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# Optimizing Islamic Religious Education Learning to Strengthen Religious Moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile: A Qualitative Case Study in Indonesian Elementary Schools

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores how the optimization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strengthens religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile in elementary schools. Employing a qualitative descriptive case study design, the research was conducted at SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1 in Cianjur Regency, Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and analyzed using an interactive model involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that the successful internalization of moderation and civic values is strongly influenced by school management and leadership practices rather than curriculum content alone. Strategic planning, collaborative organization, experiential learning activities, and continuous evaluation enabled values such as tolerance, cooperation, and social responsibility to be embedded into daily classroom practices and school culture. Despite challenges related to time constraints, teacher readiness, and character assessment, adaptive leadership and collective participation helped sustain program implementation. The study concludes that religious moderation and character education are most effective when managed as systematic and school-wide processes. This research contributes to educational management literature by positioning PAI learning as a strategic platform for integrating religious and civic character formation in elementary education.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In pluralistic societies, education plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, identity, and social responsibility [1]. In the Indonesian context, where religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity are deeply embedded in everyday life, schools are expected not only to develop students' cognitive competencies but also to cultivate attitudes of tolerance, inclusivity, and civic responsibility [2]–[4]. Consequently, religious moderation has emerged as a critical educational agenda aimed at preventing extremism, reducing social

fragmentation, and strengthening national cohesion. Rather than being understood merely as a theological concept, religious moderation represents a practical educational approach that promotes balance (tawazun), a middle path (tawasuth), and tolerance (tasāmuh) in students' religious and social interactions [5]–[7].

The urgency of religious moderation has become increasingly relevant in elementary education, where students' values and worldviews are still being formed [8]. Early exposure to inclusive religious perspectives is essential for building long-term character dispositions that support peaceful coexistence in diverse communities. Studies indicate that religious education delivered through rigid or exclusive approaches may unintentionally reinforce intolerance, whereas contextual and humanistic pedagogies foster empathy, dialogue, and mutual respect [9]–[11]. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education (Pendidikan Agama Islam/PAI) should not be limited to doctrinal instruction but must function as a transformative medium for character and citizenship formation [8], [12].

In parallel with this agenda, the Indonesian government has introduced the Pancasila Student Profile (Profil Pelajar Pancasila/P5-PPRA) as a national framework for strengthening character education [13]. This policy emphasizes the development of students who are morally grounded, collaborative, critical, and socially responsible. The P5-PPRA framework encourages schools to integrate Pancasila values into everyday learning through project-based and cross-curricular activities that connect knowledge with real-life experiences [14], [15]. Within this framework, religious moderation and civic values are not treated as separate domains but as complementary components of holistic character education [16].

Given these developments, PAI holds a strategic position in bridging religious teachings with national values. Teachers are expected to act not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators of value internalization, curriculum designers, and mediators of diversity within the classroom. Empirical studies highlight that effective religious education requires contextual learning strategies, teacher role modeling, and inclusive classroom climates that enable students to experience diversity constructively [17]. However, the success of such initiatives depends greatly on how learning processes are managed and optimized at the school level.

Despite growing interest in religious moderation and P5-PPRA, most existing research remains theoretical or focuses on secondary education contexts. Limited studies have explored how these values are concretely internalized through daily classroom practices in elementary schools, particularly within socially and culturally diverse local settings. Moreover, few investigations examine how PAI learning can be systematically optimized as an integrated strategy that simultaneously strengthens religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile. This gap suggests the need for context-based empirical research that captures real practices and challenges at the school level [18]–[20].

This issue is particularly relevant in Ciranjang District, Cianjur Regency, where schools operate within heterogeneous cultural and religious environments. SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1 represent two elementary schools that actively implement character education programs while navigating local diversity. These schools provide valuable

contexts for examining how PAI learning is designed, implemented, and optimized to promote religious moderation and national identity simultaneously.

Addressing this gap, the present study aims to explore the practices of strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile through the optimization of Islamic Religious Education learning. Specifically, this research investigates (1) how values of religious moderation are internalized in classroom practices, (2) how P5-PPRA is implemented through learning design and school activities, and (3) how contextual and experience-based PAI strategies enhance teachers' capacities and foster inclusive school cultures. The novelty of this study lies in its integrative perspective, positioning PAI not merely as a subject of religious instruction but as a strategic and transformative platform for character education that connects religious values with civic and national identity formation. By providing contextual evidence from elementary schools, this research contributes to the development of locally grounded character education policies and professional practices for PAI teachers in the era of the Merdeka Curriculum.

## 2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive case study design to explore how religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile are strengthened through the optimization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning in elementary schools. A qualitative methodology was selected because it enables researchers to understand social, cultural, and educational phenomena holistically within their natural settings and to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and practices in depth [21], [22]. The case study design was considered appropriate as it allows for a comprehensive investigation of complex educational processes within real-life contexts, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its environment are not clearly separated [23], [24].

The research was conducted at two public elementary schools in Ciranjang District, Cianjur Regency, Indonesia: SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1. These schools were purposively selected because both actively implement character education initiatives and integrate religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile into daily learning activities. The two sites also represent diverse social and cultural backgrounds, providing rich contextual variation that supports comparative and in-depth analysis.

Participants consisted of school principals, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, classroom teachers, and students who were directly involved in character education and PAI learning processes. Principals and PAI teachers served as key informants due to their central roles in designing and implementing learning strategies, while classroom teachers and students provided complementary perspectives regarding daily practices and learning experiences. Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on their involvement, experience, and relevance to the research focus.

Data were collected through methodological triangulation, including in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on learning strategies, value internalization processes, and challenges in implementing religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile. Classroom observations were carried out to examine teaching practices, student

1752

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interactions, and school activities related to character education. Document analysis involved reviewing lesson plans, school work programs, project reports, curriculum documents, and other records related to PAI learning and P5-PPRA implementation [25].

In qualitative research, the researcher served as the primary instrument (human instrument), directly interacting with participants and interpreting the collected data [26]. To ensure systematic data collection, supporting instruments such as interview guides, observation checklists, and document review protocols were utilized.

To establish trustworthiness, this study applied four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through source and method triangulation, prolonged engagement in the field, and member checking with participants to verify interpretations. Transferability was supported by providing rich and detailed contextual descriptions of the research settings (thick description). Dependability and confirmability were strengthened through an audit trail, systematic documentation of procedures, and peer debriefing to minimize researcher bias [27]–[29].

Data analysis followed the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña[30], consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved coding and categorizing relevant information related to learning management and character education practices. The data were then organized into thematic narratives, matrices, and comparative patterns to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn iteratively and continuously verified throughout the research process. Data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously, allowing the researcher to respond adaptively to emerging insights in the field.

Through this methodological approach, the study aimed to generate comprehensive and contextually grounded insights into how PAI learning can be optimized as a strategic platform for strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile in elementary education.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Planning and Design of PAI Learning for Strengthening Religious Moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile

The findings indicate that the planning stage served as the primary foundation for strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1. In both schools, value internalization was not conducted spontaneously or incidentally but was systematically designed within instructional planning documents and school programs. Principals and PAI teachers integrated moderation and character values into lesson plans, learning objectives, and school activities to ensure that character education became an integral component of the teaching process rather than an additional agenda.

Interview data reveal that planning began with the alignment of curriculum objectives with the broader goals of character education. Teachers analyzed the competencies within the Merdeka Curriculum and identified opportunities to embed values such as tolerance, respect, cooperation, and nationalism into learning materials. One PAI teacher explained:

2

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1753

*“When preparing the lesson plan, we do not focus only on religious knowledge. We also include attitudes such as respecting differences and cooperating with others. These values must appear clearly in the objectives and activities.”* (Interview, PAI Teacher, SDN Ciranjang 1)

17

This statement suggests that learning design extends beyond cognitive targets to include affective and behavioral dimensions. Teachers intentionally structured lessons to promote value internalization alongside academic achievement.

Observational findings further confirmed that planning was conducted collaboratively. Regular coordination meetings were organized among principals, PAI teachers, and classroom teachers to synchronize learning strategies with school-wide character programs. During these meetings, participants discussed how religious moderation themes could be linked with P5-PPRA projects, such as community service, group discussions, and social care activities. The researcher observed that these collaborative forums enabled teachers to share ideas and develop integrated learning scenarios that connected religious teachings with real-life experiences.

Document analysis provided additional evidence of systematic planning. Lesson plans (RPP/Modul Ajar), annual programs, and project-based learning schedules explicitly incorporated objectives related to tolerance, inclusivity, and national identity. Several modules included activities such as reflective discussions, role-playing, and cooperative learning tasks designed to foster empathy and respect among students. These documents indicate that religious moderation and Pancasila values were formally embedded within the instructional framework rather than treated as informal messages.

Teachers also emphasized that early planning helped ensure consistency in implementation. One teacher noted:

*“Because we plan everything from the beginning of the semester, the activities run more smoothly. We already know which themes relate to moderation and which projects strengthen Pancasila values.”* (Interview, Classroom Teacher, SDN Nangala 1)

This perspective highlights that structured planning enhances clarity of roles and reduces ambiguity during classroom practices. As a result, teachers could focus more on facilitating learning rather than improvising activities.

Although both schools shared similar planning approaches, contextual differences were observed. SDN Ciranjang 1 emphasized formal curriculum integration through detailed lesson plans and structured project schedules, while SDN Nangala 1 adopted a more flexible approach, adjusting activities to students' needs and local conditions. Despite these variations, both strategies demonstrated deliberate and strategic preparation. A summary of the planning practices is presented in Table 1.

4

**Table 1. Summary of Planning and Design Practices for PAI Learning**

Planning Aspect	SDN Ciranjang 1	SDN Nangala 1	Data Sources
Curriculum alignment	Integrated into lesson plans and modules	Contextual adaptation of themes	Documents
Learning objectives	Moderation and character values specified	Value-based competencies emphasized	Documents
Stakeholder involvement	Principal and teacher coordination meetings	Collaborative planning sessions	Observation, interviews
Program integration	Linked with P5-PPRA projects	School-based character activities	Observation
Planning approach	Structured and formal	Flexible and adaptive	Interviews

Overall, these findings demonstrate that systematic and intentional planning played a crucial role in laying the groundwork for strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile. By embedding character values within instructional design and coordinating efforts among stakeholders, both schools established a clear direction for subsequent implementation. This suggests that effective character education begins not merely with classroom practices but with strategic and collaborative learning design guided by strong managerial leadership.

### 3.2. Organizing Roles and Collaborative Structures for Strengthening Religious Moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile

Following the planning and design stage, organizing emerged as a crucial managerial function that translated instructional intentions into coordinated actions among school members. The findings indicate that both SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1 systematically arranged human resources, responsibilities, and collaborative mechanisms to ensure that the strengthening of religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile was not dependent solely on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers but became a shared institutional responsibility. Through structured delegation and teamwork, character education efforts were implemented more consistently across classrooms and school activities.

Interview data reveal that principals recognized that the internalization of values requires collective participation from all educators. Consequently, responsibilities were distributed among PAI teachers, classroom teachers, and school staff through formal and informal coordination. One principal explained:

*“Religious moderation is not only the responsibility of PAI teachers. All teachers must support it. Therefore, we also coordinate and divide tasks so that every subject contributes to character education.”* (Interview, Principal, SDN Nangala 1)

This statement highlights the shift from individual-centered practice to shared leadership. Organizing focused on integrating moderation and Pancasila values into various subjects and school programs rather than isolating them within religious education classes.

Observational findings further demonstrated the presence of collaborative structures within both schools. The researcher observed that coordination meetings, teacher working groups, and joint supervision of school programs supported character education activities. PAI teachers acted as facilitators of religious values, while classroom teachers reinforced

these values through daily interactions and cross-curricular projects. For example, during project-based learning sessions, teachers from different subjects jointly supervised group discussions emphasizing tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect among students.

Document analysis also confirmed the institutionalization of these organizational arrangements. Official decrees, team structures, and task assignments related to P5-PPRA and character education were identified in both schools. These documents outlined the roles of principals as coordinators, PAI teachers as content specialists, classroom teachers as facilitators, and students as active participants. Such formalization indicates that value education was embedded within the school’s organizational framework rather than conducted informally.

Teachers emphasized that clear role distribution improved program effectiveness. One PAI teacher noted:

*“Because each teacher has specific responsibilities, we can support each other. I focus on religious content, while other teachers reinforce the values through their subjects and daily behavior.”* (Interview, PAI Teacher, SDN Ciranjang 1)

This finding suggests that organizing enhances efficiency and accountability. When responsibilities were clearly defined, teachers were better able to coordinate their efforts and avoid overlapping tasks.

In addition, student participation was also structured through organizing strategies. Both schools formed student groups or committees responsible for leading religious and character-based activities such as group prayers, community service, and collaborative projects. These arrangements encouraged peer learning and strengthened students’ sense of ownership in practicing moderation and civic values.

Comparatively, SDN Ciranjang 1 adopted a more formal organizational system with structured committees and regular reporting, whereas SDN Nangala 1 applied a more flexible and situational approach that emphasized informal coordination. Despite these contextual differences, both approaches effectively fostered cooperation and shared commitment among school members. **A summary of the organizing practices is presented in Table 2.**

**Table 2.** Summary of Organizing Practices for Character Education and PAI Learning

Organizing Aspect	SDN Ciranjang 1	SDN Nangala 1	Data Sources
Organizational structure	Formal committees and task assignments	Flexible collaborative teams	Documents
Role distribution	PAI teachers and classroom teachers share duties	Integrated cross-subject responsibility	Interviews
Teacher coordination	Regular meetings and planning sessions	Informal collaboration and discussion	Observation
Student involvement	Student groups and activity leaders	Peer participation in projects	Observation
Management approach	Structured and systematic	Adaptive and contextual	Interviews

Overall, these findings demonstrate that effective organization of roles and collaborative structures significantly supported the internalization of religious moderation

and the Pancasila Student Profile. By distributing responsibilities and fostering teamwork, both schools transformed character education into a collective institutional practice rather than an isolated instructional effort. This suggests that organizing is a strategic managerial process that strengthens coordination, accountability, and sustainability of value-based education initiatives.

### 3.3 Implementation of PAI Learning for Strengthening Religious Moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile

Following the planning and organizing stages, the implementation phase represented the actual enactment of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning and school activities designed to strengthen religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile. The findings indicate that both SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nangala 1 translated their instructional plans into consistent classroom practices and experiential activities that encouraged students to internalize values of tolerance, respect, cooperation, and national identity. Rather than limiting character education to theoretical instruction, both schools emphasized practical engagement and daily behavioral reinforcement.

Interview data reveal that teachers deliberately applied contextual and student-centered learning strategies to make values more meaningful. Instead of relying solely on lectures, PAI teachers incorporated discussions, group work, storytelling, and problem-solving activities related to real-life situations. One teacher explained:

*“If we only explain the concepts, students quickly forget. Therefore, we use discussions and role-playing so they can experience what tolerance and respect mean in everyday life.”* (Interview, PAI Teacher, SDN Ciranjang 1)

This statement highlights that experiential learning was prioritized to ensure deeper understanding and behavioral change. Students were encouraged not only to understand religious teachings cognitively but also to practice them socially.

Observational findings further confirmed that value internalization occurred through daily interactions and routines. The researcher observed that students worked collaboratively in heterogeneous groups, shared responsibilities during class activities, and demonstrated respectful communication with peers from different backgrounds. Teachers consistently modeled inclusive attitudes, such as listening to diverse opinions and resolving conflicts peacefully. These practices created a classroom climate that reflected the principles of moderation and mutual respect.

In addition to classroom instruction, implementation extended to school-wide programs aligned with the P5-PPRA framework. Both schools organized project-based activities such as community service, charity events, environmental clean-ups, and collaborative religious celebrations. These projects provided authentic contexts for students to apply values of cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility. For example, during a social service project, students worked together to distribute aid packages, fostering solidarity and civic awareness.

Document analysis also supported these observations. Lesson plans, project reports, and activity portfolios documented the integration of religious moderation and Pancasila values into learning objectives, tasks, and assessments. Several modules explicitly included

reflective exercises, group projects, and behavioral evaluations to monitor students' character development. Such documentation indicates that implementation was systematic and accountable rather than incidental.

Teachers reported observable changes in students' attitudes as a result of these consistent practices. One classroom teacher noted:

*"Students are more respectful now. They listen to each other during discussions and rarely argue about differences. We can see that the values are slowly becoming habits."* (Interview, Classroom Teacher, SDN Nangala 1)

This finding suggests that repeated exposure and structured practice contributed to gradual behavioral transformation, reinforcing the importance of consistency in implementation.

Despite similar objectives, the two schools exhibited slight differences in emphasis. SDN Ciranjang 1 focused more on structured classroom-based instruction with detailed learning modules, while SDN Nangala 1 emphasized experiential and community-based projects that connected learning with local contexts. Nevertheless, both approaches effectively supported value internalization through active student participation. A summary of the implementation practices is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Summary of Implementation Practices for PAI Learning and Character Education

Implementation Aspect	SDN Ciranjang 1	SDN Nangala 1	Data Sources
Teaching strategies	Discussions, role-play, storytelling	Experiential and contextual learning	Observation, interviews
Classroom practices	Cooperative group work and reflection	Interactive and participatory tasks	Observation
School programs	Structured P5-PPRA projects	Community-based activities	Documents
Teacher modeling	Inclusive attitudes and conflict mediation	Emphasis on empathy and cooperation	Observation
Main focus	Classroom integration	Community engagement	Interviews

Overall, these findings demonstrate that effective implementation of PAI learning relies on contextual, participatory, and experiential approaches that connect religious teachings with everyday behavior. By embedding moderation and Pancasila values into both classroom instruction and school-wide activities, both schools successfully transformed character education into lived experiences rather than abstract concepts. This suggests that consistent and practice-oriented implementation is essential for fostering sustainable character development among elementary students.

### 3.4 Evaluation and Monitoring of PAI Learning for Religious Moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile

Evaluation constituted a crucial managerial function in ensuring the sustainability and effectiveness of spiritual value integration at SDN Nangala 1 and SDN Ciranjang 1. The findings indicate that evaluation was not treated merely as a formal administrative procedure but as a continuous reflective process aimed at monitoring students' behavioral development, assessing program effectiveness, and improving future strategies. Both

schools emphasized authentic and behavioral assessment rather than relying solely on cognitive or written tests, recognizing that character formation is best observed through daily actions and attitudes.

Interview data reveal that principals and teachers viewed evaluation as an ongoing responsibility embedded in everyday supervision. Rather than conducting periodic examinations, teachers continuously observed students' discipline, responsibility, respect, and empathy during school activities. One principal stated:

*"Tests cannot measure character. We evaluate students through their behavior—how they speak, how they treat friends, and how they follow school rules."* (Interview, Principal, SDN Nanggala 1)

This statement highlights the emphasis on behavioral indicators as the primary measure of success. Evaluation focused on observable character traits rather than abstract knowledge.

Observational findings further confirmed that monitoring occurred routinely throughout the school day. Teachers supervised students during prayers, classroom activities, and social interactions, providing immediate feedback when inappropriate behaviors occurred and reinforcing positive attitudes. The researcher observed that teachers frequently reminded students about discipline, honesty, and cooperation, demonstrating that evaluation was closely connected to daily guidance rather than delayed correction. Such continuous supervision created a consistent environment for character reinforcement.

Document analysis provided additional evidence of structured evaluation practices. Both schools maintained behavior records, activity reports, attendance logs, and reflective notes documenting students' participation in spiritual and social programs. Some classes used simple character checklists or reflection journals to track students' progress over time. These documents served as references during teacher meetings to assess whether planned activities effectively supported character development.

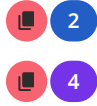
Teachers also emphasized the importance of collaborative reflection. One teacher noted:

*"After each program or activity, we discuss the results together. If students show improvement, we continue the strategy. If not, we modify it."* (Interview, Teacher, SDN Ciranjang 1)

This finding suggests that evaluation was participatory and developmental rather than punitive. Teachers collectively reviewed outcomes and adjusted strategies to improve future implementation.

In addition, parental feedback was incorporated into the evaluation process. Both schools communicated with parents to monitor whether spiritual and character behaviors were also practiced at home. This home-school collaboration provided broader perspectives on students' behavioral consistency and strengthened the overall effectiveness of the program.

Although both schools shared similar evaluation principles, differences were observed in approach. SDN Nanggala 1 applied more formal and structured monitoring through routine checklists and scheduled reviews, while SDN Ciranjang 1 emphasized informal observation and reflective discussions. Despite these differences, both systems



effectively supported continuous improvement and accountability. A summary of the evaluation practices is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Summary of Evaluation and Monitoring Practices for Spiritual Value Integration

Evaluation Aspect	SDN Nanggala 1	SDN Ciranjang 1	Data Sources
Assessment method	Behavior checklists and supervision	Observation and reflective dialogue	Observation, interviews
Documentation	Reports and attendance logs	Reflection notes and journals	Documents
Monitoring focus	Discipline and religious routines	Empathy and social behavior	Observation
Feedback system	Structured teacher guidance	Discussion-based feedback	Interviews
Evaluation approach	Formal and systematic	Flexible and participatory	Interviews



Overall, these findings demonstrate that systematic evaluation and monitoring played a vital role in sustaining the effectiveness of religious moderation and character education initiatives. By combining authentic assessment, reflective dialogue, and documented evidence, both schools ensured that character development remained measurable, accountable, and continuously improved. This suggests that evaluation functions not merely as a control mechanism but as a learning process that strengthens the long-term institutionalization of value-based education.

### 3.5 Discussion



This study examined how the optimization of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning contributes to strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile in elementary schools through four interconnected managerial functions: planning, organizing, implementation, and evaluation. The findings demonstrate that character and value internalization is not achieved solely through doctrinal instruction, but through systematic management and leadership practices that embed moderation and civic values into daily school life. In both SDN Ciranjang 1 and SDN Nanggala 1, the success of character education initiatives was strongly influenced by how principals and teachers strategically designed, coordinated, enacted, and continuously refined learning processes. This suggests that religious moderation in schools is fundamentally a managerial and pedagogical process rather than merely a curricular requirement.



First, the planning practices identified in this study reflect the principles of strategic educational management. By integrating religious moderation and Pancasila values into lesson plans, school programs, and project-based activities, teachers ensured that character education was formally institutionalized rather than incidental. This finding aligns with management theory, which emphasizes planning as the foundational function that determines program sustainability and effectiveness [31], [32]. When values are embedded within official instructional documents and school policies, implementation becomes more consistent and accountable. Similarly, Mulyasa argues that character education initiatives are more effective when systematically incorporated into school planning rather than treated

as supplementary activities [33]. The present study confirms that deliberate and collaborative planning establishes a clear direction for value-based learning.

Second, the organizing stage highlights the importance of distributed leadership and collaborative responsibility. The formation of coordinated teams, shared duties among teachers, and integration across subjects indicate that character education cannot rely solely on PAI teachers. Instead, it requires collective engagement from the entire school community. This finding supports Hallinger's concept of instructional and collaborative leadership, which stresses that sustainable school reform depends on shared participation rather than centralized authority [34]. By distributing roles and fostering teamwork, schools enhanced accountability and ensured that moderation and civic values were reinforced across multiple learning contexts. Such collaborative practices also resonate with Aisyah's argument that inclusive character education requires coordinated efforts among educators to create consistent behavioral modeling.

Third, the implementation phase demonstrates that experiential and contextual learning play a critical role in internalizing values. Students in both schools engaged in discussions, role-playing, group projects, and community service activities that allowed them to practice tolerance, cooperation, and empathy directly. These approaches reflect experiential learning theory, which posits that meaningful behavioral change occurs through active participation rather than passive reception of information [35]. Religious moderation, therefore, becomes a lived experience rather than abstract knowledge. Previous studies similarly suggest that contextual and participatory religious education fosters deeper understanding and inclusive attitudes. The present findings extend this view by demonstrating how such pedagogical strategies are strengthened when supported by structured management.

Fourth, continuous evaluation and monitoring were found to be essential for sustaining character development. Rather than relying solely on written assessments, teachers employed authentic evaluation methods, including behavioral observation, reflective journals, and project portfolios. This approach corresponds with the concept of continuous improvement in educational organizations, where feedback and reflection guide ongoing refinement of practices. Evaluation functioned not merely as a control mechanism but as a learning tool that enabled teachers to identify gaps and adjust strategies. Similarly, it emphasizes that systematic monitoring enhances program credibility and effectiveness. By embedding evaluation into routine practices, both schools strengthened accountability and ensured long-term consistency.

Despite these strengths, the study also identified challenges related to limited time, varying teacher readiness, and the complexity of assessing character outcomes. These constraints indicate that value-based education requires sustained effort and adaptive leadership. Similar obstacles have been reported in previous research on character and religious education, particularly in resource-limited school contexts. However, the adaptive strategies observed—such as collaboration, contextual learning, and reflective dialogue—demonstrate that managerial flexibility can mitigate such barriers. This finding supports the concept of adaptive leadership, which emphasizes responsiveness to contextual demands and continuous problem-solving [36], [37].

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature by integrating character education, religious moderation, and school management perspectives. While earlier studies often examined religious moderation or P5-PPRA implementation separately, this research positions PAI learning as a strategic managerial platform that connects religious teachings with civic and national values. By applying a management lens, the study highlights how planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating functions mediate the relationship between policy intentions and students' character outcomes. This integrative perspective constitutes the primary novelty of the study and provides a more comprehensive understanding of how value-based education can be institutionalized in elementary schools.

Overall, the discussion suggests that strengthening religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile requires more than curriculum content; it demands strategic leadership, collaborative structures, experiential learning practices, and continuous evaluation. When these managerial processes operate cohesively, character education is more likely to evolve into a sustainable school culture rather than remain symbolic or procedural. Therefore, enhancing principals' and teachers' managerial competencies is essential for advancing inclusive and transformative education in diverse school settings.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that optimizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning to strengthen religious moderation and the Pancasila Student Profile requires systematic managerial integration rather than isolated instructional efforts. The findings highlight that when planning, organizing, implementing, and evaluating functions operate cohesively, value internalization becomes embedded within school culture. Religious moderation and civic values are strengthened not merely through doctrinal teaching but through collaborative leadership, experiential learning practices, and continuous reflective supervision. Thus, effective character formation emerges from the alignment between pedagogical strategies and structured school management processes.

The implications of this study emphasize the importance of reinforcing managerial competencies among principals and teachers in implementing value-based education. Schools aiming to promote inclusive religious understanding and civic responsibility should institutionalize moderation and Pancasila values within strategic planning documents, collaborative structures, contextual learning designs, and authentic assessment systems. For policymakers, the findings suggest that strengthening religious moderation in elementary education requires leadership development programs, cross-subject integration strategies, and sustainable monitoring mechanisms rather than relying solely on curriculum directives.

This research is limited to two public elementary schools within a specific regional context in Indonesia. The qualitative case study approach provides in-depth insights into processes and practices but does not seek broad statistical generalization. Variations in school culture, leadership style, community background, and teacher capacity may influence the effectiveness of similar initiatives in other educational environments.

Future research may extend this study across diverse geographical regions, different school types (public, private, or faith-based), and varying sociocultural contexts to examine broader applicability. Quantitative or mixed-method research could measure the long-term

impact of optimized PAI learning on students' inclusive attitudes and civic engagement. Further studies may also explore the integration of digital learning environments and multicultural education frameworks in strengthening religious moderation.

In a broader societal context, this study contributes to ongoing efforts to cultivate inclusive, tolerant, and civically responsible young citizens. By positioning PAI learning as a strategic platform for embedding religious moderation and national values, elementary schools can foster balanced individuals who uphold faith commitments while respecting diversity. Such educational efforts are essential for promoting social harmony and strengthening national unity in pluralistic societies.

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