

## THE CHARACTER EDUCATION MODEL AS A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR NURTURING RELIGIOUS MODERATION WITHIN STATE ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN INDONESIA

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### Abstract

The model for nurturing attitudes of religious moderation in State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) has primarily focused on the cognitive dimension, particularly the aspect of understanding. However, it is important to acknowledge that moderate religious attitudes are also shaped by the processes of meaning-making and habituation. This study offers novelty by contextually adapting the character education model as a comprehensive framework for nurturing moderate religious attitudes in PTKIN. This study employs a qualitative approach with a

phenomenological design. The data is analyzed through several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, with the aim of understanding the significance of students' experiences while participating in the moderate religious attitude formation program. The study results indicate that the adapted character education model, which combines elements of understanding, meaning, and habituation, effectively promotes moderate religious attitudes among PTKIN students. These findings provide important implications for the development of religious moderation programs within the PTKIN context. However, this study has limitations regarding the scope of participants, as it does not represent all PTKIN in Indonesia. Therefore, further testing of these results in a broader context is necessary.

**Keywords:** Character education model, Religious moderation, Moderate religious attitude, Islamic higher education institutions

## A. Introduction

Religious moderation is defined as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that consistently takes a moderate stance, behaves equitably, always acts fairly, and refrains from extreme religious views (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019a). Religious moderation is the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a fair and balanced manner to avoid extreme or excessive behavior when implementing them (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019b). Kementerian Agama RI (2019a) stated that the leading indicators of religious moderation are national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture.

The demand for moderation in religious life has become popular in recent years (Kamaruddin, 2012; Musyaffa et al., 2022). This issue has even increased after the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama RI), henceforth referred to as MoRA, made a policy institutionally (Apriani & Aryani, 2022). Recognizing the importance of

cultivating religious moderation, the Government, specifically the MoRA of the Republic of Indonesia, has incorporated a religious moderation program into the 2020-2024 Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) (Qoumas et al., 2024). The religious moderation program at the MoRA has also been established as a Key Performance Indicator of the Minister of Religious Affairs entrusted to the Rectors of universities (Rismawati et al., 2021). The program is not only for students but also for lecturers and education staff.

Religious moderation is a joint commitment among various elements of the nation to maintain a more complete balance in religious life (Saputra et al., 2021). Religious moderation emphasizes each individual as a member of society, part of a particular ethnic and national group, culture, religious variety, and political orientation, to be willing to listen to each other and learn to develop the ability to manage and overcome differences with each other (Pabbajah et al., 2021). Religious moderation is essential in a homogeneous country, such as Indonesia, which is rich in diversity, so it is very easy for friction between groups, especially between religions. Thus, it is necessary to provide an understanding that the values of acting in the context of diversity make us not selfish, intolerant, discriminatory, and so on (Sumarto & Harahap, 2019).

Moderation in religion is a balance of beliefs, ethics, and character, both when treating others as individuals and in situations with state institutions (Fauziah, 2024). According to Chaliddin et al. (2024), the formation of religious moderation is basically the formation of religious character. Another study conducted by Fadila and Aprison (2024) showed that

character building through school extracurricular activities can help form a moderate attitude in religion. These studies show that a moderate attitude in religion is an inseparable part of character education. These studies show that religious moderation is an integral part of character education. According to Kementerian Agama RI (2019a), one of the strategies used to instill religious moderation is strengthening religious values, national cultural values, and personal values. Thus, according to researchers, strengthening values can be used as a model to form a moderate attitude in religion.

Character education is a deliberate effort to help a person understand, care for, and practice core ethical values (Lickona, 2022). Another definition states that character education is a systematic effort to instill and develop consistently and continuously character qualities based on religious values, culture, and state philosophy that are internalized by students at home, at school, and in the community in their daily lives, so that they will form character behavior (A. Hasanah, 2013). Meanwhile, according to Faniko and Omeri (2015), character education is a process of naming or internalizing values consisting of a breadth of knowledge, awareness, and behavior to be used as habits, distinctive characteristics in individuals.

According to Lickona, morality has three components: knowledge, feeling, and action (Hanim & Herdi, 2022). Furthermore, according to Lickona, several basic principles are important in character education, namely 1) sincerity or honesty, 2) compassion, 3) courage, 4) compassion (kindness), 5) self-control, 6) cooperation, and 7) diligence or hard work (Loloagin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Peterson and Seligman, 24 character strengths are incorporated into

six components: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, simplicity, and transcendence or religiosity (Hanim & Herdi, 2022).

The results of the study conducted by researchers on previous research found that religious moderation can be formed through digital media (Mandala et al., 2024) and social media (Azizah et al., 2024). The attitude of religious moderation can be formed through Islamic Religious Education and Citizenship subjects (Desnita & Salminawati, 2024; Fajrin, 2024; Patih et al., 2023; Sunardi & Jamiludin, 2025). According to Aulia (2024) and Tanjung et al. (2024), the formation of an attitude of religious moderation is effectively carried out through extracurricular Islamic Spirituality. A study by Noor et al. (2022) stated that the formation of religious moderation through the development of Subject Specific Pedagogy (SSP) in science learning.

Based on the explanation above, it is known that the formation of an attitude of religious moderation is a priority program of the Indonesian MoRA, which has been implemented using various methods. However, data from the Setara Institute (2022) shows a significant increase in incidents of extremism and intolerance in religion in the last five years, including 32 incidents (2022), 44 incidents (2021), 24 incidents (2020), 31 incidents (2019), 20 incidents (2018), and 17 incidents (2017). Another fact that researchers also found about the attitude of tolerance and mutual respect between religious communities among students at PTKIN is that it is indicated to be low. The findings of this study are supported by the results of Subchi et al. (2022). In their research, 16.8% of students at the Islamic State University (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, UIN)

Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta still have a low level of religious tolerance. This serves as the basis for the Setara Institute (2020) to publish a list of the ten most radical universities in Indonesia, two of which are PTKIN, namely UIN Bandung and UIN Jakarta.

The phenomenon indicates that the program for fostering religious moderation attitudes has not been fully successful. According to the researcher, the program aimed at fostering religious moderation attitudes is not optimal. This is because it has primarily focused on the cognitive aspect or understanding domain. In fact, the formation of attitudes is not enough if it only relies on the dimension of understanding. It is supported by research from Hasanah and Sulistyaningrum (2023), which suggests that religious moderation attitudes can be formed through character education. Hasanah and Sulistyaningrum's research (2023) is in line with the character education model offered by Lickona (2022), which states that character education must be carried out in three stages, namely the first development of moral knowledge, the second appreciation and meaning of morals, and the third moral habits.

Based on the explanation above, where the phenomenon of religious moderation is still low among students, and the results of Hasanah and Sulistyaningrum's (2023) research, which emphasizes that the model of forming a moderate religious attitude is carried out through character education. Thus, according to the researcher, the moral education model can be used as the right alternative to overcome the attitude of religious moderation in students at PTKIN. Therefore, in this study, the researcher is interested in conducting research

related to the models offered by six PTKIN to form a moderate religious attitude that adapts the character education model to be used as a model for forming a moderate religious attitude in students. Implementing the Character Education model as a strategy to cultivate a moderate religious attitude in students is, according to the researcher, a fresh and intriguing approach that merits further exploration. This method distinguishes itself from earlier studies that have mainly focused on developing the cognitive domain or understanding. Therefore, in this study, the researcher took the title of adapting the character education model as a method for forming students' moderate religious attitudes.

Religious moderation has become a national strategic agenda as stated in the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN). It has been designated a key performance indicator of the MoRA. This policy emphasizes the importance of forming moderate religious attitudes at various levels, including PTKIN. In line with this, different programs have been implemented to instill the values of religious moderation through courses, extracurricular activities, and digital and social media. However, several empirical data show that attitudes of intolerance and extremist tendencies among PTKIN students are still prominent. This indicates that the approach used so far, which tends to emphasize the cognitive aspect or understanding alone, has not been effective enough in forming moderate religious attitudes.

The main gap that has not been widely touched upon by previous research is the lack of integration between understanding, meaning, and habituation of religious values in one attitude formation framework. As developed by Lickona,

the character education model offers a more comprehensive approach through three stages: moral knowledge, moral appreciation, and moral action. Although the relevance of character education in the formation of values has been widely recognized, research that explicitly adapts this model in the context of forming moderate religious attitudes in the PTKIN environment is still very limited. Therefore, this study aims to explore the character education model as an alternative approach to forming moderate religious attitudes among students and to answer how the adaptation of this model can be applied contextually and effectively in PTKIN.

## **B. Theoretical Review**

### **1. Concept of Character Education**

Character Education is the totality of goodness identified through tradition, religion, literary stories, wisdom, and the assembly of reasonable people (Lickona, 1992). Meanwhile, according to Faniko and Omeri (2015), character education is a process of naming or internalizing values consisting of a breadth of knowledge, awareness, and behavior to be used as habits, habits, and distinctive characteristics in individuals.

Character education is essential for fostering religious moderation. According to Albertus (2010), the process of facilitating individuals to behave more freely in interpreting the value of goodness, nobility, and what deserves to be pursued to the fullest, can be used as a reference for behavior in life, both for oneself, with others, and God. In addition, Lickona (1992) explained that character education is a planned effort to build noble character based on values that are, in fact, suitable for individuals and for society. Mulyasa

(2022) argues that character education is the process of internalizing something good in life to become a habit, so that individuals are aware, understand, care, and are committed to applying this goodness in everyday life.

Lickona (1991) identifies three main dimensions of character education, namely: 1) knowing goodness is the knowledge of good values that pass in society to live with themselves and live in society, 2) loving kindness is liking and liking the values of kindness that are spread and prevail in society, 3) doing good is the application of good values that have been embedded in oneself to create a harmonious life. Furthermore, Lickona states that character is closely related to the concept of moral education, namely, knowledge of moral values, judgment, appreciation, and moral attitudes, as well as moral action.

Furthermore, morality has three components: knowledge, feeling, and action (Hanim & Herdi, 2022). Several basic principles are important in character education, namely 1) sincerity or honesty, 2) compassion, 3) courage, 4) compassion (kindness), 5) self-control, 6) cooperation, and 7) diligence or hard work (Loloagin et al., 2023). Meanwhile, according to Peterson and Seligman, 24 character strengths are incorporated into six components: wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, simplicity, and transcendence or religiosity (Hanim & Herdi, 2022). The principles serve as criteria that schools and other groups can use to plan character education efforts and to evaluate available character education programs, books, and curriculum resources (Lickona et al., 1996).

One of the characters that is very important in shaping a moderate attitude in religion is the character of religious transcendence. According to Marzuki and Haq (2018), religious character is the attitude and behavior of obeying the teachings of the religion he believes in. Religious character will be reflected in faith and piety towards Allah, who is virtuous and responsible for their religion. Meanwhile, character related to society and oneself is a character that describes how individuals relate well to others and themselves. These three characters are essential for santri to equip themselves to become leaders in the future.

According to Lickona (2022), an effective character education model consists of three stages. The first stage is sharing moral knowledge (knowing the good), which is the main goal of moral education, to know what moral values should be known and understood. According to Lickona, moral values that are very important for students to learn are 1) sincerity or honesty, 2) compassion, 3) courage, 4) compassion (kindness), 5) self-control, 6) cooperation, and 7) diligence or hard work. The target to be obtained in the first stage is the growth of knowledge about moral values, moral awareness, the ability to understand from the point of view of others, the ability to analyze moral actions, moral decision-making, and knowledge of moral values in oneself.

The second stage is to instill a sense, appreciation, and belief in moral values (desiring the good) among students. At this stage, the character education process invites students to live moral values, meaning that students are invited to explore moral values until they enter their souls or become part of their souls. This appreciation process can also mean

that in the process of instilling moral values, students are invited to feel seriously until it enters their hearts. The target to be obtained at the appreciation stage is the emergence of conscience, self-confidence, empathy, love of kindness, self-control, and humility from the moral values that have been instilled. At this stage, a suitable technique to be carried out by the managers of religious moderation houses is to conduct focus group discussions with a special theme of moral values.

The third stage is moral behavior or action (doing the good), where the focus is on integrating moral values into real-life behaviors. The expected outcome of this stage is for students to practice moral values in their daily lives and to develop a lasting desire to act in accordance with those values, ultimately making them a habitual part of their character.

## **2. Religious Moderation**

Moderate in religion does not mean the attitude or behavior of inviting to compromise the main principles of the practice of worship of each religion that has become a belief. However, moderation is a tolerant attitude towards people of other faiths in human relations. Imam Shamsi Ali concluded that moderation is a commitment to what it is, without being reduced or exaggerated, meaning that being in the middle does not lead to a sense of egoism (Widodo & Karnawati, 2019).

In the view of Fadl (2014), moderate is similar to the terms modernist, progressive, and reformist. However, he chooses the term moderate because describing the group he confronts with the Puritans is more appropriate. According

to him, modernism implies a group that tries to overcome the challenges of modernity, which are contemporary problems. He also asserts that moderation reflects the religious views of most Muslims today.

Moreover, Fadl (2014) further explained that moderation is an attitude that believes God grants humans the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. So that they have the freedom of space to make the best choices, in the sense that they are still within the moral corridors applied to the general public. Al-Qaradhawi (2017) defined moderate as an attitude that embodies security, unity, and strength. In order to achieve this attitude, it is necessary to have a comprehensive understanding of their respective religious beliefs. Al Qaradhawi views moderation as promoting social values such as deliberation, justice, freedom, human rights, and minority rights.

Kolis (2017) provides a conclusion from the ideas of the famous Sufi figures Husin Mansur al-Hallaj and Muhryi al-Din Ibn 'Arabi, that the Sufistic thinker wahdat al-adyan offers a moderate idea that is humanist and universal in the context of religious relations, where it contains moral messages that are directly related to the problem of harmony of religious social life. Every religion must be in its teachings, inviting people to live and help each other in social relations, without distinguishing religion or class.

According to Nurcholis Madjid, moderation is a process of change, both attitudes and mentality to adjust the guidance of life with the guidance of current life in order to create a happy life for the community. Moderation can also be interpreted as a movement or effort to reinterpret traditional doctrines

and adjust to the times and science. Religious moderation is vital in a homogeneous country, such as Indonesia, which is diverse, so it is very easy to have friction between groups, especially between religions. So it is necessary to provide an understanding that the values of acting in the context of diversity do not make us egoistic, intolerant, discriminatory, and so on (Sumarto & Harahap, 2019).

Based on the explanation, it can be concluded that religious moderation is a perspective, attitude, and behavior that always takes a position in the middle, always acts fairly, and is not extreme in religion (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019a). Furthermore, Kementerian Agama RI (2019a) states that the leading indicators of religious moderation are national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture.

### **C. Research Method**

This research uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design because it aims to examine an event, experience, and reality experienced by individuals (Moleong, 2012). In this study, the events and experiences referred to are the experiences gained by respondents following the formation of religious moderation through character education organized by six PTKIN. The reason for using the phenomenological design is that researchers want to describe the experiences and meanings obtained by respondents when participating in the religious moderation attitude formation program through character education.

The respondents in this study were students from six PTKIN, specifically UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, UIN Syekh

Nurjati Cirebon, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh, UIN Salatiga, and UIN Alauddin Makassar. These students had participated in a program aimed at developing attitudes of religious moderation. Additionally, the managers of the religious moderation houses at these six PTKINs were also involved in the study. The selection of these institutions was intentional, as the researcher sought to capture a diverse representation of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, recognizing that culture and language significantly influence the formation of attitudes toward religious moderation (Suharyanto, 2024).

The selection criteria for PTKIN were crafted with careful consideration of the rich diversity of local cultures and languages. The six PTKIN institutions chosen represent regions characterized by distinct cultural backgrounds, customs, and regional languages, including Sundanese (from Bandung and Cirebon), Malay (from Palembang), Acehnese, Javanese (from Salatiga), and Bugis-Makassar. This diversity is thought to play a crucial role in fostering the internalization of religious moderation values among students.

Each of the selected PTKIN has an active religious moderation house and has systematically implemented various character-strengthening programs along with coaching in religious moderation for their students. Additionally, these institutions actively engage in national programs aimed at reinforcing religious moderation as identified by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA), particularly within higher education. The geographical distribution of the six PTKIN reflects a range of regions in Indonesia: the western region (Aceh, Palembang), the central region (Cirebon, Bandung, Salatiga), and the eastern region (Makassar). This

distribution enables a comprehensive analysis of program implementation within the unique context of each region.

The population in this study was vast and complex to reach; therefore, snowball sampling was used. This sampling technique is very effective in research involving groups or communities that are difficult to identify through conventional sampling techniques. The groups or communities in this study were students from six universities that the researcher had determined as the target population. However, this technique also has a risk of bias because respondents tend to recommend individuals who with similar characteristics the sample obtained may not be representative.

Data collection in this study used interviews and questionnaires. Interviews were conducted with the managers of religious moderation houses using a structured interview model that refers to a list of questions about the program of forming religious moderation attitudes in students. The questionnaires were distributed to a total of 141 students taken from six PTKIN. The questionnaires given to students were related to the character that was felt to have been formed in students, and the attitude of religious moderation that had been formed after participating in the religious moderation attitude formation program.

The data analysis utilized thematic analysis in conjunction with descriptive quantitative techniques. Thematic analysis was carried out by researchers to investigate data collected from interviews with managers of moderation houses at six PTKIN institutions. Concurrently, descriptive quantitative analysis was employed to assess data obtained through questionnaires. To ensure the validity and

credibility of the qualitative data, researchers implemented source triangulation techniques. This involved gathering data from two key sources: interviews with two managers of religious moderation houses at the six PTKIN institutions, and questionnaires distributed to students. The questionnaires were rigorously tested for validity and reliability using psychometric methods.

Each item in the questionnaire was assessed using Corrected Item-Total Correlation. Items with a correlation value below 0.3 were considered invalid and were excluded from further analysis. The internal reliability of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach’s Alpha, with an  $\alpha$  value exceeding 0.70 indicating that the instrument is reliable. Table 1 and 2 below are the research questions and the questionnaires that was utilized in this study:

**Table 1.** *Research Questions*

| Stages                                          | Interview Questions                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Knowledge of the values of religious moderation | At the stage of knowledge of the values of religious moderation, what abilities do you want to achieve in the process of forming an attitude of religious moderation in the institution you lead? |
| Embracing the values of religious moderation    | At the stage of experiencing the values of religious moderation, what abilities do you want to achieve in the process of forming an attitude of religious moderation in the institution you lead? |
| The practice of religious moderation            | At the stage of religious moderation behavior, what abilities do you want to achieve in the process of forming an attitude of religious moderation in the institution you lead?                   |

**Table 2.** *Research Questionnaire Indicators and Statements*

| Indicator                      | Questions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| National commitment            | I believe that love for one’s country is part of faith, so religion and nationality must be balanced for the sake of national unity.                                                                                                     |
| Tolerance                      | I believe that differences in religion and belief are a gift from God; therefore, I will respect, appreciate, and cooperate with adherents of other religions in social life, without sacrificing the principles of each person’s faith. |
| Anti-violence                  | I reject all forms of violence, radicalism, and extremism in the name of religion, because religion teaches peace, so every dispute must be resolved wisely.                                                                             |
| Accommodation to local culture | I will help preserve positive local traditions and customs as part of the nation’s wealth, without ignoring the teachings of the religion I adhere to.                                                                                   |

**D. Findings**

**1. Profile of the Experts and Respondents**

In this study, researchers interviewed expert sources from six PTKIN responsible for fostering religious moderation and distributed questionnaires to 141 students. The following in Table 3 is the researcher’s presentation of expert source data from six PTKIN and data on students who were used as respondents. The six expert sources in Table 3 were sources who manage religious moderation houses at their respective universities.

**Table 3.** *Expert Sources*

| <b>PTKIN</b>                    | <b>Number</b> | <b>Code</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------|
| UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon | 1 person      | E-1         |
| UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung  | 1 person      | E-2         |
| UIN Raden Fatah Palembang       | 1 person      | E-3         |
| UIN Salatiga                    | 1 person      | E-4         |
| UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh              | 1 person      | E-5         |
| UIN Alauddin Makassar           | 1 person      | E-6         |

In addition, Table 4 shows that most respondents came from UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. At the same time, the fewest respondents were from UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh.

**Table 4.** *Data of Research Respondents*

| <b>Origin of PTKIN</b>         | <b>Number</b> | <b>Percent</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon     | 25            | 17,7%          |
| UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung | 30            | 21,3%          |
| UIN Raden Fatah Palembang      | 30            | 21,3%          |
| UIN Salatiga                   | 25            | 17,7%          |
| UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh             | 15            | 10,6%          |
| UIN Alauddin Makassar          | 16            | 11,3%          |

**2. Model of Attitude Formation in Religious Moderation**

In order to get an overview of the adaptation of the character education model as a pattern of forming religious moderation attitudes in the six PTKIN targeted in this study, the researcher conducted interviews with the managers of religious moderation houses. The results of interviews with the six managers of religious moderation houses (n = 6) stated the reason for adapting the character education model from (Lickona, 2022) for the formation of religious moderation attitudes is because

the character education model because the model offered by (Lickona, 2022) has a strong psychological basis for forming religious moderation attitudes. According to the informants (n = 6), the character education model is ideal because the formation of attitudes begins with instilling an understanding of the values of religious moderation, then experiencing the values of religious moderation, and finally getting used to it.

Regarding the stages of forming an attitude of religious moderation, six informants (n=6) stated that the formation stage follows the character education stage according to the model from (Lickona, 2022), which consists of three stages, namely the stage of knowledge of the values of religious moderation, appreciation of the values of religious moderation and habituation of the values of moderation in the form of behavior as seen in the Figure 1 below.

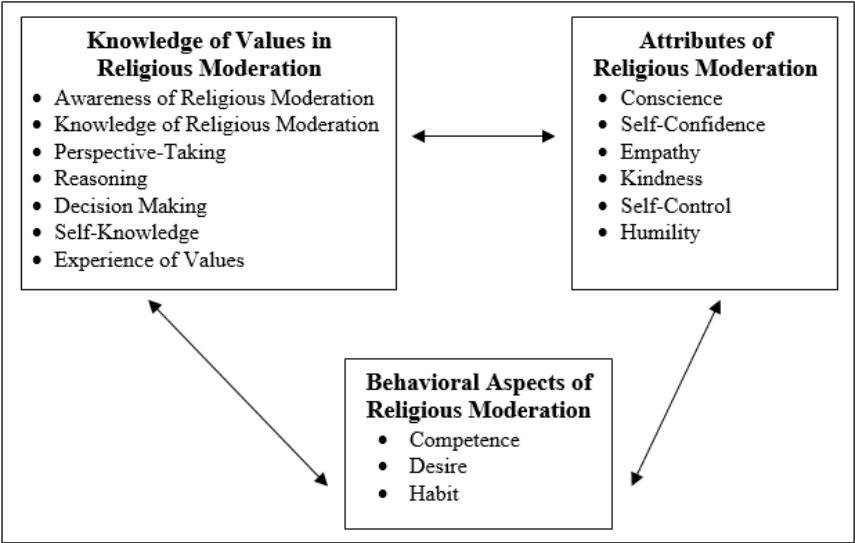


**Figure 1.** *Model for Developing Students' Attitudes Towards Religious Moderation*

The model for developing attitudes of religious moderation in the six targeted PTKIN, based on interviews with experts, consists of several stages. The first stage focuses on increasing awareness of the values associated with religious moderation. Those managing the religious moderation houses introduce and promote these values, which include national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. This introduction is carried out through various activities, as detailed by the expert sources provided in Table 5.

**Table 5.** *Findings from Interviews with Expert Sources*

| Experts | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-1     | The target to be achieved by students in forming a moderate religious attitude is to understand and be aware of the importance of a moderate religious attitude. The activities carried out in order to create a moderate religious attitude are seminars, public lectures, integrated counseling in the curriculum, KKN, and PBAK. (Personal communication, November 2023)   |
| E-2     | The target that students want to achieve in forming an attitude of religious moderation is to understand and memorize the leading indicators of religious moderation. The way to achieve this is through socialization activities, seminars, new student orientation or 0-week (PBAK), and KKN. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                       |
| E-3     | The target to be achieved by students in forming an attitude of religious moderation is to understand and be able to make the right decisions in solving the problem of religious belief diversity. The way to achieve this is through curriculum development activities, coaching, PBAK KKN, and integration in character education. (Personal communication, November 2023) |

|     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-4 | The target to be achieved by students in forming an attitude of religious moderation is to understand and create an inclusive academic atmosphere. The way to achieve this is through student activities (DEMA), Islamic boarding schools, PBAK KKN, and opinion competitions. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                  |
| E-5 | The target that students want to achieve in forming an attitude of religious moderation is to understand the main indicators of religious moderation. The way to achieve this is through PBAK KKN activities, seminars, discussions, training, and outdoor activities. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                          |
| E-6 | The target to be achieved by students in forming an attitude of religious moderation is to create a balanced understanding of religion, tolerance, respect for differences, and promote harmony between religious communities. The way to achieve this is through PBAK KKN activities, socialization, discussion, and training. (Personal communication, November 2023) |

Referring to Table 5, the objective of fostering an attitude of religious moderation among students is to ensure that they understand, recognize, and internalize the significance of religious moderation values (n = 6). This also involves creating an inclusive academic environment (E-4), acting with balance and tolerance, respecting differences, and promoting harmony among diverse religious communities (E-6).

To achieve these goals in the initial stage, a variety of activities will be organized, including seminars, an Introduction to Campus Academic Culture, and Community Service Programs (KKN) (n = 6). Additional initiatives will consist of public lectures and curriculum integration (E-1), socialization efforts (E-2 and E-6), curriculum development coupled with character education (E-3), as well as programs

through Islamic boarding schools, opinion competitions, discussions, and training sessions (E-4, E-5, and E-6).

The second stage aims to cultivate a deeper appreciation and conviction regarding the values of religious moderation. At this phase, the strategies employed by the managers of religious moderation houses to instill these values will involve a range of activities, as detailed in Table 6 below, which is based on insights gathered from interviews.

**Table 6.** *Findings from Interviews with Expert Sources*

| Expert      | Statement                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-1 and E-2 | To deepen and increase appreciation of the values of religious moderation, internalization activities are carried out in the curriculum, extracurricular activities, community service, and focus group discussions. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                      |
| E-3         | In an effort to increase the appreciation and understanding of the values of religious moderation, this is done in the form of internalization activities in the curriculum, extracurricular activities, character building, and focus group discussions. (Personal communication, November 2023) |
| E-4         | Efforts to increase the appreciation and understanding of the values of religious moderation are carried out in the form of student activities and internalization in the curriculum. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                                     |
| E-5         | To increase the appreciation of the values of religious moderation in students, this is done in the form of value-based or character-based educational activities and internalization in the curriculum. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                  |
| E-6         | To increase the appreciation of the values of religious moderation in students, this is done in the form of implementation in the curriculum and education based on values or character. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                                  |

Based on to Table 6, the strategies employed to enhance students’ understanding and appreciation of the values of religious moderation encompass focus group discussions (E-1, E-2, and E-3), the integration of these values into the curriculum (n=6), extracurricular activities, and community service initiatives (E-1 and E-2), as well as character development and value education (E-3, E-5, and E-6).

The third stage involves behaviors that embody the values of religious moderation, specifically the process of internalizing these values through genuine actions. The objective at this stage is for students to actively practice the principles of religious moderation in their daily lives and to foster a lasting commitment to these values, effectively making them habitual. In this stage, the insights gathered from interviews with expert sources, as outlined in Table 7, include the following:

**Table 7.** *Findings from Interviews with Expert Sources*

| Experts     | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-1 and E-2 | Efforts are made so that the values of moderation are practiced in the daily lives of students through training and discussions with religious figures and interfaith figures on how they apply the values of religious moderation. (Personal communication, November 2023) |
| E-3         | The method used in implementing religious moderation in the daily lives of students is through habituation in the campus environment and examples from the academic community. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                      |
| E-4         | The method used in implementing religious moderation in the daily lives of students is through habituation in extracurricular activities. (Personal communication, November 2023)                                                                                           |

| Experts | Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| E-5     | Efforts to implement religious moderation in the daily lives of students are through habituation in extracurricular activities and inclusive social activities. (Personal communication, November 2023)                 |
| E-6     | The application of religious moderation in the daily lives of students is achieved by providing examples from the academic community and through communication on social media. (Personal communication, November 2023) |

In this study, researchers also distributed questionnaires to describe religious moderation attitudes in 141 students from six PTKIN. Based on the results of distributing questionnaires, it is known that the religious moderation attitudes of students from six PTKIN were dominated by moderate and high categories. To determine the extent to which religious moderation developed in students after participating in the mentoring program, researchers analyzed questionnaire data reflecting four main indicators: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture. The data were analyzed based on score ranges and categorized into three groups: high, medium, and low. The summary of students' religious moderation norms is presented in Table 8 below.

**Table 8.** *Norms of Religious Moderation Attitude*

| Category | Score Range | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-------------|-----------|------------|
| High     | ≥ 96        | 46        | 32.62%     |
| Moderate | 72-95       | 93        | 65.96%     |
| Low      | ≤ 71        | 2         | 1.42%      |
| Total    |             | 141       | 100%       |

As shown in Table 8, the majority of students fall into the moderate category, with 93 students (65.96%). This suggests that the character education program has positively impacted shaping students' attitudes toward religious moderation. However, the results indicate room for further improvement in achieving higher internalization. Meanwhile, 46 students (32.62%) are categorized as having a high level of religious moderation attitude. This group demonstrates strong internalization of values such as tolerance, patriotism, rejection of violence, and openness to local cultures. These students may serve as role models and agents of change within their social and academic environments.

Only two students (1.42%) fall into the low category, a small yet significant finding that warrants further attention. Cultural background, personal experiences, or limited engagement in the program may influence the low scores. Overall, the data shows that 98.58% of students are in the moderate to high categories, indicating a generally positive outcome of the religious moderation program in these higher education institutions. Nonetheless, the findings also highlight the importance of ongoing and more targeted efforts to elevate students from moderate to high levels and provide special support for those in the low category.

In order to provide a clearer picture of the distribution of students' religious moderation attitudes, a 3D bar graph is presented. This graph groups the students' total scores into three categories: high, medium, and low, based on the completed questionnaire. The graph displays the number of respondents (Sum) and the percentage (Percent) for each category, making it easier to interpret visually.

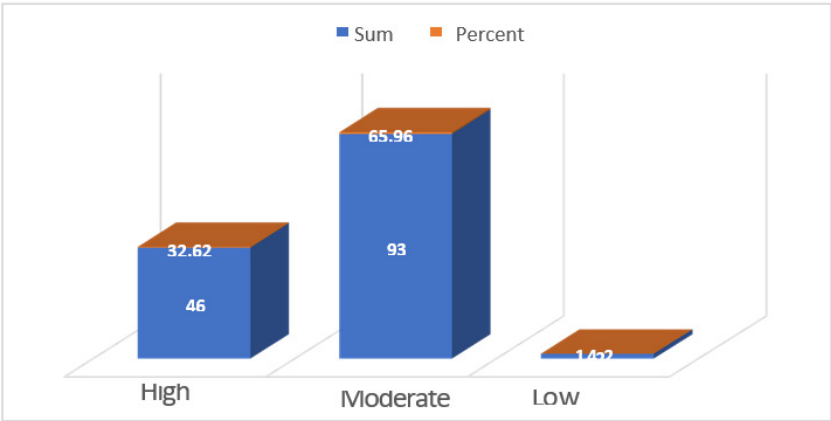


**Figure 2.** *Graph of Norms of Religious Moderation*

This picture shows that the formation of religious moderation attitudes at the six PTKIN can be said to be successful. If traced to the indicators, of the four indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture, those in the very high category are in the indicators of tolerance and appreciation of local culture, while the indicators of national commitment and non-violence are in the high category.

**E. Discussion**

The idea of religious moderation, initiated by the MoRA of Indonesia, is a collective effort to maintain harmony within a pluralistic society. It reflects the commitment to develop religious life that balances individual beliefs with societal coexistence, promoting national unity and peaceful interreligious interaction (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019a). Within the PTKIN, this program has been formalized into the Rector’s Key Performance Indicator (KPI), mandating that all

academic elements, students, lecturers, and administrative staff foster moderation as a central value in campus life. In support of this mandate, six PTKIN UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, UIN Siber Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, UIN Ar-Raniry Aceh, UIN Salatiga, and UIN Alauddin Makassar have institutionalized the establishment of Rumah Moderasi Beragama (Religious Moderation Houses), functioning as centers for education, advocacy, and cultural transformation related to moderation.

This study adopted the character education model developed by Lickona (2022), consisting of three major stages: moral knowing (cognitive understanding of values), moral feeling (emotional engagement with values), and moral action (behavioral habituation of values). These stages align well with the process of attitude formation as conceptualized in health behavior theory by Notoatmodjo (2014), which emphasizes that behavior change begins with knowledge, moves through emotional involvement, and is strengthened through consistent practice. The research findings revealed that across the six PTKIN studied, the implementation of this model followed the same general pattern, although activities and emphases varied depending on institutional context.

In the cognitive stage (knowing the good), all six campuses emphasized initial value internalization through seminars, curriculum integration, and student orientation programs such as PBAK and KKN. These interventions helped instill key moderation values: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture. Nevertheless, despite similar methods, the intensity and results varied. For instance, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati and

UIN Raden Fatah scored higher on tolerance and cultural accommodation indicators, while UIN Ar-Raniry showed lower achievement in national commitment. This reflects how institutional context, regional religious climate, and local leadership culture shape the effectiveness of value transmission.

The affective stage (desiring the good) focused on encouraging deeper emotional engagement through focus group discussions (FGDs), extracurricular activities, and value-based learning. As Ryan and Deci (2000) emphasized, developing intrinsic motivation and emotional connection to values is critical for long-term attitude internalization. In this study, FGDs provided a safe space for students to reflect, share, and emotionally relate to the importance of religious moderation. However, several institutions admitted challenges in ensuring that emotional engagement occurred meaningfully for all students, particularly when discussion forums were treated as formal obligations rather than transformative experiences.

The behavioral stage (doing the good) was realized through habitual practice in academic and social settings, including mentoring, interfaith training, inclusive campus activities, and modeling by lecturers and campus leaders. Consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971), behavior is more effectively shaped through observed modeling and reinforcement within real-life settings. Inclusive role models, open dialogues, and social media communication were among the strategies employed to instill moderation values. While students in the study reported moderate-to-high frequency of such behaviors, some expressed the need

for more structured follow-up, mentoring, and monitoring mechanisms to ensure sustainability beyond orientation programs.

While the results of Lickona's character education model are generally positive, it is important to reflect critically on its limitations when used in isolation. The model presumes a linear and rational pathway to attitude change, which may overlook the intricate socio-religious dynamics present among contemporary students. Recent research has proposed alternative or complementary frameworks that prioritize dialogical, participatory, and experiential learning. Notably, the PEACE Model (Promotion, Elaboration, Actualization, Communication, and Evaluation), introduced by Nurjanah et al. (2023), offers a more cyclical and reflective approach to value internalization. This model emphasizes stages of dialogic communication, peer-based expression, and iterative evaluation. By fostering greater student agency and accommodating local cultural contexts, it also establishes "safe spaces" for pluralistic discourse—elements that are essential in today's diverse campus environments.

Furthermore, Muslih et al. (2024) introduced the integration of the Iceberg Model and the U-Process in character education for religious moderation, demonstrating its effectiveness in prompting deep reflection and emotional transformation among students. Unlike Lickona's model, which relies on traditional moral instruction, the U-Process emphasizes suspending judgment, empathic listening, and envisioning change—a process particularly useful for confronting prejudice and religious exclusivism. Their research found that students who participated in simulated conflict

scenarios and intergroup dialogical exercises developed more resilient and flexible attitudes toward religious difference.

This study's findings also resonate with Saumantri and Bisri (2023), who found that the active involvement of student organizations in moderation activities—such as Islamic forums, interfaith camps, and local culture festivals—had a more substantial impact on student behavior compared to classroom learning alone. This underscores the importance of integrating moderation into formal curricula and embedding it within campus culture and extracurricular life, a viewpoint echoed by several expert informants in this study.

Therefore, this study contributes to the existing literature by demonstrating that while Lickona's model can serve as a foundational framework for cultivating religious moderation, its effectiveness is significantly enhanced when adapted to local institutional needs, complemented with dialogical and participatory strategies, and supported by consistent leadership. The success of character education for religious moderation does not lie solely in transmitting values but also in creating environments that allow those values to be questioned, personalized, practiced, and celebrated.

In conclusion, this research affirms the relevance of character-based models in fostering moderate religious attitudes but also calls for a pluralistic approach in model application. Future research should examine the longitudinal impact of integrated models like PEACE or U-Process across varied sociocultural contexts and explore the role of digital culture and social media in influencing moderation behavior among students. The dynamic nature of student identity,

peer influence, and regional religiosity must be considered to refine effective and contextually grounded models.

## **F. Conclusion**

This study highlights the significant role of character education in cultivating religious moderation attitudes among students in six PTKIN in Indonesia. By adopting Lickona's character education model, comprising moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action, the institutions have developed structured, multi-stage strategies to internalize values such as national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation to local culture.

The findings reveal that students generally fall within moderate (65.96%) and high (32.62%) categories of religious moderation, indicating that the character education approach has had a meaningful impact. The consistency of this result across institutions, despite variations in emphasis and local context, affirms the adaptability of the model. However, a small percentage of students in the low category (1.42%) also underscores the need for more inclusive, responsive, and sustained strategies to ensure no student is left behind in this developmental journey.

Interviews with key institutional figures reinforce that the success of religious moderation programs lies not only in cognitive instruction but also in emotional engagement and behavioral reinforcement. Students exposed to integrated approaches through curriculum design, extracurricular activities, mentoring, and community engagement exhibited stronger internalization of moderation values. Nevertheless, limitations of the linear and prescriptive nature of the Lickona

model were noted, particularly in addressing the complex, diverse, and dynamic realities of contemporary student populations.

In order to address these limitations, complementary models such as PEACE and the U-Process have been introduced in other studies, emphasizing dialogical learning, peer expression, emotional transformation, and contextual adaptability. These models offer promising directions for enhancing existing programs, especially in fostering deeper reflection and stronger emotional connections to moderation values.

In sum, this study affirms the foundational strength of character-based models in shaping students' religious moderation attitudes. However, it also calls for a more pluralistic, participatory, and context-sensitive approach to ensure lasting and meaningful transformation. Future initiatives should embrace hybrid models that integrate emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions while remaining responsive to institutional diversity, cultural background, and digital influences. The sustainability of moderation values in campus life ultimately depends not just on what students learn—but on how they experience, practice, and live those values daily in a pluralistic society.

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