum, two private Islamic primary schools governed by foundations in Subang Regency, Indonesia. The cases were selected because different institutional traditions shaped their school cultures. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's stated values guided school programs and routines. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, traditions associated with pesantren shaped daily school life. Comparing the two cases provided a basis for examining how these institutional orientations informed school practices and students' experiences.

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Participants

The study involved 24 participants across the two schools: two foundation chairs, two principals, eight teachers, and 12 students. Participants were selected purposively based on their roles in shaping, implementing, or experiencing school culture. The foundation chairs and principals provided perspectives on institutional priorities and school policies. Teachers described how these priorities were put into practice through classroom activities and school routines. Students shared their experiences of these practices and the meanings they attached to them.

Data Collection

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored how foundation leaders, principals, teachers, and students understood and experienced school practices related to religious moderation. Observations focused on school routines, organized activities, and interactions among teachers and students. The documents analyzed included school vision and mission statements, curriculum documents, foundation policies, and records of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular programs. Together, these sources provided evidence of the values each school sought to promote, how those values were reflected in practice, and how participants interpreted them.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the interactive framework of Miles et al. (2014), which comprises data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Analysis began within each case to describe the school culture, the roles of foundation leaders and school staff, and students' experiences of practices associated with religious moderation. The analysis was guided by four dimensions of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, nonviolence, and openness to local culture. The findings were then compared across the two schools to identify shared patterns and differences in how these values were introduced and reinforced. The cross-case comparison informed the development of two conceptual models of value internalization (Yin, 2018).

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was considered in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was supported through triangulation and

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member checking (Shenton, 2004). Triangulation involved comparing accounts from different participant groups with observations and school documents. Descriptions of the two schools and their institutional contexts support readers in assessing the transferability of the findings. Dependability and confirmability are addressed by showing how evidence from each school supports the within-case findings and how those findings inform the cross-case conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Internalization of Religious Moderation Values Through School Culture

The two schools drew on different institutional sources in shaping their daily practices. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's emphasis on moral character, learning, and achievement was reflected in routines that encouraged courteous conduct and in programs addressing social interaction. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, pesantren traditions informed the organization of regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, and practices emphasizing respect for teachers. These orientations provided a basis for the activities through which each school introduced and reinforced its values.

The school used greeting routines, collaborative learning, anti-bullying initiatives, social activities, and activities introducing students to regional traditions. Greeting routines and collaborative learning brought expectations about respectful conduct into students' daily interactions. Anti-bullying initiatives addressed the dimension of nonviolence, while activities involving regional traditions provided opportunities for students to engage with local culture.

The school incorporated regular worship and Qur'anic instruction into daily routines. Respect for teachers was reinforced through everyday interactions, and class names were used to communicate values emphasized by the school. Social and religious activities involved members of the wider school community and extended these practices beyond classroom instruction. These activities illustrate how pesantren traditions were expressed within the setting of an Islamic primary school.

Across the cases, classroom instruction introduced values, teacher role modeling gave students examples of how to act, and recurring activities provided opportunities to practice what they had been taught. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, collaborative learning and anti-bullying initiatives brought this process into peer interactions. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, and social participation linked it to religious routines and relationships within the school community.

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Both schools combined instruction, teacher role modeling, and recurring practice, while the activities through which students encountered these values differed. The clearest examples at SD Panatagama Islamic School were the anti-bullying initiatives and activities involving regional traditions, which corresponded to nonviolence and openness to local culture. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, the reported examples centered on religious routines, respect for teachers, and social participation. Across both cases, the findings describe the opportunities students had to practice these values. Evidence of how students understood and adopted them depends on their accounts and conduct in specific situations.

Roles of Foundations, Principals, and Teachers

The foundations set the institutional direction within which school programs and routines were developed. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's stated values were visible in the emphasis on moral character, learning, and achievement. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, institutional direction was closely connected to pesantren traditions, which were reflected in religious instruction, worship, and expectations about relationships within the school community.

Principals connected institutional priorities with the organization of school life. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, this role was reflected in the incorporation of character-building activities into school programs and routines. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, school leadership supported the continuity of worship, Qur'anic learning, and activities rooted in pesantren traditions. In both cases, school leadership linked institutional direction with activities that teachers and students carried out.

Teachers reinforced school values through instruction, example, and everyday interaction. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, these roles were reflected in collaborative learning and routines emphasizing courteous behavior. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, they were reflected in Qur'anic instruction, participation in religious routines, and interactions that modeled respect. Across the two cases, teachers were the institutional actors with whom students regularly encountered these expectations in practice.

The cases showed a shared pattern in the distribution of responsibilities. Foundations provided direction, principals organized that direction into school programs and routines, and teachers reinforced it through their work with students. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's stated values provided the main point of reference across these roles. At SDIT

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Miftahul Ulum, established pesantren practices gave school leaders and teachers a shared basis for organizing daily activities.

The comparison yielded two conceptual models. The Foundation Values–Based Model describes how the foundation's stated priorities informed school programs, routines, and teacher practices at SD Panatagama Islamic School. The Pesantren Tradition–Based Model describes how school leaders and teachers at SDIT Miftahul Ulum sustained values through established religious and social practices. Both models connect institutional direction with students' daily experiences while identifying the source of values that was most prominent in each case. Table 1 summarizes the findings for each research objective.

Table 1. Summary of Findings Across the Two Schools

Research objective	SD Panatagama Islamic School	SDIT Miftahul Ulum	Cross-case finding
Describe the forms of school culture	Greeting routines, collaborative learning, anti-bullying initiatives, social activities, and activities introducing regional traditions	Regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, value-based class names, respect for teachers, and social and religious activities	Both schools expressed institutional values through recurring activities. The forms of those activities reflected each school's institutional orientation.
Explain how religious moderation values were internalized	Collaborative learning, anti-bullying initiatives, and cultural activities provided opportunities to practice cooperation, nonviolence, and openness to local culture.	Religious routines, Qur'anic instruction, and social activities provided settings for teacher role modeling and repeated practice.	Both schools combined instruction, role modeling, and repeated practice. The available examples primarily document how the schools provided opportunities for internalization.
Explain the roles of foundations,	Foundation priorities guided school programs, principals organized their	Institutional direction drew on *pesantren* traditions, which school leaders and	The comparison yielded two models that distinguish the main source of values and

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principals, and teachers	implementation, and teachers reinforced them in daily interactions.	teachers sustained through religious and social practices.	show how institutional actors carried those values into school life.

DISCUSSION

The cross-case findings suggest that school culture supports religious moderation by giving students recurring opportunities to encounter and practice the values their schools promote. SD Panatagama Islamic School organized these opportunities around the foundation's stated values, while SDIT Miftahul Ulum drew on traditions associated with pesantren (Islamic boarding schools). Both schools combined instruction, teacher role modeling, and participation in recurring activities. This pattern is consistent with Lailiyah et al. (2026), who identified learning, teacher role modeling, and inclusive activities as ways of strengthening religious moderation in an Indonesian primary school. The comparison in Subang shows how similar approaches can take different forms depending on the institutional values that guide school life.

At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's emphasis on moral character, learning, and achievement provided a common reference for activities with distinct educational purposes. Collaborative learning gave students opportunities to cooperate with peers, while anti-bullying initiatives made nonviolence relevant to everyday interactions. Activities introducing regional traditions gave students opportunities to engage with local culture. Read together, these practices show how broad institutional commitments can be translated into specific experiences. Their relevance to religious moderation lies in the kinds of conduct students are invited to practice, including working with others and responding to conflict without aggression.

At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, the findings suggest that pesantren traditions gave religious instruction a place within the social life of the school. Regular worship, Qur'anic instruction, and practices emphasizing respect for teachers created recurring occasions for students to encounter institutional expectations. Qorib and Umiarso (2025) found that religious moderation in Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama pesantren took shape through the interplay of religious texts and their social and cultural contexts. The Miftahul Ulum case illustrates how selected traditions associated with pesantren can be adapted to primary education through routines, relationships, and participation in school activities.

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The comparison also helps explain how institutional priorities reached students. Foundations provided direction, principals organized programs and routines, and teachers reinforced expectations in their daily work with students. Thien et al. (2023) found that value-driven leadership in Malaysian primary schools was expressed through concrete practices such as positive discipline, fairness, and collaborative decision-making. In the Subang cases, the principal's role can likewise be understood through the organization of school practices. The contribution of the principal becomes visible in how institutional priorities are reflected in the activities that teachers and students carry out.

Teacher role modeling helps explain how these activities can acquire educational meaning. At Panatagama, collaborative learning provided occasions for teachers to demonstrate respectful interaction. At Miftahul Ulum, religious routines and everyday interactions with students provided occasions to model respect. Sanderse (2013) argues that role modeling in moral education involves helping students recognize the qualities being demonstrated and understand why those qualities matter. Applied to the two cases, this suggests that observing a teacher's conduct can become an opportunity for learning when students can connect the example to their own interactions.

Repeated practice can familiarize students with a value, while internalization involves coming to recognize the value as personally meaningful. Ryan and Deci (2020) distinguish forms of motivation driven by external expectations from those in which learners recognize the personal importance of an activity. This distinction helps interpret the Subang findings. A student's participation in an anti-bullying activity shows engagement with a school expectation. The student's explanation of why a peer should be treated fairly, together with evidence of how the student responds in a disagreement, provides a stronger basis for interpreting that value as a guide to action.

The evidence was more specific for some dimensions of religious moderation than for others. Panatagama's anti-bullying initiatives and activities involving regional traditions provide concrete examples of the school's attention to nonviolence and openness to local culture. Collaborative learning offers a setting in which tolerance can be practiced, particularly when students respond to different perspectives during group work. National commitment requires a different evidentiary basis, such as students' accounts of shared civic responsibilities. The available findings therefore support a clearer interpretation of the opportunities created by school practices than of the extent to which students internalized each of the four dimensions.

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The case comparison also clarifies the scope of the findings. Lailiyah et al. (2026) found that religious moderation at Kaliputih Elementary School was supported across school, family, and village settings. The Subang analysis concentrated on the relationships among foundations, principals, teachers, and students within the two schools. It therefore explains how institutional priorities were carried into school life. Whether students drew on the same values in family or community settings falls beyond the evidence examined in this comparison.

The Foundation Values–Based Model and the Pesantren Tradition–Based Model capture the predominant sources of values in the two cases. In the first model, the foundation's stated values guided the selection of programs and routines. In the second, established religious and social practices provided the basis for organizing school life. Both schools were governed by foundations, and both relied on principals and teachers to give institutional values a practical form. The distinction between the models thus concerns where school practices drew their direction and how that direction reached students through everyday activities.

The academic contribution of this study is to connect institutional governance with the study of value internalization in Islamic primary education. The two models distinguish the source of institutional values, the work of principals and teachers in translating those values into everyday practice, and the ways students encounter and interpret them. This distinction helps explain how two schools with a similar governance structure can organize religious moderation education around different traditions. It also gives comparative research a way to examine which institutional practices provide opportunities for internalization and which forms of evidence support an interpretation of students' own understanding and conduct.

CONCLUSION

This multiple-case study found that SD Panatagama Islamic School and SDIT Miftahul Ulum supported the internalization of religious moderation through classroom instruction, teacher role modeling, and recurring school activities. At SD Panatagama Islamic School, the foundation's stated values guided programs and routines, giving rise to the Foundation Values–Based Model. At SDIT Miftahul Ulum, established religious and social practices shaped daily school life, giving rise to the Pesantren Tradition–Based Model. Across both cases, principals and teachers translated institutional priorities into opportunities for students to encounter and practice the values of religious moderation.

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The study was limited to two foundation-governed Islamic primary schools in Subang Regency. The evidence was more detailed on how the schools organized opportunities to practice religious moderation than on how students understood and applied all four dimensions across settings. Future research could examine the two models in schools with different institutional characteristics and follow students over time, combining student interviews with observations of peer interactions and accounts from families. For school leaders and teachers, the findings suggest incorporating opportunities for students to explain how they understand these values and apply them in everyday situations, such as working with peers, resolving disagreements, and engaging with local traditions.

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