



# Strategic Management in Strengthening Religious Moderation: A Case Study in Primary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

Indonesia's rich cultural and religious diversity presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in fostering social harmony in pluralistic societies. This study examines the management of religious moderation in two primary education institutions, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta (MIS) Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III, located in North Toraja Regency. Using a descriptive qualitative research design, the study explores the implementation, strategic steps, and challenges of strengthening religious moderation within these schools. Findings reveal that religious moderation is tailored to the unique contexts of each institution. MIS Rantepao integrates Islamic values with community engagement through activities such as celebrating Islamic holidays and promoting social harmony among students. Conversely, SD Katolik Rantepao III emphasizes humanistic values, inclusivity, and interfaith respect, creating a learning environment that prioritizes egalitarianism and collaboration. Both schools also incorporate nationalism and civic education, reinforcing unity through Indonesia's foundational principles of Pancasila. Systematic steps, such as lesson planning, diverse teaching methodologies, and inclusive character education, demonstrate the commitment of both schools to fostering tolerance and inclusivity. Despite their efforts, challenges persist, including resource limitations, internal religious differences, and navigating local cultural traditions. These challenges underscore the need for sustained dialogue, enhanced resources, and innovative strategies to support religious moderation. This study contributes to understanding the role of education in promoting tolerance and social cohesion in multicultural societies. The findings offer practical insights for educators and policymakers aiming to foster inclusivity and harmonious coexistence through educational institutions.

## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a multicultural nation characterized by a diversity of ethnicities, languages, cultures, and religions ([Jayadi et al., 2022](#); [Maulidiah et al., 2023](#)). While this diversity is a source of national strength, it also presents challenges, particularly in mitigating conflicts often arising from differences in religious, ethnic, or cultural backgrounds ([Huda et al., 2020](#); [Indainanto et al., 2023](#); [Verkuyten et al., 2019](#)). Recent incidents highlight that many conflicts are triggered by religious issues, emphasizing the

importance of tolerance and moderation in maintaining social harmony. Beyond interreligious differences, intrareligious disputes, such as those involving sects or schools of thought, further underscore the need for efforts to foster mutual understanding and respect ([Eko & Putranto, 2019](#); [Marjani, 2023](#); [Yana et al., 2024](#)).

In the context of education, religious moderation is a vital concept for promoting inclusivity and harmony, particularly in regions marked by religious pluralism ([Mala & Hunaida, 2023](#); [Mulyana, 2023](#); [Yana et al., 2024](#)). Educational institutions play a pivotal role in instilling values of tolerance and respect through well-designed curricula, extracurricular activities, and character-building programs ([Anisah, 2023](#); [Armadi et al., 2024](#); [Zakso et al., 2021](#)). Schools and madrasahs, as formal educational settings, are uniquely positioned to address these challenges by cultivating an appreciation for diversity among students.

Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Swasta (MIS) Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III exemplify this context, with both institutions accommodating students from varied religious backgrounds. Despite being a madrasah primarily serving Muslim students, MIS Rantepao also includes a minority of non-Muslim students, creating a heterogeneous learning environment. Similarly, SD Katolik Rantepao III accommodates a small percentage of Muslim students, demonstrating an inclusive approach to education. These unique conditions call for strategic management of religious moderation to foster harmonious relationships and deepen students' understanding of diversity.

The Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has actively promoted the concept of "Religious Moderation" as a framework for addressing these challenges. Introduced in 2019, this initiative aims to guide religious practices in Indonesia's multicultural society. In madrasahs, the integration of religious moderation into the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum has been formalized through Ministerial Decree No. 183 of 2019. This policy lays a strong foundation for nurturing tolerance and inclusivity among students. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Education and Culture also supports similar efforts in general schools, ensuring the alignment of religious education with broader national education standards.

Given this backdrop, this study focuses on the strategic management of strengthening religious moderation in MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III in North Toraja Regency. It aims to investigate how these institutions implement religious moderation to promote tolerance and understanding among students. By analyzing the management practices in these two schools, the study seeks to offer valuable insights into effective strategies for fostering inclusivity in diverse educational environments.

This research is significant not only for its contribution to the academic literature on religious moderation but also for its practical implications. It provides a deeper understanding of how education can serve as a medium for promoting tolerance and harmony in multicultural societies. Moreover, the findings are expected to guide policymakers, educators, and school administrators in developing and implementing programs that address the challenges of managing diversity in educational settings.

## **METHODS**

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design to explore the management of strengthening religious moderation in primary education institutions. A qualitative approach was chosen to allow an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon within its natural context, emphasizing the interpretation of participants' experiences and practices ([Tomaszewski et al., 2020](#)). The focus of this research is on identifying how religious moderation is implemented and managed, and its impact on fostering tolerance among students with diverse religious backgrounds.

The participants of this study were selected through purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the research objectives. Participants included the principals of MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III, two class teachers and two religious teachers from each school, and four students—two from each institution—representing different religious backgrounds. These participants were chosen for their direct involvement and insight into religious moderation practices in their respective educational settings.

Data were collected using multiple instruments to ensure comprehensiveness and reliability. The researcher acted as the primary instrument, directly observing and interacting with participants. Observations were documented systematically using field notes and observation sheets to capture details of daily activities and practices related to religious moderation. Semi-structured interviews were

conducted with principals, teachers, and students to gain deeper insights into their perceptions and experiences. Additionally, institutional documents, such as lesson plans, school policies, and activity records, were analyzed to provide supporting data and context.

The data analysis followed the framework of [Miles, Huberman, and Saldana \(2014\)](#), consisting of three main stages. First, data condensation was performed to simplify, organize, and focus the raw data into key themes and patterns. This was followed by data display, where the findings were presented in a structured format, such as narratives and tables, to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn and verified through triangulation, comparing data from observations, interviews, and documentation to ensure validity and reliability. This systematic approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the management of religious moderation and its implications in primary education ([Miles et al., 2014](#)).

## RESULTS

### ***Forms of Religious Moderation Management in Primary Education Institutions***

Religious moderation in primary education institutions is implemented through diverse approaches tailored to the unique contexts of each school. At MIS Rantepao, the management of religious moderation emphasizes activities that integrate Islamic values with community engagement. Key practices include the celebration of Islamic holidays (*PHBI*), such as Maulid Nabi Muhammad, Isra' Mi'raj, and the Islamic New Year. These events serve as platforms for fostering a sense of unity and religious pride among students. As a teacher noted during an interview:

*"Through these celebrations, we encourage students to express their creativity while deepening their religious understanding in a collaborative environment."*

Additional initiatives, such as *Sedekah Jum'at* and social service activities, further contribute to building a harmonious relationship between the school and the broader community. A distinctive feature of MIS Rantepao is its focus on nurturing positive social relationships among students. The school promotes mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation, ensuring that students understand the importance of harmonious interactions. As one teacher explained:

*"Our approach involves guiding students to respect others, fulfill promises, and avoid behaviors like mocking or seeking others' faults. These values are crucial for maintaining social balance and harmony."*

This emphasis on character development aligns with the school's broader objective of instilling a strong foundation of tolerance and respect. In contrast, SD Katolik Rantepao III adopts a humanistic and inclusive approach to religious moderation. The school emphasizes "humanistic brotherhood" as a core principle, which prioritizes mutual care, shared responsibility, and the celebration of diversity. According to a teacher of Christian character education:

*"Our goal is to create a learning environment where students can grow into individuals who respect differences and work together for the common good."*

The school integrates values of openness and inclusivity into its daily practices, welcoming students from diverse backgrounds and fostering interfaith dialogue. The school also highlights the importance of egalitarian values, ensuring equal treatment for all students regardless of social status, ethnicity, or religion. As one teacher stated:

*"We strive to eliminate social and cultural dichotomies within the school. All students are treated equally, reflecting our belief in unity within diversity."*

This commitment is further exemplified through activities that promote mutual respect and understanding among students. For instance, during interviews, students frequently expressed how these practices have positively shaped their relationships. One student shared:

*"I've learned to respect my friends regardless of our differences in culture or religion. It makes our school feel like one big family."*

Both schools incorporate nationalistic and civic education into their curricula to strengthen students' sense of belonging and loyalty to the nation. This includes lessons on Pancasila, Indonesia's foundational ideology, which integrates universal values of justice, humanity, and unity. A teacher at SD Katolik Rantepao III explained:

*“Pancasila reflects the essence of religious and moral teachings, making it a unifying principle for all Indonesians.”*

Activities such as flag ceremonies and celebrations of national holidays further instill a sense of pride and unity among students. MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III demonstrate distinct but complementary approaches to managing religious moderation. While MIS Rantepao focuses on integrating Islamic values with social harmony, SD Katolik Rantepao III emphasizes inclusivity, humanistic values, and interfaith respect. These practices collectively contribute to fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, and harmonious coexistence within their respective communities.

### **Steps in Strengthening Religious Moderation Management**

The implementation of religious moderation at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III involves systematic steps to ensure its integration into daily educational activities. At MIS Rantepao, the approach begins with the preparation and organization of Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI) lessons. Teachers carefully plan lessons, setting clear learning objectives to align with the broader goals of religious moderation. As one PAI teacher explained:

*“Before each class, I ensure that the lesson plans and materials are well-prepared, adhering to the outlined objectives. This helps create a structured and effective learning environment.”*

The use of varied teaching methods is another crucial step in strengthening religious moderation. Teachers employ a mix of lecture, recitation, and demonstration techniques to engage students effectively and accommodate diverse learning needs. A student commented on this approach, stating:

*“Our teacher uses interactive methods like group discussions and problem-solving exercises, which make the lessons easier to understand and more enjoyable.”*

This diverse pedagogical strategy not only enriches the learning process but also fosters an atmosphere of inclusivity and collaboration. Learning materials are selected to support the objectives of religious moderation, although challenges remain in ensuring their adequacy and accessibility. Teachers rely on textbooks, worksheets, and translated Qur’anic texts, but some students face difficulties due to limited access to resources. A teacher noted:

*“While we provide materials such as textbooks and LKS (student worksheets), not all students have access to these due to financial constraints, which is something we continuously strive to address.”*

Despite these challenges, the dedication of teachers ensures that students grasp the core messages of tolerance and mutual respect. Evaluation practices at MIS Rantepao also play a significant role in reinforcing religious moderation. Teachers assess students’ understanding through written, oral, and practical evaluations. One teacher explained:

*“We conduct evaluations after each competency unit to measure students’ progress, often incorporating practical applications to ensure their understanding of the concepts.”*

These evaluations not only measure academic achievement but also encourage students to reflect on their behaviors and attitudes about the principles of religious moderation. At SD Katolik Rantepao III, religious moderation is strengthened through character education and inclusive teaching strategies. Lessons in Christian Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Kristen*, PAK) emphasize experiential learning, guiding students to live harmoniously within a pluralistic society. As one teacher described:

*“Our mission is to guide students toward understanding God’s teachings while respecting the diversity in their surroundings. This requires us to create a learning process that is deeply rooted in both spirituality and inclusivity.”*

The school also fosters collaboration among students of different backgrounds, encouraging them to work together on academic and extracurricular activities. A student shared:

*“We often help each other in class, whether it’s understanding the lessons or completing assignments. This has taught us to value teamwork and respect each other’s differences.”*

These interactions are critical in building a sense of unity and reducing potential conflicts among students. Both schools integrate elements of nationalism and civic education into their moderation programs. At SD Katolik Rantepao III, this includes discussions on the values of Pancasila and participation in national ceremonies. A teacher emphasized:

*“Pancasila represents the core values of all religions and unites us as a nation. We instill this understanding in our students through lessons and community activities.”*

Similarly, MIS Rantepao aligns its teachings with principles of tolerance and respect for national identity, fostering an appreciation for Indonesia's multicultural heritage. The steps taken by MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III to strengthen religious moderation encompass thorough lesson planning, diverse teaching methods, inclusive character education, and continuous evaluation. These initiatives are reinforced by a commitment to fostering interfaith dialogue, mutual respect, and national unity, ensuring that students develop into tolerant and responsible members of society.

### ***Challenges in Strengthening Religious Moderation Management***

The implementation of religious moderation at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III faces several challenges, both internal and external, reflecting the complexities of fostering tolerance and inclusivity in a pluralistic society. One of the primary challenges is maintaining tolerance (*tasammuh*) within and across religious groups. At MIS Rantepao, differences in Islamic sects occasionally pose difficulties in achieving a unified understanding of religious teachings. A teacher shared:

*"We emphasize that while we may hold different interpretations within Islam, mutual respect is key. Students are taught to uphold the principle of 'rahmatan lil alamin' (mercy to all creations) in their interactions."*

Similarly, promoting tolerance with non-Muslim communities requires careful guidance. The school ensures students understand that tolerance does not mean compromising one's beliefs but respecting the rights of others to practice their faith. As one student explained:

*"We're taught that Islam doesn't force anyone to convert, and respecting other religions is part of our faith."*

At SD Katolik Rantepao III, a significant challenge lies in addressing the diverse backgrounds of students and fostering harmony without diluting the school's religious identity. Teachers work to create a balance between imparting Christian values and promoting interfaith understanding. As one teacher noted:

*"Our role is to guide students to embrace their faith while appreciating the differences around them. This can be challenging, especially when students or their families have misconceptions about other religions."*

Overcoming these misconceptions requires continuous dialogue and educational efforts, both within the classroom and in broader community interactions. Social solidarity among students from different religious backgrounds also presents a challenge. While both schools promote mutual support during events like natural disasters or personal crises, misunderstandings or biases can occasionally arise. A teacher at SD Katolik Rantepao III recounted:

*"There are times when students hesitate to interact with peers from different religious backgrounds, especially during joint activities. It's our responsibility to bridge these gaps and show them the value of unity."*

Encouraging students to work collaboratively on shared goals helps mitigate such issues and fosters a sense of camaraderie. Another challenge is resource limitations, particularly at MIS Rantepao, where the availability of teaching materials and innovative learning media is often inadequate. This affects the delivery of lessons and the effectiveness of religious moderation programs. A PAI teacher explained:

*"We rely heavily on basic materials like textbooks and worksheets, but access to more comprehensive resources is limited. This sometimes hinders our ability to provide a deeper understanding of religious tolerance."*

Students also expressed the need for more engaging learning tools, with one commenting:

*"If we had better resources, it would be easier to understand the lessons and apply them in our lives."*

Finally, adherence to cultural norms and traditions in the local context adds another layer of complexity. In Toraja, where traditional ceremonies like funerals and weddings are deeply embedded in the community, schools must navigate the intersection of cultural and religious practices. Teachers from both schools emphasized the importance of integrating respect for local traditions into their programs. As one teacher at MIS Rantepao stated:

*"We teach students to appreciate the cultural richness of Toraja while staying true to their own religious beliefs. This helps them participate in community events respectfully and meaningfully."*

The challenges in strengthening religious moderation management at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III highlight the dynamic interplay between religion, education, and societal norms. Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts in fostering dialogue, enhancing resources, and promoting an inclusive yet respectful approach to diversity. Through these measures, the schools aim to cultivate students who embody the values of tolerance, respect, and unity in their daily lives.

## DISCUSSION

### *Forms of Religious Moderation Management in Primary Education Institutions*

The findings highlight that religious moderation in primary education institutions can be implemented effectively through tailored approaches that consider the unique cultural and religious contexts of each school. At MIS Rantepao, the integration of Islamic values with community engagement demonstrates a pragmatic approach to fostering religious pride and social harmony. Activities such as the celebration of Islamic holidays (*PHBI*) provide a dual purpose: strengthening students' religious identity and promoting their social participation. These findings are consistent with the theory of social learning, which emphasizes the importance of experiential activities in reinforcing values and behaviors ([Akers & Jennings, 2019](#); [Bai et al., 2019](#); [Chuang, 2021](#)). The inclusion of initiatives like *Sedekah Jum'at* and social service activities further supports the development of empathy and community-oriented values among students, aligning with Islamic teachings on compassion and collective responsibility ([Agustina et al., 2022](#); [Rijal et al., 2024](#); [Solihin et al., 2020](#)).

Moreover, the emphasis on character development at MIS Rantepao underscores the school's commitment to instilling foundational values such as mutual respect, empathy, and cooperation. This aligns with the principle of *akhlaq* (Islamic ethics), which prioritizes interpersonal harmony and individual moral responsibility ([Nisa et al., 2023](#); [Rijal et al., 2024](#)). The school's ability to nurture positive social interactions among students is significant, particularly in fostering a respectful and inclusive environment within a religiously homogeneous institution.

Conversely, SD Katolik Rantepao III adopts a humanistic approach, placing inclusivity and interfaith respect at the forefront of its religious moderation strategy. By emphasizing "humanistic brotherhood" and egalitarian values, the school ensures equal treatment for all students, regardless of their social or religious background. This reflects John Dewey's philosophy of education, which views schools as miniature societies where democratic principles and mutual respect are cultivated ([Dewey, 2024](#); [Mohammed, 2024](#); [Motherway, 2022](#)). The school's efforts to eliminate social and cultural dichotomies align with the broader objectives of multicultural education, which seeks to promote equality and reduce prejudice ([Arsal, 2019](#); [Schachner, 2019](#); [Suri & Chandra, 2021](#); [Torres & Tarozzi, 2020](#)).

The findings also reveal that SD Katolik Rantepao III fosters interfaith dialogue and openness, creating a platform for students to learn from one another's diverse perspectives. These practices resonate with theories of intergroup contact, which posit that meaningful interaction between individuals from different groups can reduce bias and foster mutual understanding ([Christ & Kauff, 2019](#); [Paolini et al., 2021](#); [Tropp et al., 2022](#); [White et al., 2021](#)). Students' testimonials about how these practices have positively shaped their relationships provide compelling evidence of the effectiveness of this approach.

Both schools demonstrate a shared commitment to incorporating nationalistic and civic education into their curricula, which strengthens students' loyalty to the nation while reinforcing universal values of justice, humanity, and unity. The alignment of these efforts with the principles of Pancasila highlights the schools' acknowledgment of Indonesia's multicultural framework and its potential to unify diverse populations ([Habibah et al., 2023](#); [Ikhsan et al., 2024](#); [Khalilurrahman et al., 2023](#)). This is particularly significant in promoting religious moderation as a foundation for social cohesion in a pluralistic society.

The complementary approaches observed in these schools—MIS Rantepao’s integration of Islamic values with social harmony and SD Katolik Rantepao III’s emphasis on inclusivity and interfaith dialogue—illustrate that religious moderation can be effectively tailored to suit different contexts. These findings provide a model for other educational institutions seeking to foster tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious coexistence among students. However, it is important to recognize that the success of these initiatives depends on sustained efforts, adequate resources, and the active involvement of all stakeholders, including teachers, students, and the broader community.

### ***Steps in Strengthening Religious Moderation Management***

The implementation of religious moderation at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III demonstrates systematic efforts to embed values of tolerance and inclusivity into educational practices. These steps reflect the schools’ commitment to fostering harmonious relationships among students while addressing the unique religious and cultural contexts in which they operate.

At MIS Rantepao, the careful preparation and organization of Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam*, PAI) lessons ensure that the principles of religious moderation are integrated into daily learning activities. By establishing clear objectives and using diverse teaching methods such as lectures, group discussions, and demonstrations, teachers create an interactive learning environment that supports both cognitive and affective development ([Chew & Cerbin, 2021](#); [Elmi, 2020](#); [Fischer & Hänze, 2019](#); [Hussein et al., 2024](#)). These practices not only enrich the learning process but also contribute to building an inclusive atmosphere where students can appreciate diverse perspectives ([Harris et al., 2020](#); [Rasmitadila et al., 2021](#)).

The reliance on selected learning materials, including textbooks and translated Qur’anic texts, aligns with the school’s goal of reinforcing religious understanding and tolerance. However, challenges such as limited access to resources highlight the need for greater institutional support. Despite these limitations, the school’s dedication ensures that students are exposed to core messages of mutual respect and empathy, emphasizing the importance of character development alongside academic achievement.

Evaluation practices at MIS Rantepao further strengthen the implementation of religious moderation. Through written, oral, and practical assessments, teachers measure students’ understanding while encouraging self-reflection on their behaviors and attitudes ([Murphy Odo, 2022](#); [Pang, 2022](#); [Takkaç Tulgar, 2019](#); [Zhang et al., 2022](#)). These evaluations provide a holistic approach to learning, ensuring that students internalize the values of religious moderation in their interactions within and beyond the school environment ([Fauzan &., 2024](#); [Masturin, 2023](#)).

At SD Katolik Rantepao III, the focus on character education and inclusive teaching strategies underscores the importance of experiential learning in fostering a harmonious and pluralistic society. By incorporating humanistic values and promoting interfaith dialogue, the school creates a learning environment that prioritizes respect for diversity and shared responsibility ([Nisa et al., 2023](#); [Pradana et al., 2023](#)). This approach reflects a broader commitment to inclusivity, as evidenced by the integration of egalitarian principles and collaborative activities into the daily lives of students ([Mala & Hunaida, 2023](#); [Mulyana, 2023](#)).

Both schools also emphasize the role of nationalism and civic education in promoting religious moderation. Lessons on Pancasila serve as a unifying framework that integrates religious values with the principles of justice, humanity, and national unity ([Badrun et al., 2023](#); [Sapsudin & Wibisono, 2024](#)). Participation in national ceremonies and discussions on civic responsibility further strengthens students’ loyalty to Indonesia’s multicultural identity ([Armadi et al., 2024](#); [Verkuyten et al., 2019](#)). These initiatives underscore the importance of aligning religious education with civic values to build a cohesive and tolerant society.

The complementary approaches of MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III highlight the potential of educational institutions to act as agents of social harmony. While MIS Rantepao focuses on integrating Islamic values with social harmony, SD Katolik Rantepao III emphasizes inclusivity and interfaith respect. Together, these practices contribute to fostering tolerance, mutual understanding, and a sense of national unity among students. Despite challenges such as resource limitations and

varying cultural contexts, the efforts of both schools provide a valuable model for promoting religious moderation in primary education.

### ***Challenges in Strengthening Religious Moderation Management***

The challenges in strengthening religious moderation management at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III illustrate the complexities of fostering tolerance and inclusivity in a pluralistic society. These challenges highlight the intricate interplay between religious education, cultural norms, and the broader societal context, necessitating multifaceted strategies to address them effectively.

One significant challenge is maintaining tolerance (*tasammuh*) within and across religious groups. At MIS Rantepao, internal differences among Islamic sects require educators to emphasize mutual respect while fostering a unified understanding of Islamic teachings. This approach aligns with the concept of *rahmatan lil alamin* (mercy to all creations), which emphasizes compassion and inclusivity. Promoting tolerance with non-Muslim communities adds another layer of complexity, as students must be guided to respect the beliefs and practices of others without compromising their religious convictions. These efforts align with Allport's intergroup contact theory, which suggests that positive interactions between individuals from different groups can reduce prejudice and foster mutual respect ([Christ & Kauff, 2019](#); [Pettigrew, 2021](#); [Tropp et al., 2022](#)).

At SD Katolik Rantepao III, balancing the promotion of Christian values with interfaith understanding presents a nuanced challenge. The diversity of the student population requires the school to address misconceptions and encourage a culture of openness. Teachers play a pivotal role in fostering this balance by creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among students. This challenge underscores the importance of inclusive pedagogy, which prioritizes respect for diversity while maintaining the integrity of religious identity ([Brennan et al., 2021](#); [Mala & Hunaida, 2023](#); [Mizani, 2022](#)).

Social solidarity among students from diverse religious backgrounds also poses challenges. While both schools encourage mutual support, misunderstandings or biases can occasionally hinder collaboration. Encouraging students to work together on shared goals, such as community service or group projects, has proven effective in bridging these gaps and promoting camaraderie ([Eko & Putranto, 2019](#); [Indainanto et al., 2023](#); [Zakso et al., 2021](#)). These efforts resonate with the principles of cooperative learning, which emphasize the value of teamwork in fostering interpersonal relationships and reducing conflict ([Abramczyk & Jurkowski, 2020](#); [Bassachs et al., 2020](#); [Dzemidzic Kristiansen et al., 2019](#)).

Resource limitations, particularly at MIS Rantepao, present another significant challenge. The lack of access to comprehensive learning materials and innovative teaching tools affects the delivery of lessons and limits the effectiveness of religious moderation programs. Addressing this challenge requires institutional support to provide adequate resources and training for teachers. This aligns with the broader goal of ensuring equitable access to quality education, which is a cornerstone of sustainable development in diverse communities ([Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021](#); [Harris et al., 2020](#); [Unterhalter, 2019](#)).

Cultural norms and traditions in the Toraja region further complicate the implementation of religious moderation. Traditional ceremonies, such as funerals and weddings, are deeply ingrained in the community, requiring schools to navigate the intersection of cultural and religious practices. Integrating respect for local traditions into educational programs helps students appreciate cultural diversity while remaining true to their religious beliefs. This approach reflects the principles of culturally responsive teaching, which seeks to validate and affirm students' cultural identities within the educational process ([Brown et al., 2019](#); [Kieran & Anderson, 2019](#)).

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study highlight the diverse approaches, systematic steps, and persistent challenges involved in managing and strengthening religious moderation in primary education institutions, specifically at MIS Rantepao and SD Katolik Rantepao III. The management of religious moderation at MIS Rantepao emphasizes the integration of Islamic values with community engagement through activities such as celebrating Islamic holidays, conducting social services, and fostering harmonious social relationships among students. These initiatives reflect the school's commitment to



instilling mutual respect and empathy while reinforcing Islamic principles. In contrast, SD Katolik Rantepao III adopts a humanistic and inclusive approach, emphasizing openness, egalitarianism, and interfaith respect. By promoting mutual care and celebrating diversity, the school creates an environment where students are encouraged to value differences and collaborate effectively.

The implementation of religious moderation is further strengthened through systematic steps that embed these values into everyday educational activities. At MIS Rantepao, lesson planning, diverse teaching methods, and regular evaluations ensure an inclusive learning environment that supports tolerance and mutual respect. Despite resource constraints, teachers at MIS Rantepao creatively adapt their methods to ensure that students grasp and internalize these values. At SD Katolik Rantepao III, character education and experiential learning are central to fostering interfaith understanding and collaboration among students. Both schools also incorporate elements of nationalism and civic education, reinforcing students' sense of unity and loyalty to Indonesia's multicultural heritage.

Despite these efforts, the implementation of religious moderation faces several challenges. MIS Rantepao grapples with internal differences among Islamic sects and limited access to teaching resources, which sometimes hinder the effectiveness of its programs. Meanwhile, SD Katolik Rantepao III must address misconceptions about interfaith interactions and balance the promotion of Christian values with inclusivity. Both schools also face the broader challenge of navigating the intersection of cultural traditions and religious practices, particularly in the Toraja region, where local ceremonies are deeply rooted in community life. Addressing these challenges requires sustained dialogue, resource enhancement, and innovative strategies to overcome systemic and societal barriers.

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