

Pedagogical Compassion and Religious Moderation: Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Perspectives on *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* in Indonesian Madrasahs

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ABSTRACT

The rise of intolerance in educational settings demands a fundamental shift toward a pedagogical compassion approach. *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* serves as a strategic response to internalize religious moderation through humanistic values. This study aims to analyze the perspectives of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers regarding the readiness and structural challenges of implementing the *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* at MAN 2 Cilacap. This study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, involving a descriptive survey of a small group of 11 IRE teachers using a 16 item questionnaire, followed by in-depth interviews with selected key informants. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were then integrated with interview findings to provide a comprehensive contextual understanding, rather than to make inferential generalizations about the population. The results reveal the phenomenon of the Agency Paradox: although teachers demonstrate high affective commitment rooted in *Ar-Rahman* theology, they face methodological stuttering due to a lack of technical guidance and strick administrative demands. Teachers responded to this challenge through a Pedagogical Bricolage (adaptive navigation) strategy, namely improvising digital platforms to maintain the relevance of learning. Furthermore, this study identified a crucial barrier in the form of dissonance within the hidden curriculum, marked by the coexistence of authoritarian and humanistic teaching styles, as well as a deficit in students' social literacy that hinders empathy. The findings suggest that the success of religious moderation does not depend solely on theological competence, but rather on a cohesive school ecosystem. This implies the need for policy reforms that shift the focus from the individual burden on teachers toward building a democratic school culture and strengthening social literacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's pluralistic social reality, the concept of religious moderation or Wasathiyah Islam has emerged as a strategic normative framework for fostering social cohesion. Strengthening religious moderation has now become a structured national strategic agenda, as outlined in the Roadmap for

Strengthening Religious Moderation 2025–2029 (Ali Ramdhani et al., 2025). This policy targets not only passive tolerance but also active social cohesion, as empirical findings indicate that the integration of affective values of moderation mitigates potential conflicts and strengthens social capital amidst diversity (Mo'tasim, 2024). As the primary vehicle for the internalization of these values, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a central role. However, recent discourse reveals fundamental problems in IRE practice. Evaluation practices in PAI have long been trapped in a cognitive hegemony that neglects students' affective dimensions. As highlighted by Erlangga et al. (2024) and Hidayat et al. (2023), the dominance of paper-based testing has reduced the complexity of diversity competencies to mere text memorization. This phenomenon hinders the internalization of character values, because as Santrock (in Erlangga, 2024) asserts, without evaluation instruments that touch on the emotional realm, education fails to detect authentic internal changes in students (Akbar et al., 2025).

To address these limitations, the humanistic educational paradigm through *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* (KBC) now enjoys strong legal and philosophical legitimacy. For a global audience, it is important to note that the LBC is not merely a local pedagogical initiative, but a formal national policy established through the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 6077 of 2025 as the operational framework for madrasahs in Indonesia. In response to the challenge of dehumanization, the contemporary PAI paradigm in madrasahs is moving toward the implementation of this approach. Nafisah et al., (2025) operationally define KBC as a reconstructive learning strategy in which teachers act as facilitators of affection who build emotional *bonds* with students through a culture of compassion. Daaboul's (2024) phenomenological study confirms that this love-based pedagogy significantly reduces behavioral problems and enhances students' autonomous engagement in learning. This approach offers a more sustainable alternative compared to authoritarian approaches, „Entris Trisnawandi's (2025) which according to analysis, tend to produce pseudo-obedience. However, the reality on the ground is often paradoxical, where teachers are expected to be humanistic administratively yet remain trapped in a school culture that still perpetuates rigid disciplinary patterns.

Conceptually, this study positions *Kurikulum Berbasis Cinta* as the operational manifestation of the humanistic paradigm and Pedagogical Compassion. There is a close interconnection among the core concepts in this discourse; religious moderation in madrasahs is built upon the foundation of pedagogical compassion, the successful implementation of which depends heavily on teachers' agency. Unfortunately, this agency often clashes with the hidden curriculum of institutions that remain authoritarian, which in turn leads to stagnation in students' social literacy regarding empathy. This KBC approach integrates the spiritual dimensions of Sufism particularly the concept of *Mahabbah* (love) into modern educational practice, aligning with the “ethics of care” in global educational philosophy (Noddings, 2012). When love is made the axis of the curriculum, learning is no longer understood as a mechanistic process of knowledge transfer, but rather as a transformative educational relationship that touches the inner dimensions of the learners. Theoretical literature indicates that when Islamic Education (PAI) is delivered through the lens of compassion, it naturally erodes exclusive and intolerant attitudes, thereby strengthening the foundation of religious moderation (Raihani, 2014).

Nevertheless, the conceptual appeal of love-based pedagogy faces real challenges when operationalized within large-scale formal educational institutions such as State Senior High Schools. On-the-ground realities are often paradoxical, where teachers are expected to be administratively humanistic yet remain trapped in a school culture that still perpetuates authoritarian disciplinary patterns. Based on the literature review, the research gap regarding religious moderation in madrasahs can be categorized into three main clusters. First, studies focusing on curriculum design and textbook analysis (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Sutrisno, 2019). Second, studies evaluating learning outcomes or student tolerance indices (Hefner, 2020; Naj'ma & Bakri, 2022). Third, an area that remains under-researched: studies on the mechanisms of affective pedagogy internalization and teacher agency (Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, 2015). Existing studies tend to overlook the perspective of Islamic Education teachers as policy implementers (Suhadi, 2018). This oversight is critical because the success of the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* depends not only on syllabus documents but also on teachers' internal

readiness and their ability to navigate structural challenges (Zembylas, 2018a). Much of the prior literature has emphasized the completeness of rational instruments; thus, an in-depth analysis of the complexity of teachers' emotions and agency as policy filters still requires adequate empirical evidence. To examine this issue, this study systematically employs the theoretical frameworks of Teacher Agency and the Hidden Curriculum to construct a more focused analysis.

To examine this issue, this study systematically employs the theoretical frameworks of Teacher Agency and Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). The success of implementing a moderate religious curriculum depends heavily on what Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson (2015) refer to as 'Teacher Agency'. In the Indonesian context, Fitriza et al. (2025) found that this agency is a dynamic capacity shaped by reflections on the past, visions of the future, and practical assessments of the present. Highly agency-driven teachers are more resilient in implementing inclusive practices (Mukhibat et al., 2024). This theory is then integrated with the concept of PCK expanded to include an affective dimension, where a teacher's competence is measured not only by mastery of subject matter but also by their ability to convey positive emotions as a teaching method.

In terms of novelty, this study makes an original contribution in three main areas. First, at the level of the object of study, this research shifts the focus of analysis from students or curriculum documents to the subjectivity of PAI teachers as central agents of change. Second, at the conceptual level, this study explicitly positions the value of love or compassion (*mahabbah*) as a pedagogical instrument in strengthening religious moderation, not merely as an ethical or normative discourse commonly discussed from legal and civic perspectives. Third, from an empirical context, this study presents a micro-analysis at MAN 2 Cilacap that adopts a humanistic approach, thereby providing a concrete picture of the negotiation process between the idealism of the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* and the reality of madrasah bureaucracy.

Based on this, this study aims to investigate the perspectives of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers at MAN 2 Cilacap regarding the implementation of the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* as an instrument of religious moderation. Specifically, this study seeks to answer two fundamental questions: (1) How do Islamic Religious Education teachers perceive their cognitive, affective, and pedagogical readiness to implement the Love-Based Curriculum? and (2) What structural, cultural, and instructional challenges do teachers encounter in translating love-based pedagogy into religious moderation learning? By answering these questions, this study presents a micro-level analysis of curriculum implementation within the specific context of religious education.

Through a comprehensive analysis, the findings of this research are expected to contribute directly to the evaluation of curriculum implementation within madrasah settings. Practically, these findings are projected to serve as a foundation for the formulation of sustainable teacher professional development programs focused on strengthening affective competencies. At the macro level, this study is expected to enrich the of the religious moderation education paradigm in Indonesia by integrating social literacy values more holistically.

2. METHODS

This study employs a Mixed Methods Research design with a Convergent Parallel Design strategy to combine quantitative and qualitative data to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of teacher agency (Creswell, J. W., & Poth, 2018). This design was chosen because it is appropriate for addressing the research questions holistically, where the descriptive mapping of teachers' readiness needs to be validated and deepened simultaneously with qualitative analysis of structural challenges in the field. Given the very small sample size, the quantitative data is explicitly not intended for inferential generalization to a broader population but serves exclusively to map the descriptive and contextual landscape regarding the cognitive and affective readiness levels of PAI teachers at the research site (Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, 2018). Meanwhile, qualitative data serves as an explanatory instrument to delve into *the depth of meaning* and unravel the sociological and

psychological contexts underlying these statistical figures (Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, 2019; Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017).

The study was conducted at MAN 2 Cilacap, an educational institution serving as a reference for the implementation of the moderation curriculum. The selection of research subjects in the quantitative phase utilized total sampling (census), involving the entire population of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, totaling 11 individuals. The use of this census aimed to capture a comprehensive profile of teachers' readiness within a single school ecosystem. For the qualitative phase, purposive sampling was used to select 4 key informants based on criteria of substantial experience and active involvement in diverse moderation teaching to elicit in-depth narrative data. All research procedures adhered to academic ethical considerations; institutional approval was obtained, and participants voluntarily provided informed consent with a guarantee of anonymity.

The instrument was developed based on the theoretical framework of Teacher Agency. Quantitative data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire with a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree to 4 = Disagree) consisting of 16 items that measure internal and external dimensions. This instrument has undergone content validity testing and Cronbach's Alpha reliability testing with a coefficient value of 0.82, ensuring reliable measurement consistency (Azwar, 2019). Meanwhile, qualitative data was collected using a semi-structured *in-depth* interview guide designed on January 18, 2026, lasting approximately 45–60 minutes per session, and conducted in Indonesian. The entire interview process was recorded and transcribed verbatim to explore teachers' practices of pedagogical compassion and their negotiation of structural challenges.

Data analysis procedures were conducted separately before integration. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (percentages and mean scores) to categorize teachers' readiness levels (Riduwan, 2020). The categories for determining the mean score were based on the following intervals: 1.00–1.75 (Low), 1.76–2.50 (Moderate), 2.51–3.25 (High), and 3.26–4.00 (Very High). Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, 2020), which includes data condensation, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The final stage of the analysis involved a side-by-side comparison, in which the descriptive statistical findings were compared and synthesized with the thematic findings from the interviews to confirm the convergence or divergence of the data in addressing the research questions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

3.1.1 Teacher Readiness Map: The Gap between Affective Commitment and Technical Instruments

Descriptive statistical analysis of 11 PAI teachers at MAN 2 Cilacap reveals a unique pattern of readiness. As shown in Table 1, there is a disparity in scores between internal (commitment) and external (technical) aspects.

Table 1. Distribution of PAI Teachers' Readiness in KBC Implementation

No	Readiness Indicator	Mean Score	SD	Category
1.	Understanding of the basic concepts of the Love-Based Curriculum (Q1)	3.55	0.52	Very High
2.	Belief in the effectiveness of love (Affective) (Q4)	3.27	0.47	Very high
3.	Mental readiness to change teaching style (Humanistic) (Q6)	3.18	0.60	High
4.	Availability of documents (Lesson Plans/Teaching Modules) (Q7)	3.09	0.70	High
5.	Regular use of humanistic media (videos/stories) (Q10)	3.09	0.54	High
6.	Persuasive communication skills (Q9)	3.00	0.63	High
AVERAGE TOTAL		3.20	0.57	HIGH

To view the distribution of responses in more detail, the following visualizes teachers' responses to the key indicators in the questionnaire:

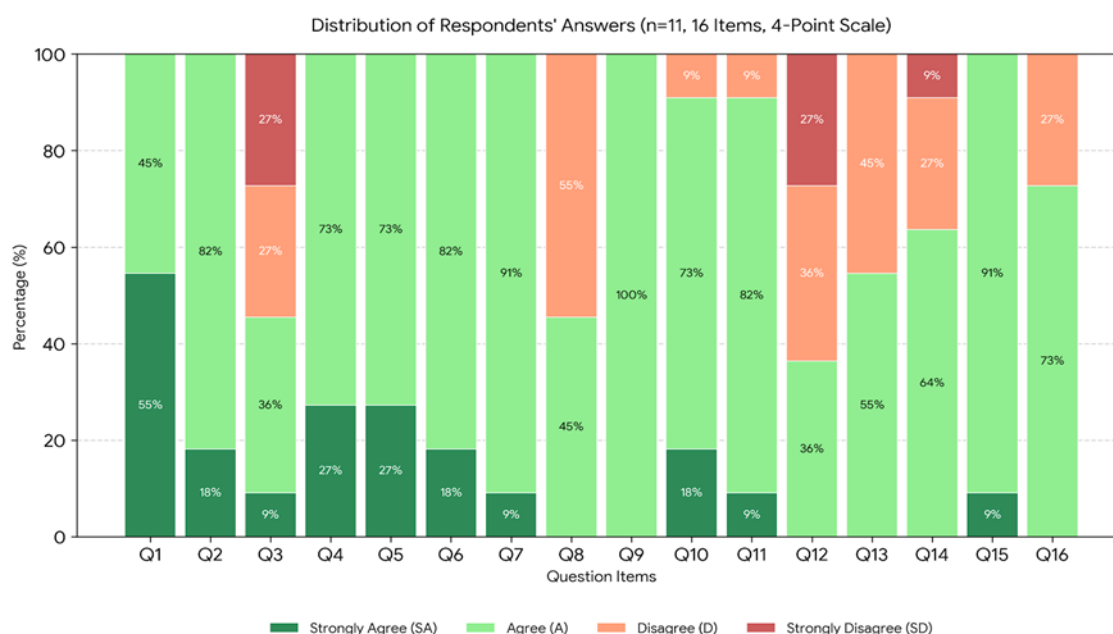


Figure 1. Percentage Distribution of Respondents' Answers (n=11) Regarding KBC Indicators

Given the limited number of respondents (n=11), the interpretation of the data in Table 1 and the visualization in Figure 1 are purely descriptive. These results indicate that, overall, teachers' readiness falls into the High category (Mean=3.20). However, upon closer examination, a sharp disparity is evident between internal and external aspects. Teachers scored very high on the Aspects of Understanding (3.55) and Affective Beliefs (3.27) dimensions. This is reinforced by the graph in Figure 1 (Q1 and Q4), where the dominance of green (Strongly Agree/Agree) indicates a positive consensus that, philosophically and psychologically, PAI teachers have a strong commitment to the value of compassion.

Conversely, this commitment faces technical obstacles, as the scores for Document Availability (3.09) and Communication Skills (3.00) are the lowest. The visual data in Figure 1 (specifically Q11 and Q12) reveal a spectrum of yellow/orange colors, indicating the presence of barriers. This data provides an initial signal regarding a phenomenon conceptualized in this study as *methodological stuttering* a condition of discrepancy where teachers possess high affective and cognitive readiness but lack operational guidance and technical resources in the field.

3.1.2 Translating Love in Learning: Theological Foundations and Digital Improvisation

The qualitative findings provide a deep explanation (*explanatory power*) for the high affective scores mentioned above. This theme regarding the theological foundation is strongly supported by three of the four key informants. For the teachers, the Love-Based Curriculum is not merely an administrative requirement, but a theological manifestation. Informant 2 represents this collective perspective by constructing the meaning of love from the attribute of God, Ar-Rahman.

For me, the Love-Based Curriculum, or KBC, is a deep learning approach whose essence is to apply compassion to all people. We derive its philosophy from the phrase Bismillah, specifically from the divine attribute of Allah, Ar-Rahman. Just as Allah bestows His compassion upon all humanity in this world and the hereafter, regardless of whether a person worships Him or not, that is the spirit we carry. Through KBC, we aim to introduce and instill in students the meaning of universal compassion toward fellow human beings. (Informant 2)

This belief is also shared by Informant 3, who asserts that: *implementing KBC is akin to practicing religious law comprehensively, prioritizing mercy over anger*. This theological conviction is then translated into a humanistic history teaching strategy, such as framing the narrative of the Wali Songo in a way that embraces local culture without judgment.

Meanwhile, to address the challenge of low scores in the technical aspect (lesson plan documents), teachers employed pedagogical improvisation. Interview findings indicate that all informants (4 out of 4 teachers) agreed that they adopted a pedagogical bricolage strategy, defined as a teacher's ability to navigate limitations by assembling and utilizing any available digital resources to maintain the relevance of the material. As expressed by Informant 1:

Actually, I had already initiated the teaching of religious moderation through the e-class platform developed by INSIMA. The timing was perfect, because the material I was teaching at the time was closely related to the values of moderation, such as tasamuh (tolerance) and musawah (equality). So, I immediately implemented it in classroom interactions. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that at the administrative level such as in Lesson Plans (RPP) or Teaching Modules the integration of the KBC concept has not yet been fully and explicitly incorporated; however, in practice, the learning process is already underway. (Informant 1)

3.1.3 Structural Challenges: School Cultural Dissonance and Literacy Deficits

Implementation challenges are not only technical but also structural. Table 2 provides a descriptive summary of teachers' perceptions regarding the main obstacles they face in the field.

Table 2. Statistics on KBC Implementation Challenges

No	Challenge Indicator	Mean Score	SD	Category
1.	Harsh school environment (Q15)	3.09	0.54	High
2.	Lack of technical references/guidelines (Q11)	3.00	0.63	High
3.	School administrative workload demands (Q16)	2.73	0.78	High
4.	Student character tending to disrespect soft approaches (Q13)	2.55	0.82	High
5.	Lack of training (Workshops/Technical Training) (Q14)	2.55	0.68	High
6.	Difficulty finding teaching methods (Q8)	2.45	0.52	Moderate
7.	The belief that a tough approach is more effective (Q3)	2.27	0.90	Moderate
TOTAL AVERAGE (Grand Mean)		2.59	0.69	HIGH

Based on the comprehensive 16 item survey, the harsh out of school environment (Q15, 100% agreement), strict administrative workloads (Q16, 100% agreement), and a shift in student character that undervalues humanistic approaches (Q13, 100% agreement) emerged as the primary barriers. Furthermore, a substantial majority (91%) identified a lack of institutional technical training (Q14) as a major hurdle. However, qualitative data revealed a more complex reality behind these figures, namely the existence of school cultural dissonance. This cultural barrier was consistently highlighted by three out of four informants. The three informants highlighted a contradictory coexistence: on one hand, PAI teachers strive to apply a humanistic approach, yet on the other hand, there are still colleagues who adopt a strict disciplinary orientation and an authoritarian pedagogical style. This creates a hidden curriculum that confuses students regarding which values the school actually upholds.

Furthermore, implementation barriers are exacerbated by students' cognitive factors. Specifically, two of the four informants (including Informant 2) identified that the challenge of religious moderation is not merely ordinary misbehavior, but a deficit in social literacy. Teachers identified this deficit empirically through participatory observation of the dynamics of students' daily social interactions at the madrasah. Based on these observations, the social literacy deficit is manifested through several specific behavioral indicators: students' inability to critically interpret social contexts, difficulty respecting differing opinions during class discussions, and the presence of an empathy gap when interacting with peers. This is further emphasized by Informant 2's in-depth observations:

The most crucial challenge actually lies in the students' lack of literacy. This poses a serious obstacle to the learning process. I've observed that, due to low literacy, students' ability to understand others' perspectives is limited. The implications are deeply felt in daily social interactions; they struggle to empathize and tend to be less attuned to their social environment. (Informant 2)

This specific analysis by Informant 2 is also corroborated by Informant 4, who reinforces that: students often get stuck in black-and-white thinking due to a lack of exposure to cross-cultural literacy. This finding underscores that the barriers to religious moderation are systemic in nature caught between a school culture that is not yet fully democratic and students' literacy capacities that require fundamental strengthening.

3.1.4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

To provide a comprehensive overview, the following presents a data integration matrix (Joint Display) that juxtaposes statistical findings with qualitative insights.

Table 3. Joint Display of Convergent Parallel Analysis Results

Analysis Domain	Quantitative Findings (Survey n=11)	Qualitative Findings (Informant Interviews)	Integration Status
Concept Acceptance	Very High (Mean 3.55). The majority of teachers (55% SS, 45% S) understand the basic concepts of KBC.	Confirmed. The majority of informants (3 out of 4) interpret the KBC concept deeply through theological (Ar-Rahman) and philosophical (<i>Humanizing Humans</i>) foundations.	Convergence (Mutual Reinforcement)
Implementation Strategy	High (Mean 3.09). The use of video/story media is fairly routine, but explicit lesson plans remain limited.	Elaborated. All informants (4 out of 4) practice Pedagogical Bricolage (digital improvisation via E-class & Visual Storytelling) even without standard lesson plan guidelines.	Elaboration (Qualitative explanation of "How")
Main Obstacles	High. Universal consensus (100% agreement) on harsh out-of-school environment (Q15), administrative workload (Q16), and student character resistance (Q13). 91% lack technical training (Q14).	Expanded. Informants revealed systemic barriers: school cultural dissonance due to peers' authoritarian styles (3 out of 4 informants) and students' social literacy deficits (2 out of 4 informants).	Expansion (Qualitative adds new dimensions)
Discipline Paradigm	Moderate (Mean 2.27). Some teachers (45%) still believe in the effectiveness of a strict/firm approach (See Figure 1, Q3).	Confirmed. There is acknowledgment of resistance from colleagues who are reluctant to abandon a	Convergence (Statistical data reflected in reality)

Analysis Domain	Quantitative Findings (Survey n=11)	Qualitative Findings (Informant Interviews)	Integration Status
		strict disciplinary orientation.	

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Paradox of Ecological Agency: High Commitment vs. Methodological Stuttering

An integrative analysis of the research data (see Table 3: Joint Display) reveals a phenomenon of convergence in philosophical aspects, yet sharp divergence in technical aspects. Statistically (see Table 1), teachers demonstrate very high affective commitment (Mean=3.27) and mature conceptual understanding (Mean=3.55). These numerical findings were corroborated by qualitative narratives, in which most informants (3 out of 4) viewed the KBC's not merely as an official duty, but as a theological manifestation of the attribute of Ar-Rahman. As emphasized by Informant 2: We derive the philosophy from the phrase 'Bismillah,' particularly regarding Allah's attribute, Ar-Rahman; we aim to introduce and instill in students the meaning of universal compassion. This belief is also endorsed by Informant 3, who asserts that KBC is akin to "

However, this highly affective dimension experiences a significant drop-off when entering the realm of technical implementation, such as the preparation of lesson plans (Mean=3.00) and complaints regarding the lack of references or the availability of technical guidelines (Mean=3.00 in Table 2: Implementation Challenges). This phenomenon can be sharply interpreted through the lens of Biesta's (2015) theory of Ecological Teacher Agency, which asserts that teacher agency is not a static individual capacity but rather the result of ecological interactions between the past, the future, and the present (Priestley et al., 2015). In this context, the Projective Dimension (Future Vision): Very strong. Teachers have a sincere aspiration to become humanistic educators grounded in the theology of love. However, this aspiration clashes with the weak and constraining Practical-Evaluative Dimension (current conditions) (Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, 2015). Specifically, the survey data reveal that 100% of teachers feel their capacity to provide personal approaches is hindered by strict school administrative demands (Q16), and 91% lack adequate technical training from institutions to translate concepts into practice (Q14). It is this ecological imbalance that creates a condition of methodological stuttering: teachers are ready in heart but confused in hand (Lopes, 2016).

Nevertheless, this study rejects the conclusion of Hanafi et al. (2022), which deterministically labels the absence of institutional documents as a teacher's failure. Instead, drawing on qualitative findings regarding the initiatives of the majority of teachers (4 out of 4 informants), this study identifies the operation of the Pedagogical Bricolage mechanism (Campbell, 2019). The development of this bricolage concept is one of the study's most significant contributions, beginning with Resources (Available Resources) where, in the absence of official guidelines, teachers utilize resources at hand namely the school's E-class digital platform and the repertoire of local cultural history (the history of Wali Songo syncretism) as the informant stated, I have already initiated the cultivation of religious moderation through the E-class platform; I directly applied its integration into classroom interactions. Meanwhile, regarding Constraints (Challenges Faced), teachers are confronted with acute structural barriers, namely the absence of technical guidelines, the burden of school administration, and the fact that the KBC concept has not been explicitly incorporated into the Lesson Plans (RPP) or standard government teaching modules (Mean=3.09), however, this improvisation in supporting the value of moderation successfully bridges theoretical concepts into relevant practice because classroom practices are aligned with materials that are closely related to the values of moderation, such as *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *musawah* (equality) (Informant 1). Nevertheless, there are limitations where it is crucial to note that this adaptive bricolage practice is merely an individual stopgap solution and by no means a substitute for the lack of adequate institutional support from the government. Ultimately, teachers activate the Iterational Dimension and integrate it with digital technology to overcome structural

constraints, and this demonstrates that PAI teachers at MAN 2 Cilacap engage in adaptive navigation; they transform structural limitations into spaces for pedagogical creativity to maintain the relevance of the values of moderation.

3.2.2 The Dissonance of the Hidden Curriculum: The Clash Between Authoritarian and Humanist Cultures

Regarding structural challenges, quantitative data explicitly highlighted the harsh out-of-school environment (Q15, 100% agreement) and student character resistance to soft approaches (Q13, 100% agreement) as massive external hurdles. However, through qualitative analysis, it was found that the most potentially corrosive challenges are actually internal-systemic in nature. Consistent acknowledgments from three out of four informants revealed a cultural dissonance within the school resulting from a contradictory coexistence: while PAI teachers apply a humanistic approach, there are still colleagues who maintain a strict disciplinary orientation and an authoritarian pedagogical style. This directly explains why 45% of survey respondents (see Figure 1, Q3) still believe in the effectiveness of a strict disciplinary approach.

Theoretically, the coexistence of humanistic Islamic Education teachers and an authoritarian school culture indicates the presence of acute dissonance within the Hidden Curriculum (Giroux & Giroux, 2006). Schools often face difficulties in building a cohesive ecosystem of values. This failure manifests in a sharp paradox: while the formal (explicit) curriculum normatively teaches values of compassion, tolerance, and moderation, the hidden (implicit) curriculum instills the contradictory message that the dominance of power and verbal punishment are legitimate instruments of social control. Authoritarian practices that are enforced and normalized in daily interactions at school may potentially hinder students' critical development.

Consequently, students experience value confusion. When students are taught kindness in PAI class but empirically experience or witness verbal violence in other subjects or during disciplinary interactions, the value of Pedagogical Compassion painstakingly built by the PAI teacher can weaken and become highly complicated. This finding strongly reinforces (Kurniawan, 2018) argument that the seeds of intolerance are often concealed within undemocratic school management structures. When compared to previous studies that have focused more on radicalization as a result of external technological influences (Damanhuri, 2020), this research demonstrates that internal-systemic factors can be equally destructive saboteurs. Therefore, KBC cannot merely be an individual teacher's agenda; it must become a collective agency. Without holistic school cultural reform to address this dissonance, religious moderation education risks becoming nothing more than cosmetic rhetoric amidst a strong authoritarian culture (Ilma et al., 2025).

3.2.3 Literacy Gap as a Barrier to Religious Moderation: Beyond Theological Knowledge

This study identified a crucial intervening variable rarely discussed in mainstream studies of religious moderation: Social Literacy. Qualitative findings confirm that low student literacy (which explains the lowest quantitative indicator score for Student Character, Mean=2.55) is directly correlated with a lack of social sensitivity. Based on in-depth observations, two of the four informants identified that this barrier triggers an empathy gap. As Informant 2 stated, *"The most crucial challenge actually lies in the students' lack of literacy."* The implications are deeply felt in daily interactions; they struggle to empathize and tend to be less sensitive to their social environment. This statement is reinforced by Informant 4, who noted that students often get stuck in black-and-white thinking due to a lack of exposure to cross-cultural literacy.

This finding challenges the government's common assumption that extremism is solely caused by a deficit in theological understanding or a misreading of religious texts. A cross-analysis of quantitative data and educator interviews indicates that religious moderation actually demands a high level of cognitive ability namely, Sociological Imagination to understand the perspectives and conditions of the Other. A deficit in cultural literacy causes students to lose this cognitive flexibility, so

it is natural that they have a high probability of tending toward black-and-white thinking. This aligns with the concept of Reading the World, where students who are unable to critically interpret social reality will struggle to interpret religious texts in a moderate manner (Nugraha et al., 2024).

These findings expand the discourse of previous studies, such as the research by Rusydiyah et al. (2020), whose analysis remains largely limited to the mechanics of digital literacy. This study argues unequivocally that the implementation of moderation is fundamentally a matter of a critical literacy gap. Without the capacity to read others' narratives, such as the ability to imagine oneself in another's position (Nussbaum, 2008), students will not be able to authentically internalize the value of tolerance. The practical implication is the need to apply Differentiated Instruction and the architecture of Pedagogical Compassion (Zembylas, 2015, 2018b) within the PAI classroom (Abreu, 2021). The moderation approach has proven that one cannot take a shortcut to enter the discourse of religious doctrine debates; rather, it must absolutely begin with strengthening critical reasoning and building psychological safety, as suggested by Edmondson, so that students dare to explore differences without fear (Edmondson, 1999).

3.2.4 Future Research Directions

Based on the synthesis of empirical findings and the limitations of this study, which focuses predominantly on the educator's perspective, future research directions need to be expanded in an exploratory manner across two major domains. First, it is urgently necessary to initiate a qualitative phenomenological study that specifically explores the empirical perspectives of students (student voice) to precisely diagnose the extent to which school cultural dissonance (the tension between humanistic teaching practices and authoritarian institutional management) actually influences the development of their mental health, psychological burden, and the refinement of their moderate character literacy. Second, at the pragmatic level of operational technical improvements, a quasi-experimental design is urgently needed to test the efficacy of the Pedagogical Bricolage model (specifically the integration of the e-class platform, videos, and the historical narrative of the Wali Songo) in statistically and measurably improving students' empathy scores. The findings from this follow-up study will serve as a fundamental evidence-based foundation for structural policymakers in formulating standard technical protocols for the operationalization of KBC, while simultaneously addressing the shortage of tools faced by teachers at the grassroots level.

Before articulating the conclusions, it is important to establish several limitations regarding the empirical validity of this research. First, this study is based on a single-site study design at MAN 2 Cilacap and involves only a very limited sample size, so the findings cannot be automatically generalized to broader geographical or institutional contexts. The analysis of effectiveness and commitment indicators relies heavily on teachers' self-reports, which leaves room for social desirability bias. Furthermore, the narrative regarding school culture conflicts is drawn primarily from the teachers' perspective, leaving a very limited exploration of the students' direct perspectives. Finally, the absence of long-term classroom observation means that the validity of conclusions regarding pedagogical efficacy still relies on perceptual validation rather than empirical data on actual learning.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the readiness of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers at MAN 2 Cilacap to implement the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* (KBC) is marked by a very strong affective and theological commitment, yet its implementation is hindered by a lack of instruments and operational technical support. In response to the absence of official guidelines, educators navigate these limitations through adaptive pedagogical bricolage strategies, namely by independently integrating available digital platforms and historical narratives to preserve the essence of religious moderation within the learning space. Nevertheless, these strategic implementation efforts face precipitating structural challenges within the madrasah environment, particularly in the form of hidden curriculum dissonance

resulting from the coexistence of PAI educators' humanistic approaches and the still-authoritarian disciplinary culture of Furthermore, the deficit in social literacy among students also serves as a systemic barrier that empirically weakens their capacity for empathy and critical reasoning regarding diversity. The specific contextual conditions at MAN 2 Cilacap have significant implications for the direction of religious education policies and practices, where the successful internalization of moderation values cannot be reduced to merely the individual moral responsibility of educators alone, but rather demands a holistic and comprehensive transformation of the school ecosystem.

Based on these findings, this study proposes a series of practical recommendations for optimizing future educational programs. From a managerial perspective, policymakers and madrasah authorities must immediately develop standardized technical implementation guidelines for the KBC to address the methodological challenges faced by teachers in the field. Additionally, institutions must proactively facilitate professional development programs for educators that specifically focus on mastering compassionate *pedagogy*. At the cultural level, it is urgently necessary to align institutional disciplinary policies with the values of religious moderation to eliminate contradictory disciplinary practices. In the instructional realm, programs to strengthen students' social literacy must be massively integrated as a curricular priority to build their capacity for empathy and sociological awareness. To strengthen future evaluation methodologies, the assessment agenda for the implementation of the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* (KBC) should mandatorily include direct classroom observation instruments to validate the pedagogical efficacy of actual learning interactions, rather than merely relying on self-reported administrative documentation. The study suggests that the implementation of the *Kurikulum berbasis cinta* requires not only individual teacher commitment but also institutional coherence, technical guidance, and a democratic school culture that supports religious moderation.

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