



The Role of MTs N 3 Surabaya City in Building Religious Moderation Culture: Analysis of Inclusive and Child-Friendly Education Models

Asmiati¹, Dwi Atmaja², Lilik Mahmudah³ Abdul Kholiq⁴, Priyo Bagus Widyanto⁵.

¹MTs N 3, Surabaya, Email asmadiyah69@gmail.com

²MTs N 3, Surabaya, Email email.ndorodemang@gmail.com

³MTs N 3, Surabaya, Email lilikmahmudah8@gmail.com

⁴MTs N 3, Surabaya, Email kholiqabdul127@gmail.com

⁵MTs N 3, Surabaya, Email wpriyobagus@gmail.com

Corresponding Author: asmadiyah69@gmail.com

Abstract:

Backgrounds. As educational institutions with Islamic characteristics, madrasahs play unique roles and bear special responsibilities in this national project. Madrasahs function not only as institutions for knowledge transfer, but also as centers for character formation and religious understanding of Indonesia's young Muslim generation.

Aims. This research conducts an in-depth analysis of the religious moderation culture development model at MTsN 3 Surabaya City, positioned as a pioneer in responding to the national agenda for strengthening religious moderation. Facing challenges of intolerance and radicalism, this madrasah has designed a holistic and systematic program architecture.

Methods. Using qualitative analysis methods on institutional publication data and news reports, this study identifies three main strategic pillars: (1) student empowerment as agents of change through the flagship program "Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation"; (2) institutional ecosystem strengthening through in-depth teacher training and internal knowledge production in the form of dozens of moderation books; and (3) holistic integration of moderation values into curriculum, school culture, and strategic partnerships.

Result. The main findings indicate that this strategy not only successfully forms tolerant, prosocial, and nationally minded student characters, but also fundamentally transforms the school climate into a safer, more harmonious, and collaborative environment.

Conclusion. The central thesis of this report is that the comprehensive implementation of religious moderation at MTsN 3 Surabaya City functions as an instrumental mechanism to realize an inclusive education model based on the Child-Friendly School (CFS) framework.

Implementation. This model proves effective in translating macro policies into impactful micro practices, offering valuable insights for other educational institutions.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Inclusive Education, Child-Friendly School (CFS), MTsN 3 Surabaya City, Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation, Character Education



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INTRODUCTION

Religious Moderation as Contemporary Islamic Education Paradigm National Context: The Urgency of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

In the contemporary Indonesian socio-political landscape, strengthening religious moderation has become a national priority agenda. Facing challenges of increasing polarization, intolerance, and radicalism threats, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), has positioned the "Strengthening Religious Moderation" program as one of the main pillars in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020-2024 (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2024). This policy is not an attempt to dilute or weaken religious teachings, but rather a movement to moderate the understanding and practice of religious life in society. This concept is defined as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion that takes the middle path (*wasathiyyah*), namely by not being extreme (*ifrath*) or liberal (*tafrith*) (Riza et al., 2024). The goal is to manifest the essence of religious teachings that protect human dignity, build public welfare, and are based on principles of justice, balance, and adherence to the constitution as a national agreement.

Strategically, Kemenag directs the implementation of this policy to various fronts, with the education sector being the most crucial arena. Educational institutions, especially those under the auspices of Kemenag such as Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Madrasah Aliyah (MA), are seen as the front line in nurturing moderation values from an early age. There is a clear mandate for educators in madrasah to actively create and integrate learning content rich with religious moderation content. Key indicators that must be instilled include four main pillars: love of homeland (*muwatanah*), high tolerance (*tasamuh*), anti-violence attitude (*la 'urf*), and accommodation of local culture (*'urf*) (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2025). Regular training and development for teachers are organized to ensure they possess the competence to implement these values in their daily lives and classroom teaching practices (Kantor Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Bantul, 2023).

Madrasah as the Front Line

As educational institutions with Islamic characteristics, madrasahs hold unique roles and responsibilities in this national project. Madrasahs function not only as institutions

for knowledge transfer, but also as centers for character formation and religious understanding of Indonesia's young Muslim generation. Therefore, the success of the religious moderation strengthening program greatly depends on madrasah's ability to translate government macro policies into effective micro programs at the school level. Kemenag actively encourages madrasahs not merely to be passive implementers, but to become innovation incubators in developing curriculum models and programs that inherently instill moderation principles (Kantor Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Bantul, 2023).

The challenge for madrasah is how to internalize moderate values—such as balance (*tawazun*), justice (*i'tidal*), and consultation (*shura*)—into the entire educational ecosystem, from learning planning and extracurricular activities to school culture as a whole. This requires breakthroughs and "out of the box" thinking from madrasah managers to produce a generation that is not only academically intelligent and ritually pious, but also moderate, tolerant, and has strong national commitment (MTsN 3 Bogor, 2025).

Case Study: MTsN 3 Surabaya City as Pioneer

Within the constellation of these national policies, Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri (MTsN) 3 Surabaya City emerges as a highly relevant and interesting case study. This institution consciously and structurally responds to the national agenda call by positioning itself as a "pioneer in forming young generations who are tolerant and appreciate diversity" (Duta.co, 2025). This commitment is not mere rhetoric, but has been formally articulated in one of the madrasah's missions, namely to "develop moderate religious life" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025a).

The steps taken by MTsN 3 Surabaya City show systematic and comprehensive efforts to become a model for implementing religious moderation. Various news reports and internal school publications consistently highlight their initiatives, from teacher training, commitment declarations, to launching flagship programs centered on students (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). Thus, MTsN 3 Surabaya City is not just a school that runs a curriculum, but a social laboratory that actively designs and tests character education models based on moderation. The initiatives taken by MTsN 3 Surabaya City can be seen as a concrete manifestation of abstract policies formulated at the central level. This school effectively becomes the locus of implementation, where big ideas about moderation, tolerance, and nationalism are tested, adapted, and put into practice in daily educational

activities. An in-depth analysis of the model developed by MTsN 3 Surabaya City, therefore, not only provides an overview of a school's success, but also offers valuable insights for evaluating national education policies more broadly.

Problem Formulation and Main Thesis

This research aims to analyze the model applied by MTsN 3 Surabaya City in-depth. The analysis focus will be directed to answer three main problem formulations:

1. What is the role of MTsN 3 Surabaya City in building a religious moderation culture in the school environment?
2. What are the strategies and flagship programs implemented to achieve these goals?
3. What is the impact of religious moderation implementation on the school community, including students, teachers, and the overall learning climate?

Based on preliminary analysis of available data, this report proposes the main thesis as follows: That MTsN 3 Surabaya City, through holistic and structured program architecture, not only successfully implements religious moderation policies, but also effectively builds an inclusive education model centered on the Child-Friendly School (CFS) concept, which has potential for replication in other educational institutions. This thesis underlines that religious moderation efforts in this school are not isolated programs, but become the foundation for creating an educational ecosystem that is safe, appreciates differences, and empowers all its citizens, which is the essence of inclusive and child-friendly education (Hasanah & Abbas, 2024).

Conceptual Framework: Linking Religious Moderation, Inclusive Education, and Child-Friendly Schools

To comprehensively analyze the MTsN 3 Surabaya City model, a solid conceptual framework is needed. This framework will define three key concepts—religious moderation, inclusive education, and Child-Friendly Schools (CFS)—and most importantly, build theoretical bridges that show the intrinsic connections among the three. This report argues that religious moderation functions as a fundamental mechanism to realize the vision of inclusive education through practical implementation of CFS principles.

Definition of Religious Moderation in Educational Context

Religious moderation, or *wasathiyatul Islam*, is a central concept in contemporary Islamic discourse in Indonesia. In an educational context, this concept is translated into a series of principles and values aimed at forming balanced, fair, and tolerant student perspectives and behaviors. Based on guidelines from the Ministry of Religious Affairs and various academic literature, religious moderation is supported by several main pillars:

1. **Tawassut (Taking the Middle Path):** Understanding and practicing religion that is not excessive (*ifrath*) and does not reduce the essence of religious teachings (*tafrith*). This is an attitude to avoid all forms of extremism, both right and left.
2. **Tawazun (Balanced):** The ability to maintain balance between various aspects of life, such as worldly and afterlife interests, use of revelation evidence (*naqli*) and reasoning (*aqli*), as well as between idealism of thought and realism of action.
3. **I'tidal (Just and Consistent):** An upright, honest, and proportional attitude in acting. This includes the ability to treat others according to their rights and obligations and being consistent in upholding truth and justice.
4. **Tasamuh (Tolerance):** An open attitude and appreciating differences, whether in terms of ethnicity, race, group, or religion. Tolerance does not mean mixing beliefs, but acknowledging and respecting the existence of others' beliefs as part of social reality.
5. **Musawah (Equality):** Viewing and treating others equally without discrimination based on gender, beliefs, or social status. This principle recognizes the same dignity for every human being as God's creature.
6. **Syura (Consultation):** Prioritizing decision-making through dialogue and consensus. This principle teaches to appreciate differences of opinion and uphold collective decisions above personal or group interests.
7. **Muwatanah (Citizenship and Nationalism):** Instilling love for the homeland and commitment to the four pillars of nationalism: Pancasila, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, NKRI, and the 1945 Constitution. This principle affirms that being a good Muslim is simultaneously being a good Indonesian citizen.

In the educational realm, internalization of these principles is expected to fortify students from radical and exclusive ideologies, as well as prepare them to live harmoniously in Indonesia's multicultural society (Hefni, 2019).

Inclusive Education: Beyond Special Needs

The term "inclusive education" is often narrowed to mean education for children with special needs (CSN) in regular schools. However, in a broader and more progressive framework, inclusive education is a philosophy and approach that aims to ensure that *all* students, without exception, feel safe, valued, respected, and have equal opportunities to participate and learn. This approach seeks to identify and eliminate all forms of barriers to learning and participation, which can arise from various factors, including disability, socio-economic status, ethnicity, language, gender, and, most relevant to this study, differences in religious beliefs or views.

Proper inclusive education creates a school culture where diversity is not only tolerated but celebrated as a strength. Learning environments are designed to be flexible and responsive to the individual needs of each student. In the context of religious moderation, inclusive education means creating spaces where students from diverse religious backgrounds can interact positively, learn from one another, and feel safe from bullying, stereotypes, or marginalization based on their religious identity (Purnomo & Solikhah, 2021).

Child-Friendly Schools (CFS) as Conceptual Bridge

Here lies the crucial conceptual meeting point. The official vision of MTsN 3 Surabaya City is "The realization of human resources who are faithful, knowledgeable, noble, environmentally cultured and **child-friendly**" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025a). The use of the phrase "child-friendly" is not coincidental, but a marker that connects the school's vision with a broader national policy framework, namely the Child-Friendly School (CFS) concept. CFS is a program initiated and promoted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) RI (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection, 2019).

The CFS concept is built on principles that are functionally identical to inclusive education goals. CFS aims to create educational environments that are **Clean, Safe, Friendly, Beautiful, Healthy, Comfortable, and Pleasant (BARISAN)**. More deeply, CFS is an educational unit capable of guaranteeing, fulfilling, and respecting children's rights and protecting them from violence, discrimination, and other mistreatment, while supporting children's active participation in planning, policies, learning, and supervision. CFS principles, such as non-discrimination, best interests of the child, and the right to life,

survival, and development, directly reflect the foundations of inclusive education (Fitriani et al., 2021; Nasarudin et al., 2024).

Thus, a logical line of thinking can be built. MTsN 3 Surabaya City's efforts to be "child-friendly" are practical manifestations of their commitment to providing inclusive education. The question then is, how do they achieve this vision? The answer lies in the religious moderation program. Programs designed to instill values of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *musawah* (equality), and anti-violence directly contribute to creating safe and discrimination-free environments, which are absolute requirements for a Child-Friendly School. In other words, religious moderation is not merely an additional program. However, it becomes the primary *mechanism* or *instrument* used by MTsN 3 Surabaya City to build the foundation of an inclusive and child-friendly school climate. The conceptual hierarchy is clear: the implementation of religious moderation is the means (the how) to achieve the Child-Friendly School vision, which in turn is the concrete manifestation (the what) of the **inclusive education** philosophy.

Architecture of Moderation Culture Building: Strategies and Flagship Programs at MTsN 3 Surabaya City

Analysis of various data shows that MTsN 3 Surabaya City does not sporadically or partially approach a culture of religious moderation. Instead, this madrasah has designed a comprehensive, multi-layered program architecture targeting various stakeholders. This architecture can be dissected into three main components: student empowerment pillar, institutional ecosystem strengthening foundation, and holistic integration strategy into the pulse of madrasah life.

Main Pillar - Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation: Student Empowerment as Agents of Change

The "Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation" program is the flagship initiative and most prominent from MTsN 3 Surabaya City. This program represents a paradigm shift, from an educational model that positions students as passive objects to one that empowers them as subjects and active agents of change (TV9 Nusantara, 2025).

Goals and Philosophy: The main goal of this program, as emphasized by the Madrasah Head, Dra. Asmiati, M.Pd., is to "create harmony in the school environment and form a generation that is moderate, anti-radicalism, and upholds diversity". More pragmatically, this

program is designed as a preventive measure to minimize potential conflicts among students, such as bullying and physical altercations, by instilling values of tolerance and appreciation for differences from an early age. Its basic philosophy is that the most effective and sustainable cultural change is one that is pioneered by, for, and from the students themselves (Duta.co, 2025).

Selection Process and Training

Membership in Young Ambassadors is exclusive and competency-based. Prospective ambassadors, coming from 7th and 8th grade students, must go through a "rigorous selection". One of the main criteria in this selection is students' ability to make presentations on religious moderation concepts (Duta.co, 2025). This indicates that what is sought is not only achieving students, but also those who have conceptual understanding and good communication skills. After being selected, 10 students who become Young Ambassadors undergo routine training programs held monthly. This training aims to continuously deepen their understanding of moderation values and hone their skills in effectively spreading tolerance messages.

Activities and Real Actions

The Young Ambassadors are not only symbols, but also actors involved in various concrete activities. Their actions cover three main realms:

1. **Internal Socialization:** Their main task is to socialize religious moderation values to their peers. This is done through various media, such as giving materials or presentations in class or student forums (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025c), as well as leading "Moderation Chants" in school events to build team spirit and collective commitment (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025d).
2. **Social Action and Environmental Care:** The ambassadors also practice moderation values in the form of real actions beneficial to the community. One documented example is "cleaning school and surrounding environment" activities (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025e). Such activities instill social responsibility and show that piety is not only vertical (to God), but also horizontal (to others and the environment).
3. **Strengthening National Insight:** The ambassadors' work plan, as expressed by the elected chairperson, Ghafi Alvaro Susilo, includes an agenda to visit "cultural places". The goal is for students to better know Indonesia's cultural diversity and, through direct experience, strengthen their tolerance attitudes. This plan shows deep

understanding that religious moderation cannot be separated from national insight and appreciation for diversity (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b).

Ecosystem Strengthening - Educator and Institutional Capacity Development

The success of student-centered programs largely depends on the ecosystem support surrounding them. MTsN 3 Surabaya City realizes this and systematically builds strong foundations through educator capacity development and institutional commitment strengthening.

Teacher and Staff Training

The school proactively organizes professional development programs focusing on religious moderation. One example is the "Religious Moderation Strengthening Workshop for Teachers and Employees" held in March 2025 (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). The scale of this event shows the madrasah's seriousness; this event was not only attended by all teachers and employees, but also involved the Madrasah Committee, Madrasah Supervisors, even the Head of Surabaya City Kemenag Office. The materials presented were not basic, but included strategic analysis of "Diversity and Threats of National Disintegration" and introduction to planning methods like "Scenario Thinking" to help educators implement moderation creatively and anticipatively.

Knowledge Production as Differentiator

One of the most distinguishing strategies of MTsN 3 Surabaya City is its focus on knowledge production. There is strong evidence that teachers and a "moderation group" at this madrasah have collectively written and published "five volumes of books on national moderation and 10 supporting moderation books" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). This step is very significant. It shows that the madrasah not only acts as a consumer or implementer of top-down policies, but has transformed into a knowledge producer and center of expertise in its field. The book writing process requires teachers to conduct deep reflection, research, and codification of the good practices they implement. This not only improves individual competence, but also creates institutional intellectual assets that make programs more sustainable and less dependent on certain leadership figures.

Formalized Institutional Commitment

The madrasah's commitment to religious moderation is not only implicit, but also explicitly stated and formally established. In the workshop event, a "Moderation Madrasah Declaration" procession was held, read by teacher representatives and followed by all participants (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). Such declarative actions have strong symbolic

functions, namely as an affirmation of collective institutional identity and commitment, as well as a social contract that binds all madrasah citizens to uphold moderate values.

Holistic Integration - Weaving Moderation into Madrasah Life

The third strategy is to weave moderation values into all aspects of madrasah life, making them an inseparable part of the school culture.

Curriculum and Learning: Although specific Learning Implementation Plans (RPP) from MTsN 3 Surabaya City are not available in the data, it can be assumed with high confidence that integration of moderation values into the curriculum occurs systematically. This is based on three factors: (1) existence of national mandate from Kemenag (Kantor Kementerian Agama Kabupaten Bantul, 2023; MTsN 3 Bogor, 2025); (2) organization of workshops for teachers on moderation implementation in madrasah (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b); and (3) existence of integration models commonly applied in Islamic educational institutions. The model that might be applied is as depicted in examples found in educational literature (Nuhaliza et al., 2024), where teachers integrate key concepts such as *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, and *i'tidal* contextually into relevant subjects, especially Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and Pancasila and Citizenship Education (PPKn), through discussion methods, case studies, and exemplary behavior.

Orientation, Socialization, and Partnerships: Instilling moderation values begins from the first day a student sets foot in the madrasah. These values are socialized during the Student Madrasah Introduction Period (MATSAMA) (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025f). Furthermore, the madrasah understands the importance of synergy between school and home. Therefore, they hold special meetings with new student guardians to introduce the madrasah's vision, mission, and programs, including character strengthening initiatives, to ensure alignment and support from parents (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025). Strategic partnerships are also built with external parties to strengthen moderation messages. Besides Kemenag, this madrasah also shows a sophisticated understanding of the threat spectrum by partnering with Special Detachment (Densus) 88 Anti-Terror to provide socialization on preventing radicalism and intolerance (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025h).

Learning Culture and Continuous Improvement: MTsN 3 Surabaya City exhibits an open organizational culture focused on continuous improvement. One proof is the implementation of *study visits* (benchmarking) to other institutions considered excellent, such as to MAN 1 Malang City. The specific purpose of this visit was to learn and share insights about religious

moderation, particularly from the experience of a MAN 1 Malang City female student who was selected as the National Young Initiator of Religious Moderation (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025). This attitude demonstrates institutional humility and a willingness to learn and continually improve their existing model.

The approach applied by MTsN 3 Surabaya City clearly shows a mature strategic design. This model not only relies on one program, but builds a mutually supportive ecosystem. There is strong synergy between leadership providing direction from above (top-down) through workshops and declarations, with student empowerment from below (bottom-up) through the Young Ambassador program. This synergy is strengthened by horizontal stakeholder involvement (parents) and vertical partnerships with external institutions (Kemenag, Densus 88). This multi-dimensional architecture is the key to the strength and sustainability potential of the moderation culture building model at MTsN 3 Surabaya City.

The following table provides a systematic summary of this program architecture.

Table 1: Religious Moderation Program Matrix at MTsN 3 Surabaya City

Program/Strategy Name	Main Purpose	Target Audience	Key Activities
Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation	Create a tolerant, anti-radicalism, and harmonious generation; Prevent bullying and conflicts.	Grade 7 & 8 Students	Rigorous selection, monthly training, peer socialization, cultural visits, social action (environmental cleaning).
Teacher Workshop & Training	Improve teacher & staff competence and commitment in implementing religious moderation.	All Teachers & Staff, Madrasah Committee	Workshop, expert presentations (Kemenag), Scenario Thinking method training.
Moderation Book Publishing	Codify knowledge, build internal expertise, and become reference center.	Teachers, Moderation Group, Madrasah & External Community	Research process, collective writing, and publication of 5 volumes of national moderation books and 10 supporting books.
Moderation Madrasah Declaration	Formalize institutional commitment and build collective awareness.	All Madrasah Citizens	Reading declaration text together in an official event.
Parent Socialization	Align madrasah and home vision; Build synergy in educating students.	New Student Parents (Grade 7)	Beginning of academic year meeting, socialization of vision-mission and madrasah flagship programs.
Strategic Partnerships	Strengthen legitimacy and program content by involving external expertise.	Students, Teachers	Radicalism prevention socialization by Densus 88; Guidance by Kemenag.
Study Visits (Benchmarking)	Learn from good practices at other institutions for	Accompanying Teachers & Selected Students	Visit to MAN 1 Malang City to discuss with national-level Moderation Ambassador.

	continuous program improvement.		
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Impact and Implications: Realizing a Harmonious and Inclusive School Community

Implementation of a comprehensive religious moderation program architecture at MTsN 3 Surabaya City logically produces a series of significant impacts and implications for the school community. Although available data is more qualitative and intention-oriented, in-depth analysis can identify changes occurring at three levels: students, educators, and overall school climate. These impacts collectively lead to the realization of the madrasah's vision as an inclusive and child-friendly educational environment.

Impact on Students: Character Formation and Pro-Social Behavior

The most fundamental impact of this program is on student character formation. The explicit goal announced by madrasah leadership is to "create tolerance and harmonization" and produce a generation that is "more tolerant, avoids conflicts, and maintains diversity" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). These programs are designed with a preventive thinking framework, namely to prevent negative behaviors such as "bullying and brawls" by building strong character foundations (Duta.co, 2025).

Success in character formation can be seen from early indicators. One is the initiative shown by the Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation. The statement by elected ambassador chairperson, Ghafi Alvaro Susilo, about his plan to "create socialization among religious communities" and "visit cultural places" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b) is not merely repetition of training materials. This is an indication that moderation values have been internalized and translated into proactive and relevant action plans. Students' ability to formulate their own agenda aligned with the madrasah's grand vision shows program success in fostering ownership and agency in students. They are no longer just passive recipients, but have become active architects in building tolerance culture among their peers.

Impact on Educators: Competence and Commitment Enhancement

Religious moderation programs at MTsN 3 Surabaya City have also significantly changed the role and capacity of its educators. Through a series of intensive workshops involving experts and sophisticated methods like Scenario Thinking (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b), teachers not only receive instructions, but are also equipped with

analytical tools to think critically and strategically. They are encouraged to become reflective and innovative educators.

However, the most transformative impact is their involvement in writing and publishing 15 books on religious moderation (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). This initiative elevates teachers' status from mere 'instructors' to 'intellectuals' and 'knowledge producers'. This process requires them to conduct research, synthesis, and idea articulation, which inherently deepens their understanding and mastery of materials. Consequently, there is extraordinary intellectual capacity enhancement and professional commitment. Teachers at MTsN 3 Surabaya City are no longer just curriculum deliverers; they have become experts and reference sources in moderation education, which in turn improves teaching quality and their confidence both inside and outside the classroom.

Impact on School Climate: Toward a Safe and Inclusive Environment

Accumulation of changes at the student and educator levels ultimately forms a new school climate. This climate is characterized by social norms that explicitly support tolerance, harmony, and safety. Various rituals and symbols, such as "Moderation Madrasah Declaration" and "Moderation Chants" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b, 2025d), function as constant reminders of shared commitment and strengthen collective identity as a moderate community.

The presence of Young Ambassadors who actively socialize and become role models for their friends creates a positive peer social control mechanism. This helps suppress intolerant and exclusive behaviors, promoting dialogue and mutual understanding. Creating a safe and mutually respectful climate is the primary foundation of an effective learning environment. When students feel physically and psychologically safe, they can focus more on learning processes and self-development. This is the essence of the madrasah's vision to be "child-friendly" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025a). Furthermore, the enthusiasm of student guardians who "almost filled the mosque" during madrasah program socialization events (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025g) is a strong indicator of trust and positive relationships between school and parents. This shows that the favorable climate built within the school has been successfully felt and supported by the broader community, creating a solid and coherent educational ecosystem.

Overall, the model applied by MTsN 3 Surabaya City shows a mature understanding of how impact is created. They do not measure success solely by academic achievements,

but also by cultural and behavioral changes. Their success measures are preventive and proactive: not measured by how well they resolve conflicts, but by how successfully they prevent conflicts from occurring in the first place. Focus on "avoiding conflicts" and "preventing negative things" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b; Duta.co, 2025) shows an intervention targeting root causes—namely intolerance culture—and not just its symptoms. This preventive approach is most aligned with the mandate to create safe, inclusive, and child-friendly learning environments.

DISCUSSION

MTsN 3 Surabaya City as Inclusive Islamic Education Model

Analysis of the role, strategies, and impact of religious moderation implementation at MTsN 3 Surabaya City enables us to conduct a deeper discussion. This section will synthesize all findings to evaluate the strengths of the applied model, articulate conceptual relationships between moderation and inclusivity, and identify potential challenges and future development directions.

Model Strength Analysis: Holistic, Student-Centered, and Knowledge-Based

The model developed by MTsN 3 Surabaya City shows three fundamental strengths that make it practical and potentially sustainable.

First, a **holistic and multi-stakeholder approach**. This program does not stand alone, but is designed as an ecosystem. There are top-down interventions, such as leadership commitment declarations and intensive teacher training (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). There is also bottom-up empowerment, where students are placed through the Young Ambassador program as the main driving force of change among them (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). This model is also strengthened by horizontal stakeholder involvement (parents) (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025g) and vertical partnerships with external institutions that have specific expertise (Kemenag, Densus 88) (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b, 2025h). Architecture that involves all institutional components synergistically reflects best practices in organizational change management and public policy, making it significantly more robust compared to approaches that focus on only one aspect.

Second, the **student-centered model**. By making students "Ambassadors," MTsN 3 Surabaya City applies pedagogical principles that are very effective for character education at the adolescent level. Adolescents are more likely to be influenced by peers than authority

figures. By empowering selected students as agents of change, moderation messages are delivered through more authentic and acceptable media to their audience. The Young Ambassador program effectively creates role models and opinion leaders among students, thereby accelerating internalization processes and the formation of new social norms.

Third, a **model based on internal knowledge production**. The most unique and strategic strength of this model is its emphasis on teachers writing and publishing books (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b). This initiative has significant long-term implications. It transforms the madrasah from a mere policy implementer to a center of excellence, having intellectual authority. By having an internal knowledge corpus, moderation programs become more resistant to leadership changes and have strong foundations for future training and development. This also positions MTsN 3 Surabaya City as a reference for other schools, strengthening its status as a "model" or "pioneer".

Connecting the Dots: Moderation as Prerequisite for Inclusivity

This discussion returns to the report's main thesis: that religious moderation programs at MTsN 3 Surabaya City are fundamental mechanisms for building an inclusive education model based on Child-Friendly School (CFS) framework. This connection can be articulated explicitly.

The madrasah's vision to be "child-friendly" (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025a) directly connects with CFS principles demanding safe, comfortable, and discrimination-free learning environments (Fitriani et al., 2021; Nasarudin et al., 2024). An environment cannot be called "child-friendly" if students still feel threatened, marginalized, or humiliated because of ethnic, cultural, or even internal religious view differences. Here is where religious moderation programs play their role as prerequisites.

By instilling *Tasamuh* (tolerance) principles, this program directly combats potential SARA-based bullying. By teaching *Musawah* (equality), this program cultivates mutual respect and rejects discrimination. By promoting *La 'Unf* (anti-violence), this program explicitly aims to "prevent bullying and brawls" (Duta.co, 2025), which are the most real threats to students' physical and psychological safety. Moreover, by strengthening *Muwatanah* (love of homeland), this program fosters a shared identity among Indonesian citizens, transcending primordial barriers and creating an inclusive national brotherhood (*ukhuwwah wathaniyyah*).

Thus, every pillar of religious moderation implemented by MTsN 3 Surabaya City directly contributes to creating conditions necessary for inclusive and child-friendly schools. Moderation is not a separate end goal, but an instrumental foundation enabling inclusivity and child-friendliness visions to be realized.

Table 2: Synchronization of Religious Moderation and Child-Friendly School Principles in Practice at MTsN 3 Surabaya City

Key Principle (Combined Moderation & CFS)	Manifestation in MTsN 3 Programs	Contribution to Inclusive & Child-Friendly Climate
Tolerance & Diversity Appreciation (<i>Tasamuh</i>)	Young Ambassadors plan visits to cultural places and inter-religious socialization (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b).	Creates environment appreciating differences, reducing stereotypes, and opening students' insights to multicultural reality.
Anti-Violence & Safe Environment (<i>La 'Unf</i>)	Ambassador program explicitly aims to prevent <i>bullying</i> and brawls (Duta.co, 2025); Partnership with Densus 88 for radicalism prevention (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025h).	Guarantees physical and psychological safety for all students, which is main requirement for effective and child-friendly learning environment.
Equality & Non-Discrimination (<i>Musawah</i>)	Socialization of moderation values to all students regardless of background (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b); Workshop for all teachers & staff (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b).	Builds culture where every individual is valued and has equal rights, eliminating marginalization potential.
Active Child Participation (<i>Syura</i>)	Students become main agents through Young Ambassador program, planning and implementing their own activities (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b).	Gives students voice and agency in shaping their school environment, according to core CFS principles and empowering education.
National Commitment & Shared Identity (<i>Muwatanah</i>)	Moderation Madrasah Declaration (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b); Singing Indonesia Raya in official events (MTsN 3 Kota Surabaya, 2025b).	Strengthens shared ownership as Indonesian nation, transcending narrow group identities and building unity foundation.

Potential Challenges and Development Directions

Although the applied model is very strong, critical analysis needs to identify potential challenges and areas for further development.

Long-term Impact Measurement: Current available data is qualitative and focuses on processes and short-term goals. The future challenge is how to measure long-term impact of this program more quantitatively. For example, is there a decrease in fighting or bullying cases? How are the attitudes and behaviors of Moderation Ambassador alumni after they graduate and continue to higher education levels or enter society?

Scalability and Replication: MTsN 3 Surabaya City, as a state madrasah in a big city, likely has better resources (financial, human, and network) compared to other madrasah in peripheral areas or private schools. The challenge is how to adapt and replicate this model in schools with more limited resources. Need to identify which components of this model

are *low-cost, high-impact* (such as Young Ambassador program) and can be applied more broadly.

Inclusivity Depth: The main focus of religious moderation at MTsN 3 is on inclusivity in the context of religious, cultural, and national diversity. This is a very important step. However, the term "inclusive education" in full spectrum also includes other dimensions such as inclusion for students with disabilities (special needs), gender equality, and socio-economic backgrounds. Although searches on madrasah official sources did not find explicit programs for these areas, future development direction for madrasah is to expand their "child-friendly" and "inclusive" framework to include these dimensions more systematically (Iman et al., 2025; Novrizal & Manaf, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the role, strategies, and impact of implementing religious moderation, this report presents a series of conclusions and strategic recommendations aimed at policymakers, education practitioners, and future researchers.

Analysis in this report has answered three main problem formulations as follows:

1. **Role of MTsN 3 Surabaya City:** This madrasah not only serves as an educational institution running a curriculum, but has transformed into an incubator, pioneer, and model in building a religious moderation culture. This role is carried out through a conscious, planned, and systematic institutional approach, as a direct response to the national agenda to combat intolerance and radicalism.
2. **Strategies and Flagship Programs:** The applied strategy is holistic, multi-layered, and centered on creating a supportive ecosystem. Its program architecture is supported by three main pillars: (a) student empowerment as agents of change through the flagship "Young Ambassadors of Religious Moderation" program; (b) institutional capacity strengthening through in-depth teacher and staff training and internal knowledge production in the form of dozens of moderation books; and (c) integration of moderation values into all aspects of madrasah life through curriculum, socialization, and strategic partnerships with various parties.

IMPLEMENTATION

The impact of this strategy is transformative for the entire school community. At student level, there is formation of tolerant, pro-social, and initiative characters. At educator level,

there is professional competence enhancement and role shift from instructor to knowledge producer. Collectively, this creates a more harmonious, safe, and collaborative school climate, effectively realizing the madrasah's vision as an inclusive and "child-friendly" educational institution.

The main conclusion is that MTsN 3 Surabaya City has successfully developed a model demonstrating that comprehensive implementation of religious moderation programs serves as a fundamental mechanism for building inclusive education foundations.

Recommendations for Policymakers (Ministry of Religious Affairs)

Making MTsN 3 Surabaya City National *Benchmark*

The Ministry of Religious Affairs is advised to officially recognize and promote MTsN 3 Surabaya City as a study center and national *benchmark* for implementing religious moderation strengthening programs at elementary and secondary education levels. Study visits and internship programs for madrasah heads and teachers from across Indonesia to this school need to be facilitated.

Supporting Replication and Innovation

To encourage replication of this model, Kemenag needs to provide funding schemes or competitive grants specifically aimed at supporting innovative programs such as forming Moderation Ambassadors or teacher book writing projects at other madrasahs, especially those with resource limitations.

Integrating the CFS Framework: It is recommended that Kemenag collaborate with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) to formally integrate the "Child-Friendly School" (CFS) framework into guidelines and training modules for implementing religious moderation in madrasahs. This will provide a stronger conceptual foundation and more measurable goals (namely, creating safe and non-discriminatory environments).

Recommendations for Education Practitioners (Madrasah/Other School Heads)

Adopting Student Empowerment Model

School heads at other madrasahs and general schools are encouraged to adopt or adapt the "Young Ambassador" model. This program proves effective in building student leadership and spreading positive values through peer channels, with relatively affordable costs.

Investing in Teacher Capacity as Knowledge Producers

Investment in teacher capacity development should not stop at the training level. School leaders need to create climate and provide incentives encouraging teachers to conduct small-scale research, write, and share good practices. This will build internal expertise and make programs more sustainable.

Building Early Synergy

MTsN 3 Surabaya City's practice in building synergy with parents from the beginning through program socialization for new students is a strategic step worth emulating. Ensuring vision alignment between school and home is key to character education success.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

Conducting Longitudinal Studies: Longitudinal research is needed to track long-term impact of Moderation Ambassador programs. This study can follow alumni trajectories to see how their experiences as ambassadors influence career choices, social participation, and their attitudes toward diversity in adulthood.

Conducting Comparative Studies: Comparative research between MTsN 3 Surabaya City model with other madrasah (for example, rural madrasah, private madrasah, or general schools with similar programs) would be very valuable. Such studies can identify key contextual factors (such as leadership, resources, community support) determining success or failure of moderation program implementation.

Developing Quantitative Measurement Instruments: To complement currently dominant qualitative data, researchers in education and social psychology fields need to develop and validate quantitative instruments (for example, attitude scales or school climate surveys) specifically designed to measure "moderation climate" or "tolerance culture" levels in schools. This will enable more objective impact evaluation and more systematic inter-school comparisons.

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