

Religious Moderation Values through Local-Wisdom-Based Education: An Ethno-Religious Pedagogy of the *Barazanji* Tradition in an Indonesian Madrasah

Fatmawati¹, Sri Verlin², A. Muh. Iksan Magan Saputra³, Rahmi Utami Dewi⁴, Astri Safhira⁵,
Jusmiati⁶, Andi Saddam Huzein Arifai⁷, Afdal⁸, Jumaleng⁹
^{1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9} Universitas Islam As'adiyah Sengkang, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

In an era of accelerating digital information flows, madrasah students are increasingly exposed to radicalism and religious exclusivism, which threaten social tolerance. Conventional, classroom-based religious instruction frequently fails to engage learners' affective domain, creating a critical need for culturally embedded pedagogies. This study examines how religious moderation values are internalized through the local-wisdom tradition of *Barazanji* at MTs Irsyadul Salam, Bone, focusing on the mechanisms transforming this oral tradition into character education. Using a descriptive qualitative design with a single-case study approach, the research engaged the principal, teachers, and students as purposively sampled informants. Data were generated through participatory observation of *Barazanji* extracurricular activities, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. The data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña framework, with credibility secured through source and technique triangulation. The findings demonstrate that internalization unfolds through three systematic stages: value transformation (textual introduction), value transaction (collective practice), and trans-internalization (behavioral habituation). This process successfully cultivates four core moderation pillars: *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (uprightness), and *tawasut* (the middle path), effectively reconciling religious devotion with Bugis cultural identity. Consequently, the tradition functions as an impactful hidden curriculum. This study contributes a novel ethno-religious pedagogical framework for Islamic education, offering a transferable model for madrasahs seeking to strengthen learner character and preempt early-age extremism.

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Corresponding Author:

Fatmawati,

Universitas Islam As'adiyah Sengkang, Indonesia

Email: fatmawatihjfatmawati@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia constitutes the world's largest living laboratory of diversity, a setting in which religion and culture are deeply interwoven in the formation of national identity

(Thaha et al., 2024). While this plurality is an invaluable asset, it also carries a latent potential for conflict when it is not governed by a moderate paradigm. Over recent decades, a current of religious conservatism inclined toward exclusivism has begun to permeate educational institutions, including Islamic schools (madrasah) (Malik, 2024; Zuhdi, 2018). The emergence of radical and intolerant narratives among the younger generation signals that doctrinal, theory-driven religious instruction alone is no longer adequate (Junaidi et al., 2025). The central challenge confronting contemporary education is therefore how to transform the values of religious moderation—promoted nationally by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs—from formalistic curricular memorization into an organic, internalized awareness (Fauyan et al., 2026; Muliadi et al., 2025; Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

Religious moderation (wasathiyah), structured around pillars such as *tawasut* (taking the middle path), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (uprightness and fairness), requires a delivery medium capable of reaching learners' affective and psychomotor dimensions rather than their cognition alone (Maarif et al., 2022; Sodikin et al., 2026). In institutions such as MTs Irsyadul Salam in Cekreware, Bone, this challenge is especially salient. As an Islamic educational institution rooted in the pesantren tradition and affiliated with the As'adiyah network, the madrasah bears a dual mandate: to safeguard the integrity of Islamic teaching while nurturing a generation that is genuinely inclusive toward difference. Yet the prevailing method of internalizing moderation often defaults to a rigid, top-down, textbook-centered approach that feels remote from students' sociocultural realities.

It is precisely here that local wisdom acquires strategic value. Local wisdom is not a mere relic of the past but a pedagogical instrument capable of bridging universal religious values and lived local contexts (Fatmawati, 2022; Lestari & Nopiana, 2024; Rahmawati & Khusniyah, 2025). One cultural inheritance firmly embedded in Bugis society—and particularly within the As'adiyah community—is the *Barazanji* tradition (Djawas et al., 2023; Masnani, 2025; Muhammadong, 2022; Parninsih et al., 2025). The collective recitation of the *Barazanji*, a poetic biography of the Prophet Muhammad, is not only a devotional ritual but also a site of cultural encounter saturated with messages of peace, respect for others, and love (Fattah & Ayundasari, 2021; Parninsih et al., 2025). Its narratives foreground the Prophet's inclusive, patient, and just character, which lies at the heart of religious moderation.

Although *Barazanji* is frequently regarded as a traditional oral practice, at MTs Irsyadul Salam it remains a living and consistently performed tradition. The internalization it produces, however, has typically occurred tacitly, without an explicit pedagogical framework. A gap thus persists between the routine performance of *Barazanji* and the conscious translation of its moderation values into students' everyday conduct. Many students are technically proficient in reciting the verses, yet it remains unclear whether they recognize that these verses encode principles of non-violence and the acknowledgment of others. This warrants close investigation into how local-wisdom-based education can serve as a bulwark of moderate ideology within schools (Musliem, 2024).

Prior scholarship on religious moderation has largely concentrated on macro-level curricular policy or on the delivery of moderate values through formal Islamic Religious Education (PAI) (Chotimah et al., 2025; Prasetyo et al., 2025). Research on *Barazanji*, in turn, has been dominated by philological readings of manuscripts or by sociological and anthropological analyses of communal rituals (Muttaqin, 2016; Nurtikawati et al., 2022). Few studies have positioned *Barazanji* as an “educational technology” or pedagogical strategy through which madrasahs systematically internalize religious moderation, and most school-based moderation research remains general, overlooking the local specificities of institutions.

The distinctiveness of the present study lies in its integration of three dimensions that are usually examined in isolation: the religious (religious moderation), the cultural (*Barazanji*), and the pedagogical (internalization within a madrasah). Whereas existing work tends to treat moderation as classroom subject matter, this study advances an ethno-religious pedagogy as a model for learning moderation. It analyzes how the aesthetic structure, rhyme, and harmony of *Barazanji* recitation function as a “third classroom”—an informal learning space that proves more effective than verbal instruction in formal settings—and how the trans-internalization of values is activated when students engage in collective practice, allowing social cohesion to grow organically through rhythm and narrative.

The selection of MTs Irsyadul Salam as the research site adds a further dimension. As part of the As’adiyah network, with deep historical roots in the Islamization of South Sulawesi, the institution practices a distinctive form of moderation that fuses doctrinal purification with the accommodation of local culture—contrasting with the comparatively uniform moderation models found in public schools and state madrasahs. The study thereby addresses a gap in the literature concerning how institutions grounded in traditional Islamic organizations negotiate the tension between educational modernity and the conservation of local values through aesthetic and devotional channels.

The urgency of the inquiry is reinforced by evidence that values internalized through local wisdom display greater resilience against transnational ideological pressures: values embedded through local feeling, voice, and tradition are far harder to uproot than those learned superficially. By tracing this internalization process, the study aims not merely to document existing practice but to formulate a model of inclusive, grassroots moderation education. Its intended theoretical contribution is the proposition that religious moderation need not always be taught as new content but can be revitalized from extant cultural practice; its practical contribution is to encourage madrasah educators to treat local wisdom as a relevant and enjoyable medium of learning.

Accordingly, this study is highly pertinent to national efforts to strengthen religious moderation—not by imposing external values, but by reactivating a community’s collective memory through the soothing verses of *Barazanji*. Guided by this rationale, the study addresses three research questions: (1) How are religious moderation values internalized through the *Barazanji* tradition at MTs Irsyadul Salam? (2) What stages and mechanisms characterize this internalization? and (3) Which specific moderation values are cultivated, and how do they manifest in student behavior?

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case study design. This design was selected to develop an in-depth understanding of the abstract and complex phenomenon of internalizing religious moderation values, and to permit intensive exploration of the interactions among educators, students, and the *Barazanji* tradition within the specific context of MTs Irsyadul Salam, Cekreware, Bone. The researcher served as the key instrument, remaining present in the field to conduct participatory observation, take part in the madrasah's devotional activities, and build rapport with informants to obtain authentic and naturalistic data.

The research was conducted at MTs Irsyadul Salam in Bone Regency, South Sulawesi. Informants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure that the data obtained were directly relevant to the focus of the study. Participants were chosen since their roles and capacities, comprising the madrasah principal as the authority on curricular policy, the Islamic education teacher and the religious extracurricular facilitator as agents of value transformation, and students actively engaged in *Barazanji* recitation. In addition, local religious and cultural figures from the Kajua region were consulted to enable a comprehensive analysis of the *Barazanji* philosophy from a local-wisdom perspective.

Data were classified into two categories. Primary data derived from in-depth interviews and field notes compiled during direct observation of the internalization of moderation values in *Barazanji* activities. Secondary data were gathered through documentary study, including school profiles, the madrasah curriculum, activity photographs, and literature relevant to the *Barazanji* text and the concept of religious moderation. Integrating these two sources provided a comprehensive account of how moderation values are enacted within the religious-cultural framework of the madrasah.

To obtain rich and valid data, the study combined three instruments. Participatory observation was used to witness the practice of *Barazanji* recitation, the accompanying social interactions, and the manifestation of moderation values in student behavior within the madrasah environment. This was complemented by in-depth, semi-structured interviews exploring informants' perceptions of the moderation values embedded in the *Barazanji* verses, and by documentation techniques that captured written and visual evidence of how local wisdom is integrated into the institution's vision, mission, and educational programs.

Data analysis proceeded iteratively, following the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana model of three interrelated stages. The first stage, data condensation, involved summarizing and selecting raw data with attention to the core moderation values of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawasut* (the middle path), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (uprightness). In the second stage, the condensed data were displayed as descriptive narratives and a relational matrix to map patterns of value internalization clearly. The final stage entailed drawing and verifying conclusions grounded in the consistency of field evidence.

To safeguard objectivity and credibility, the researchers applied several verification strategies. Source triangulation compared information across teachers, students, and

religious leaders, while technique triangulation checked the consistency between interview accounts and observational evidence. Prolonged engagement at the research site was also undertaken to build emotional proximity and to ensure that the data faithfully reflected the participants' consistent and naturalistic behavior.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The analysis indicates that the internalization of religious moderation values at MTs Irsyadul Salam did not occur solely through formal classroom instruction, but through a cultural ecosystem built upon the local wisdom of *Barazanji*. The field data organizes this process into three principal findings, presented below.

Value Transformation: Internalization through Aesthetic Literacy of the Barazanji Text

Observation revealed that every Friday morning and on Islamic holidays, students gather to recite verses from the Book of *Barazanji*. This was not merely a vocal exercise; it represented a deliberate effort by the madrasah to introduce the Prophet Muhammad as the central exemplar of moderation. As the Islamic education teacher and religious instructor (Mr. AH) explained:

"We do not simply have the students read; we explain the substance of the verses. When we reach the passage on the Prophet's gentleness toward the people of Ta'if despite being wronged, we draw out the message that religious moderation means not answering violence with violence. Barazanji is the gateway through which students first come to love the Prophet, and then to emulate his moderate character."

The observations confirmed that students engaged enthusiastically with the alternating, melodic flow of recitation. The resulting harmony of sound generated an affective atmosphere that facilitated the reception of the peaceful messages encoded in the text, signaling the cognitive entry point of the internalization process.

Value Transaction: Collective Practice as a Space for Cultivating Tolerance

A salient finding concerns how group recitation nurtures *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *tawazun* (balance) among students. Recitation was performed alternately within each row, with vocally stronger students supporting those still learning, thereby producing an inclusive atmosphere. An eighth-grade student (RF) reflected:

"I used to think that being devout meant being rigid. But in this Barazanji practice we are taught to listen to one another's voices; no one is allowed to dominate. We learn to value different tones while still sounding as one. For me it is like learning to accept differences in society later in life."

Observational data further noted the absence of social or academic hierarchies during the procession: all students sat cross-legged at the same level. This embodied the value of *i'tidal* (uprightness and fairness), through which students experienced that, before God and tradition, every individual occupies an equal standing.

Trans-internalization: Moderate Behavior in Everyday Madrasah Life

The final stage of internalization manifested as behavioral change. Observation documented a reduction in inter-student conflict and an increase in courteous conduct—locally articulated as *siri' na pacce*—integrated with religious values. The civility (*adab*) upheld within *Barazanji* was visibly carried over into daily interaction. The principal observed:

“The clearest outcome is the students’ attitude toward differences of opinion. Because they are accustomed to the flexibility of the Barazanji ethos and to respecting tradition, they are far less inclined to condemn others for differing modes of worship. They become individuals who stand in the middle—neither at the extreme left nor the extreme right.”

Synthesizing the observational and interview data, Table 1 maps the patterns of value internalization identified in the study.

Table 1. Patterns of Moderation-Value Internalization Through the *Barazanji* Tradition

Moderation value	Manifestation in <i>Barazanji</i>	Impact on student behavior
<i>Tawasut</i> (the middle path)	Balance between the Arabic text and the local Bugis dialect.	Students integrate religious observance with cultural identity.
<i>Tasamuh</i> (tolerance)	Collective recitation that honors vocal diversity.	Reduced judgmental attitudes toward differing opinions in class.
I'tidal (uprightness/fairness)	Equitable distribution of roles within the ritual.	Growth in empathy and social solidarity among students.
<i>Tawazun</i> (balance)	Integration of emotion (art) and cognition (textual understanding).	More stable emotional regulation when facing sensitive issues.

Taken together, these findings indicate that *Barazanji* functions as a form of cultural pedagogy. Whereas religious moderation is often framed as a top-down governmental project, at MTs Irsyadul Salam it is experienced as a lived, spiritual reality. The efficacy of this internalization rests on the mechanisms of repetition and feeling that are intrinsic to the aesthetic practice of *Barazanji*.



Figure 1. The *Barazanji* learning process at MTs Irsyadul Salam

Discussion

The results suggest that internalizing religious moderation through *Barazanji* at MTs Irsyadul Salam constitutes an effective form of religious ethno-pedagogy. The discussion below interprets these findings through three lenses: the dialectic of religion and culture, theories of value internalization, and a comparison with prior research.

***Barazanji* as a Medium for “Living Moderation”**

The finding that students undergo value transformation through the *Barazanji* verses supports the proposition that religious moderation is ineffective when taught as static dogma. At this madrasah, moderation becomes “living moderation.” This resonates with Abdurrahman Wahid’s (Gus Dur) account of the indigenization of Islam, in which universal Islamic values such as justice and tolerance are interwoven with local cultural instruments without forfeiting their religious substance (Muhiddin, 2020; Nurhidin et al., 2022; Subekti, 2025).

The practice of *Barazanji* demonstrates that local wisdom operates as a vehicle facilitating the psychological acceptance of moderate values. Theoretically, this is consonant with Vygotsky’s social constructivism, which holds that learning is optimized through social and cultural interaction (Alkhudiry, 2022; Palincsar, 2021; Taber, 2025). Students do not acquire moderation from dictionary definitions but from the harmony of voices and the shared experience of narrating the Prophet’s life.

Internalization Mechanisms across the Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Domains

The internalization mechanism observed here operates through three systematic stages—transformation, transaction, and trans-internalization—that together extend Krathwohl’s taxonomy of the affective domain by simultaneously engaging the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor faculties. The transformation stage targets cognition through the introduction and comprehension of the *Barazanji* text; the transaction stage cultivates affective attachment through collective practice, generating joy and a sense of belonging; and the trans-internalization stage, sustained by continuous habituation, allows moderation values to settle into the psychomotor domain until they become stable dispositions (characterization) in everyday conduct.

The novelty of the present study lies in showing how the aesthetic instruments of *Barazanji* accelerates this trans-internalization. Unlike conventional, one-directional classroom learning, *Barazanji* enlists both physical and emotional engagement, enabling values such as *tasamuh* and *tawazun* to be encoded more durably in students’ long-term memory.

Integrating Moderation Values: *Tawasut*, *Tasamuh*, and I’tidal

The *tawasut* (middle-path) value evident in this study appears in students’ capacity to position themselves as deeply devout while remaining appreciative of Bugis culture—an antithesis to the extreme puritanism that dismisses local culture as deviant. The *tasamuh* (tolerance) observed in collaborative recitation aligns with the principles of

cooperative learning (Yang, 2023; Zhou & Colomer, 2024) yet acquires an additional spiritual dimension: tolerance is not merely an academic requirement but a form of respect for the collective blessing believed to inherit in the recitation.

Comparison with Prior Research

In contrast to research that has examined moderation through the formal curriculum or within student organizations that tends to treat moderation as a state-driven product, the findings at MTs Irsyadul Salam indicate that moderation can be a culture-driven product. The study confirms that *Barazanji* local wisdom is not a decorative wrapper but a hidden curriculum that more effectively shapes a moderate disposition. Local culture, on this account, is not an obstacle to religious modernization but an accelerator that grounds moderation values and renders them resilient against radical transnational ideologies.

Pedagogical Implications

Pedagogically, the success of MTs Irsyadul Salam in integrating *Barazanji* underscores the need for madrasahs to revitalize local cultural assets within the learning process. This responds directly to the demands of Indonesia's Merdeka (Independent) Curriculum, which foregrounds the Project for Strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile and the Rahmatan lil Alamin Student Profile (P5-PPRA). Local traditions such as *Barazanji* can serve as a key instrument for realizing a learner profile that is devout, virtuous, and globally minded.

Limitations

Several limitations qualify these findings. As a single-case study conducted at one madrasah within the As'adiyah network, the results are analytically rather than statistically generalizable, and their transferability to more heterogeneous settings require further testing. The reliance on observation and self-reported accounts also leaves open the possibility of social desirability effects, which future work might mitigate through longitudinal designs and behavioral measures.

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious moderation values at MTs Irsyadul Salam are internalized systematically through the stages of transformation, transaction, and trans-internalization, by which comprehension of the *Barazanji* text is converted into concrete character. The tradition proves effective in cultivating the pillars of *tawasut* (the middle path), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (uprightness), and *tawazun* (balance), positioning local wisdom as a hidden curriculum endowed with strong aesthetic and emotional appeal. This ethno-religious approach not only strengthens an inclusive Islamic identity but also functions as a strategic instrument for protecting students from radicalism by reinforcing contextually grounded ethical values.

As practical steps, madrasahs and educators are encouraged to revitalize the *Barazanji* tradition by developing philosophical learning modules and adopting

culturally responsive teaching strategies that deepen students' cognitive understanding. At the policy level, this local-wisdom-based model merits consideration as a reference for implementing P5-PPRA in ways that honor grassroots traditions. Future researchers are invited to extend the inquiry to more heterogeneous environments in order to test the efficacy of local traditions in building social cohesion across broader and more diverse contexts.

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