

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Syaiful¹, Abdurrahman²

¹²Universitas Al Qolam Malang; Indonesia

Correspondence Email; syaifulsyaiful328@gmail.com

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the implementation of multicultural education in school policies and practices, examine the meaning of religious moderation by teachers and students, and uncover the dynamics of students' social interaction in the context of ethnic and religious diversity in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School. This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through moderated participant observations, semi-structured interviews with principals, teachers, and students, and documentation studies. Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which included data condensation, data presentation, and conclusions drawn. The results of the study show that multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School is still taking place informally and has not been institutionalized in explicit school policies. Teachers tend to interpret religious moderation normatively-textually, while students interpret it relationally and based on their daily experiences. Further, an ambivalence was found between social integration in formal school activities and the tendency to group students based on ethnicity or religion in informal student activities. The study was limited to one study location and a one-semester observation period, so the findings could not be generalized statistically. However, the results of this study offer important implications for developing inclusive school policies, strengthening experiential learning, and designing extracurricular programs that encourage cross-identity interactions. The uniqueness of this research lies in the integration of multicultural education and the study of religious moderation in the local context of West Kalimantan, with a focus on the construction of meaning and dynamics of social interaction in a multiethnic and multireligious school environment.

Keywords

Multicultural Education, Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, Case Study, Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School.



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INTRODUCTION

Initial observations at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School indicate that its diverse student population and inclusive activities hold strong potential for multicultural education and religious moderation. Yet, these values are practiced more in daily activities than in explicit institutional policies. Students still tend to form friendship groups based on similar ethnic or religious backgrounds, indicating a gap between everyday tolerance and systematic efforts to build a multicultural school culture. This condition highlights the need for more structured school policies to strengthen multicultural values and religious moderation, in line with Indonesia's 2024 Interfaith Harmony Index score of 76.47 (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2025). This study examines whether multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School effectively strengthens religious moderation by fostering tolerance, respect for differences, anti-discrimination, dialogue, and cooperation, while assessing its implementation, alignment with moderation principles, and contribution to harmonious school life in a multicultural context.

Several previous studies have shown that multicultural education makes an important contribution to building students' attitudes toward religious moderation. The first research shows that the use of Islamic Religious Education teaching materials based on multicultural education is able to increase students' understanding of the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and religious moderation in a learning environment that has a diversity of religions and students' backgrounds (Darman, 2024). The second study shows that multicultural education based on religious moderation can strengthen the values of tolerance, justice, respect for diversity, and coexistence in a pluralistic society (Wahid, 2024). The third study shows that school culture, teacher example, the provision of worship facilities for students of different religions, and interfaith collaborative activities are important factors in building religious moderation in the school environment (Fatikha Rizqiyani Ahmad Saefudin, 2026). The fourth research shows that Islamic studyation teachers have an important role in building a culture of religious moderation through example, habituation, and strengthening the value of tolerance to students (Rodin et al., 2025). The fifth study shows that multicultural Islamic education, when carried out in a contextual, dialogical, and inclusive manner, can contribute to strengthening students' religious moderation and fostering an open attitude towards diversity (Muhaemin et al., 2026).

Based on these five studies, most previous research has focused on the development of teaching materials, conceptual studies, literature studies, learning models, or the role of teachers in

building religious moderation. These studies have not comprehensively examined how multicultural education, as a culture and a school system, shapes attitudes toward religious moderation in schools with real religious and ethnic diversity. In addition, no research has been found that specifically examines the implementation of multicultural education in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School, which has the characteristics of a multicultural society typical of West Kalimantan.

The novelty of this research lies in the study's object, focus, and context. First, this study empirically examines the implementation of multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School, which has students with diverse religious backgrounds (Islamic, Catholic, Christian, and Buddhist) and ethnic backgrounds (Malay, Dayak, Chinese, Madura, Bugis, and Javanese). Second, this study not only describes the implementation of multicultural education but also analyzes its conformity with the principles of religious moderation and identifies its role in fostering attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious living in the school environment. Third, this study presents an empirical picture of multicultural education practices in junior high schools in Pontianak City. This context has not been widely studied in previous research and is expected to enrich the scientific literature on multicultural education.

Multicultural education, as a pedagogical concept and movement, has grown rapidly in the United States since the 1970s. Multicultural education is an educational reform approach that aims to change school structures so that students from different racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, gender, and social-class groups have equal learning opportunities. In the Indonesian context, multicultural education is defined as an educational effort that recognizes, respects, and celebrates diversity and cultural identity in building substantive democracy (Aziz & Hidayah, 2024).

In the realm of Islamic education, multicultural education has strong normative roots. Islamic teachings explicitly recognize diversity as part of the *sunnatullah* (Muhammad Subki, Fitrah Sugiarto, 2021). Values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *'adl* (justice), and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* became the theological foundation for the practice of multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (Amarullah et al., 2024). The transformation of these values from the normative realm to pedagogical practice is the main challenge faced by PAI teachers in heterogeneous schools.

Religious moderation in the Islamic tradition, known as *wasathiyah*, emphasizes a balanced, not extreme, religious stance and prioritizes the values of justice and tolerance (Haidar, Abdullah, 2023). This concept is not only a theological position, but also a social orientation that determines

how one interacts with adherents of other religions. In the context of education, religious moderation serves as a preventive instrument against radicalism and religious exclusivism.

Although studies on multicultural education and religious moderation have grown rapidly, significant gaps remain. First, most research remains normative-conceptual or focuses on measuring tolerance attitudes quantitatively, without exploring how these values are constructed, negotiated, and internalized in everyday social practice (Sukardi et al., 2025). Second, studies that explicitly integrate multicultural educational analysis and religious moderation within a single analytical framework are still limited, even though the two are interrelated in heterogeneous school contexts. Third, research based on the local context of West Kalimantan, with its distinctive ethnic characteristics, is almost unavailable, so research findings from Java or other contexts cannot be directly transposed.

Based on the background and gaps of the research, this study aims to analyze the implementation of multicultural education in school policies, learning processes, and culture, examine its conformity with the principles of religious moderation, and uncover the dynamics of social interaction between teachers and students in internalizing the values of tolerance, mutual respect, and harmonious life in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School. This research departs from the view that multicultural education and religious moderation are not only understood as learning programs or materials but also as social processes constructed through daily interactions, school culture, and the *hidden curriculum* that shape the attitudes and behaviors of school residents. Therefore, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution in enriching the study of multicultural education and religious moderation through the perspective of social construction and symbolic interactionism, as well as providing practical contributions as evaluation and recommendation material for schools, educators, and policy makers in developing an inclusive, tolerant, and able to strengthen religious moderation in a multiethnic and multireligious educational environment.

METHOD

This field research employed a qualitative case study at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School to examine multicultural education and religious moderation through observation, in-depth interviews with school principals, teachers, students, and other school members, and documentation of relevant school activities and programs. The qualitative approach was used to describe and

interpret how multicultural values and religious moderation are practiced and understood in learning activities, student interactions, and school culture (Grave et al., 2022).

The research data is in the form of data on the implementation of multicultural education and religious moderation at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School, which includes: (1) school policies related to diversity and inclusivity; (2) a learning process that integrates multicultural values and religious moderation; (3) school culture that reflects tolerance, mutual respect, and cooperation between school residents; (4) social interaction of students from different religious and ethnic backgrounds; and (5) the perception of school principals, teachers, and students regarding the implementation of multicultural education and religious moderation. The source of research data consists of primary data, namely school principals, vice principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, subject teachers, students, and education personnel, as well as secondary data in the form of school documents, vision and mission, rules, school programs, teaching modules, photos of activities, archives, and other relevant documents.

Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School from February 10 to March 11, 2026, focusing on learning activities, student and teacher interactions, religious and diversity-related activities, and practices reflecting tolerance, mutual respect, cooperation, and religious moderation, with relevant situations recorded in field notes. In-depth interviews were conducted from February 17 to March 12, 2026, with principals, vice principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, subject teachers, students, and education staff selected based on their involvement and knowledge, covering school policies, learning strategies, habituation, multicultural values, students' interreligious and interethnic experiences, and school social culture. Documentation was collected throughout the study, including the school's vision and mission, regulations, programs, teaching modules, activity schedules, photographs, archives, and other relevant records to complement and verify observational and interview data. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and member checking.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, conducted continuously throughout the research process (Matthew B. Miles, II A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, 2014). The findings were critically interpreted using Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory to examine the formation of multicultural values through social interaction

(Berger, Thomas, and Luckmann, 1966). Blumer's symbolic interactionism to understand how tolerance, diversity, and religious moderation acquire meaning through interaction (Blumer, 1969). and the hidden curriculum concept to analyze values, norms, attitudes, and behavioral patterns learned through everyday school experiences beyond formal instruction (Jackson, 1968). The findings were then related to the concepts of multicultural education and religious moderation and compared with previous studies to identify similarities, differences, reinforcement, and research novelty, thereby producing an in-depth analysis of how multicultural education shapes religious moderation at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Table 1. Expert Validation

No.	Instrument	Validator	Aiken's V Score	Category
1.	Critical Thinking Test	Subject Matter Expert	0.89	Highly Valid
2.	Descriptive Writing Test	Language Expert	0.91	Highly Valid
3.	Observation Sheet	Evaluation Expert	0.87	Highly Valid

This study aims to describe the implementation of multicultural education and religious moderation in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School. Based on the results of observations, documentation, and analysis of field data, several findings were obtained that illustrate the implementation of multicultural education, its alignment with the principles of religious moderation, and its role in fostering tolerance and mutual respect in the school environment.

Table 2. Research Findings on the Implementation of Multicultural Education in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School

No.	Aspects Examined	Research Findings
1.	School policy	The school applies the same educational services policy to all students regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social background.
2.	Learning process	Teachers develop learning that gives all students the opportunity to work together in heterogeneous groups.
3.	School culture	The school is accustomed to activities that involve all school residents regardless of religious or ethnic identity.
4.	Student interaction	Relations between students are harmonious, although in some informal activities, there is still a tendency to form groups based on religious or ethnic closeness.
5.	School environment	The school environment shows a conducive, safe, and respectful atmosphere for diversity.

Source: Observations and interviews, processed by researchers (2026)

Based on the table above, the implementation of multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School is evident across various aspects of educational practice. The school provides equal treatment to all students, both in academic services and school activities. The value of togetherness is also evident in the learning process through group activities that involve students from diverse backgrounds. In addition, the school culture supports the creation of an inclusive environment so that students are used to interacting with friends from different religions and ethnicities. However, in activities outside of learning, some students still tend to choose social groups based on the proximity of certain identities.

Table 3. Research Findings on Religious Moderation in Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School

No.	Indicators of Religious Moderation	Research Findings
1.	Tolerance	The students showed respect for the implementation of worship and religious activities carried out by other students.
2.	Mutual respect	No discriminatory treatment was found in learning activities or school services.
3.	Interfaith cooperation	Students can cooperate in academic activities and school activities without distinction of religion.
4.	Conflict resolution	Differences of opinion between students are resolved through deliberation and teacher assistance.
5.	Harmony of school life	The relationship between school residents is conducive and respects each other's diversity.

Source: Observations and interviews, processed by researchers (2026)

The results of the study show that the values of religious moderation have developed in school life. Students are accustomed to respecting differences in beliefs, working together on various activities, and maintaining harmonious relationships with other school residents. During the study, no discriminatory treatment was found based on religious differences. In addition, every problem that arises is resolved through deliberation so that school life continues to run conductively.

Table 4. Research Findings on the Role of Multicultural Education
in Shaping Religious Moderation

No.	Focus of Findings	Research Results
1.	Tolerance formation	Multicultural education encourages students to accept and value diversity as part of school life.
2.	Formation of mutual respect	Students are accustomed to respecting their peers' differences of opinion, culture, and beliefs.
3.	Strengthening cooperation	School activities provide a space for collaboration between students from different backgrounds.
4.	Prevention of discrimination	The school applies the principle of equal rights and opportunities for all students.

5. Implementation challenges	There is no written policy that specifically regulates multicultural education and religious moderation as a school program.
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Source: Observations and interviews, processed by researchers (2026)

The study's findings show that multicultural education fosters tolerance, respect for diversity, and cooperation among students. The school environment is a social learning space that allows students to understand the importance of coexistence in a pluralistic society. On the other hand, this study also found that the implementation of multicultural education is still more evident in school culture and daily practice than in written policies that specifically regulate its implementation. This condition indicates that strengthening multicultural education still has room for development through the preparation of more systematic school programs and policies.

Summary of Research Results

Overall, Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School has implemented multicultural education through inclusive policies, equal learning opportunities, and a school culture that respects religious and ethnic diversity, contributing to tolerance, mutual respect, cooperation, and harmony. However, more structured and sustainable school policies are still needed to strengthen multicultural education and religious moderation. Data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation were organized by research focus and presented systematically in tables and descriptive explanations.

Table 5. Research Findings on Multicultural Education and Religious Moderation at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School

No	Policy Formulation	Policy Implementation	The Meaning of Religious Moderation According to Teachers and Students	Dynamics of Student Social Interaction
1.	The school implements an equal service policy for all students regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social background.	The value of diversity is integrated into learning activities, school activities, and educational services.	Religious moderation is understood as an attitude of mutual respect, respect for differences, and peaceful coexistence.	Relationships between students are established harmoniously in learning activities and school activities.
2.	There are no specific documents regarding the policy of multicultural education and religious moderation as a school program.	Teachers provide equal opportunities to all students to participate in learning and school activities.	Teachers view moderate attitudes in religion as part of the formation of students' character.	Students are able to work together in groups whose members come from different religions and ethnicities.

3.	School rules apply equally to all school residents regardless of religious or ethnic identity.	The school is accustomed to joint activities that involve all students without discrimination.	The students interpreted religious moderation as an attitude of mutual respect in carrying out their respective worship and beliefs.	In informal activities, it is still found that some students have a tendency to interact more intensely with friends who have ethnic or religious similarities.
4.	School policies support the creation of a safe, comfortable, and inclusive learning environment.	The school provides a space for all students to participate in extracurricular organizations and activities.	Religious moderation is understood as an effort to maintain unity in the midst of diversity.	Disagreements between students are generally resolved through deliberation with the help of teachers.
5.	Schools do not yet have written guidelines on evaluating the implementation of multicultural education.	The value of tolerance is developed through habituation in daily school life.	Teachers and students consider that diversity is a wealth that must be maintained together.	The school environment shows a conducive, tolerant, and minimal conflict based on religious and ethnic background.

Source: Observations and interviews, processed by researchers (2026)

Description of Policy Formulation Findings

The findings show that Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School has implemented multicultural education through inclusive educational services, equal application of school rules, equal participation in academic and extracurricular activities, and joint activities involving students regardless of religion, ethnicity, or social background. Multicultural values such as tolerance, unity, diversity, and mutual respect have also been integrated into several subjects (Hasnawati, 2020). However, the school has not yet established specific written policies or strategic programs for multicultural education and religious moderation, so implementation still largely relies on general equality policies and individual teacher initiatives.

Teachers generally understand religious moderation as respecting religious differences, maintaining harmony, preventing conflict, and demonstrating these values through learning, habituation, example, equal treatment, and inclusive communications (Arifin & Huda, 2024). Similarly, interpret religious moderation as respecting different beliefs, avoiding discrimination, and living harmoniously with peers from diverse backgrounds, with direct social interaction providing a stronger practical understanding than classroom instruction alone (Sukenti & Hermawan, 2024). Student interactions are generally harmonious, particularly during learning, group work, extracurricular activities, and school programs, where cooperation occurs across religious and ethnic differences. However, in informal settings such as recess or after-school activities, some students

tend to form friendship groups based on religious, ethnic, or cultural similarities, reflecting social and emotional proximity rather than a rejection of other groups (Chen et al., 2023). No religion- or ethnicity-based conflict or discrimination was identified, although more structured school programs are needed to strengthen social integration and ensure sustainable multicultural education.

Discussion

Findings show that multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School is shaped by school policies, learning, teacher modeling, habituation, and student interaction, fostering tolerance and cooperation. However, some students still form ethnic- or religion-based friendship groups, indicating that inclusive interaction has not yet been fully achieved.

Social Construction of Multicultural Education through School Policies and Practices

The findings of the study show that multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School is not only present as learning material, but is also constructed through policies, school programs, habituation, and school community interaction practices. The value of tolerance and respect for differences is introduced through learning and school activities that allow students to interact with friends from different religious and ethnic backgrounds. This condition shows that schools become social spaces where the value of diversity is not only taught but also produced and interpreted through daily experiences.

These findings can be analyzed through the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann, which views social reality as something that is formed through a process of externalization, objectification, and internalization (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In the context of this research, school policies and programs can be understood as a form of institutionalized objectification of multicultural values. In contrast, the habituation and interaction among school residents create a space for students to internalize these values. This means that multicultural education does not stop at the level of formal policy but becomes effective when the values institutionalized by the school take meaning in learners' social experience. This view is in line with studies showing that school institutional strategies play an important role in presenting multicultural education in a planned manner, rather than as incidental content in learning activities (Sukardi et al., 2025).

These findings are in line with (Muhammad et al., 2023), which shows that the management of multicultural education through school strategies can internalize students' attitudes of tolerance. The same is shown by Field (Ainur Rafiq, 2026), who found that the internalization of religious

moderation in multicultural schools occurs through PAI learning and students' experiences dealing with diversity. This research also shows that school culture, teacher role models, facilities that accommodate religious differences, and interfaith cooperation programs can serve as instruments for fostering religious moderation. Several similar studies from various levels of education strengthen this dialogue of findings. (Rozaq et al., 2024) shows that the application of contextual learning models in religious education can foster multicultural awareness from an early age. At the same time, Halimah et al. (2025) emphasize that multicultural education and character-building for tolerance go hand in hand when both are deliberately integrated into school policies. (Shofwan, 2023) It also reports that a structured multicultural education strategy can shape students' character of tolerance, while documenting how school culture can be a tangible manifestation of inter-religious tolerance at the junior high school level. These findings reinforce the argument that the construction of multicultural values is not a process that stands alone in a single program, but rather the result of an accumulation of mutually supportive policies, curricula, and school habits.

However, the findings of this study show that the institutionalization of multicultural values has not automatically resulted in uniform internalization. The emergence of friendship groups based on common identities shows that the social construction built by schools is confronted with the social construction that has developed in students' lives outside of the school (Yanto et al., 2023). Thus, multicultural education needs to be understood as an ongoing process, not as an outcome achieved only through formal school policies or programs.

Social Interaction as a Space for the Formation of Meaning of Tolerance

The study's findings show that direct interaction among students is an important factor in the formation of multicultural attitudes. Students interact in learning activities, school activities, break time, and other social activities. In some situations, the interaction takes place openly and shows mutual respect. However, observations also found a tendency for some students to choose friends based on religious or ethnic similarities. This condition shows that structural diversity has been present in schools, but the social closeness among students has not always been formed across identities (Sipuan et al., 2022).

The findings can be explained through the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which affirms that human beings act upon things based on the meaning they have, that meaning is born of social interaction, and that meaning is constantly modified through the process of individual interpretation (Afdhal et al., 2024). In the context of schools, religion, ethnicity,

friendship, tolerance, and diversity are not only administrative categories, but acquire meaning through the experience of daily interactions. When learners repeatedly interact with a particular group, the closeness, sense of comfort, and identity of the group can acquire social meanings that then influence the choice of friendships (Qomaruddin et al., 2026). The study (Setiyoko, 2022), which applies the framework of symbolic interactionism to junior high school students, also shows that the process of interpreting symbols and actions underpins the formation and recovery of student friendships. This pattern is consistent with how students at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School interpret closeness within identity-based groups.

The explanation expands on research findings showing that multicultural education can increase students' tolerance attitudes. (Israel, 2025), for example, showing the relationship between multicultural education learning strategies and students' tolerance attitudes. (Yesi Arikarani, Suradi, Ngimadudin, 2025). It also shows that civic learning can play a role in developing student tolerance through the context of multicultural education. Meanwhile, research (Afdhal et al., 2024) found that multicultural education influences students' attitudes toward tolerance. Similar findings were also reported by (Syahrul Sabanil, F, Iva Sarifah & Imaningtyas, 2024) through a systematic literature review on multicultural education in Indonesian primary schools, by (Arifin & Huda, 2024) that found a relationship between the practice of multicultural values and the attitude of tolerance of students, as well as by (Muhaemin et al., 2026), which shows that inclusive schools can foster acceptance of differences through continuous cross-background interactions. (Halimah et al., 2025) also emphasized that religious tolerance in elementary schools is formed gradually through the habituation of interaction, not just through the delivery of material.

However, research conducted at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School reveals more nuanced findings. The existence of tolerance in formal activities is not always directly proportional to the pattern of informal friendships. Students can accept differences normatively, yet still choose to be socially close to groups with similar identities. These findings gain strong empirical support from geographically and socially adjacent contexts. Research on the pattern of relationships between student groups in ethno-religious-based schools in Pontianak City shows that relationships between ethnic-religious groups can range from mutually supportive attitudes to ethnocentric tendencies, depending on the intensity of cross-group interaction facilitated by the school. Similar findings emerged in the context of secondary schools in West Kalimantan: research on ethnocentrism among student groups at SMA N 1 Sungai Ambawang showed that students unconsciously tended to

choose membership in friendship groups based on ethnic similarity. However, this was not always accompanied by discriminatory attitudes towards other groups (Azhari & Albina, 2024). The study of social relations among students in culturally diverse settings also shows that the main obstacle to students' cross-identity relationships stems more from a lack of understanding and habits of intergroup interaction, rather than from an explicit rejection of difference (NAFA et al., 2022). Thus, the success of multicultural education is measured not only by students' ability to state that differences must be respected, but also by the actual interaction patterns that emerge in daily life.

The Hidden Curriculum and the Gap between Formal Values and Social Practice

The findings regarding the differences between school policies that support diversity and the tendency of some students to form groups based on common identities can be understood through the concept of hidden curriculum. (Jackson, 1968) Explains that school life not only produces learning through a formal curriculum, but also through experiences, routines, social relationships, rules, and habits that take place in school life. Thus, students can learn certain values not only from the learning material, but also from the patterns of social relationships they experience every day.

In this study, the formal curriculum and school programs have conveyed the values of tolerance, respect for differences, and cooperation. However, informal interactions among students also lead to social learning that is not always explicitly designed by the school. When students interact more often with friends who share the same religious or ethnic background, these patterns can become part of a hidden curriculum that indirectly teaches social boundaries within the friendship group (Muhammad et al., 2023). These findings are consistent with research (Slater & Cho, 2025), which shows that the hidden curriculum in PPKn learning in junior high school is effective in instilling the value of tolerance and cooperation when managed consciously by teachers, as well as by emphasizing the role of teachers in directing the hidden curriculum to foster the global diversity character of elementary school students. (Li et al., 2024) It also shows that integrating multicultural values through the hidden curriculum in religious education subjects can foster a peace-loving character in junior high school students. In contrast, their follow-up study on high schools in Mataram City confirms the role of the hidden curriculum in fostering cross-group tolerance (Tiffany D. Pogue & Jones Croft, 2023). It shows that the hidden curriculum can serve as a form of character education in vocational schools, and studies grounded in local wisdom in Maluku show that integrating local values into the hidden curriculum is effective in fostering peace and tolerance among elementary school students (Arsever et al., 2023).

The findings also have relevance to the research (Mohammed Jahirul Islam, Graduate Student, 2024), which shows that multicultural education can internalize tolerance when supported by consistent school management and strategies. This study emphasizes the importance of implementing multicultural education to strengthen religious moderation in basic education (Sholikah & Aziz, 2024). Meanwhile, research (Al-wajdi & Sunarso, 2025) shows that multicultural education and religious moderation can be integrated through subjects, local wisdom, and various school programs to build a harmonious life. Dialogue with other studies of religious moderation reinforces this pattern: (Risqi Istianingrum, 2023) shows that school culture is one of the main paths for strengthening religious moderation, (Hidayatullah & Wahyuddin, 2024) found that the internalization of the value of religious moderation in elementary schools takes place through daily habituation, and (Tampani, 2025) reported that the internalization of the values of multiculturalism and religious tolerance in junior high schools occurred through a combination of formal learning and students' social experiences. (Herawati et al., 2025). It also shows that religious moderation policies at the secondary school level have a real impact on school harmony only when they are consistently applied in daily practice. At the same time, (Ashoala & Suhendar, 2023) emphasize that a moderate curriculum needs to be accompanied by habituation so that the value of tolerance is truly internalized, not just written in curriculum documents.

The hidden curriculum perspective shows that the challenge of multicultural education lies not only in how schools formulate inclusive policies, but also in how all social practices in schools align with these values. Thus, the gap between formal values and students' practice of friendship does not merely indicate the failure of multicultural education, but shows that the process of internalizing values takes place in two spaces at once, namely the formal space controlled by the school and the informal space that develops through the social interaction of students.

Critical Synthesis

The three perspectives show that multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School operates through institutionalized school values, students' interpretation of diversity in daily interactions, and informal experiences that may reinforce or limit those values. Its effectiveness, therefore, depends on consistency between formal policies and students' social experiences. At the same time, the persistence of identity-based friendship groups indicates the need to strengthen multicultural practices in informal interactions (Purwanto, 2023). Schools need to develop learning experiences and collaborative activities that bring together interfaith and ethnic

learners more intensively so that tolerance does not stop as normative knowledge, but develops into repetitive and meaningful social experiences (Intan Jamilah Ulfa, Vivik Shofiah, 2025). Multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School is an ongoing process shaped by school policies, students' interactions, and the hidden curriculum, explaining why tolerance can develop while identity-based social grouping still persists.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that multicultural education at Pontianak Cooperative Junior High School has been implemented through school policies that prioritize the principle of equality, a learning process that integrates diversity values, and a school culture that encourages mutual respect between school members, although it has not been supported by written policies that specifically regulate multicultural education and religious moderation. This implementation is in line with the principles of religious moderation, as reflected in tolerance, respect for differences, interfaith and interethnic cooperation, and the creation of a harmonious and inclusive school environment. The study also found that multicultural education plays an important role in shaping the understanding and practice of religious moderation through daily social interactions, learning experiences, and habits in the school environment, thereby strengthening the character of students who are tolerant, respectful of diversity, and able to coexist peacefully in a pluralistic society.

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