

Strategies for Internalizing *Wasathiyyah* Islamic Values in Shaping Students' Prosocial Behavior: A Phenomenological Study at Madrasah Tsanawiyah

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Wasathiyyah Islam, Internalization of Values, Prosocial Behavior, Religious Moderation, Islamic Education

Received : 20, June

Revised : 12, July

Accepted: 22, August

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ABSTRACT

The growing diversity of students in Islamic educational institutions highlights the need for strategies that promote both religious moderation and prosocial behavior. This study examines how Wasathiyyah Islamic values are internalized to foster prosocial traits among students at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah in Kudus and identifies key factors influencing this process. Employing a qualitative, phenomenological approach, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis with the principal, teachers, and students. Findings show that integrating values-based learning, teacher modeling, institutional regulations, madrasah culture, and character programs supports discipline, tolerance, empathy, social concern, cooperation, responsibility, and deliberative habits. Students' intrinsic motivation, committed teachers, family support, and institutional culture facilitate internalization, while the broader social environment and digital media create challenges. Fostering prosocial behavior in Islamic education, therefore, requires a synergistic approach across all elements of the madrasah ecosystem to achieve effective and sustained value internalization.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's religious, cultural, and social diversity necessitates an education system that emphasizes both character development and academic achievement to foster social harmony (Arizona et al., 2025; Sukodoyo et al., 2025; Taufikin et al., 2025). Such education instills values including tolerance, respect for diversity, justice, and social responsibility, which are critical for peaceful coexistence (Banks & Banks, 2019). The importance of these values intensifies in the digital age, as unfiltered information may increase intolerance and polarization among youth (Hanafie et al., 2026; Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Madrasahs play a critical role in Islamic education by balancing knowledge acquisition and the development of moderate religious character. Wasathiyah values, justice, balance, tolerance, consultation, and the common good are central, laying the foundation for harmonious social relationships in Indonesia's pluralistic society (Al-Qaradhwani, 2022; Mohammad H. Kamali, 2012; Kementerian Agama RI, 2022).

Internalizing Wasathiyah values in education extends beyond curriculum to include teachers' example, institutional culture, habitual practice, rules, and student interactions (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019; Lickona, 2009, 2013). This multi-faceted process shapes not just students' cognition but also their attitudes and behaviors.

Developing prosocial behavior, including empathy, helping, cooperation, and social responsibility, is a primary outcome of value internalization (Batson, 2010; Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). High prosocial behavior indicates successful moral action, while its absence contributes to conflict and social problems (OECD, 2021).

Current research shows that efforts in religious moderation support tolerance, student character, and an inclusive school culture (Ainissyifa & Nasrulloh, 2025; Kosim et al., 2024). Leadership, teacher competence, and institutional culture are important for success (Shofwani et al., 2026; Sutrisno, 2019). However, most studies focus on curriculum or conceptual frameworks, leaving a gap in understanding how integrated strategies within the madrasah ecosystem shape prosocial behavior at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level.

This study addresses the gap by examining how classroom learning, teacher role modeling, school culture, rules, extracurriculars, and habit-forming programs combine to shape prosocial behavior. This holistic approach clarifies how moderate character is built in madrasahs.

MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus provides a diverse student environment for investigating how Wasathiyah values are internalized. These processes shape prosocial behavior through learning, exemplary behavior, institutional culture, regulations, and school programs. This context provides empirical insights into value internalization in an Islamic school setting. Prosocial behavior emerges from the systemic internalization of Wasathiyah values through the integration of learning, exemplary behavior, culture, regulations, and programs. The research analyzes strategies, supporting and hindering factors, and the contribution of these processes to character education based on religious moderation at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Theory of Wasathiyyah in Islam as a Paradigm for Islamic Education

The concept of *Wasathiyyah* is one of the fundamental principles in Islam, rooted in The concept of *Wasathiyyah* is one of the fundamental principles in Islam, rooted in the words of Allah SWT in Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143, which affirms the position of Muslims as *ummatan wasatan*, a community capable of serving as a role model through fairness, balance, and moderation (Arif, 2020).

Etymologically, the word *wasath* means middle, the best, justice, and proportionality. In this study, 'Wasathiyyah' refers specifically to the Islamic principle of moderation, which guides a Muslim to avoid extremes in behavior and belief, seeking a middle path based on justice and balance in every aspect of life (Hanapi et al., 2019). This concept characterizes the ideal Muslim's conduct both personally and socially.

According to Kamali (2017), *Wasathiyyah* balances individual interests with societal needs and the material and spiritual aspects of life. In this context, moderation means the ability to address issues proportionately and justly, not the compromising of religious principles. Al-Qaradawi (2022) notes that *Wasathiyyah* is central to Indonesia's religious moderation policies, encompassing the respect for diversity, nonviolence, and appreciation of local culture within Islamic teachings (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

Therefore, Islamic education is tasked with instilling *Wasathiyyah* values from an early age, enabling students to develop inclusive religious identities and social awareness. National paradigm that builds students' character through six core values: justice (*al-'adl*), balance (*al-tawāzun*), tolerance (*al-tasāmuḥ*), consultation (*al-syūrā*), brotherhood (*al-ukhuwwah*), and social responsibility (*al-mas'ūliyyah al-ijtimā'iyah*) (Pajarianto et al., 2022; Setiawan et al., 2026). These six values serve as the conceptual foundation for analyzing strategies for the internalization of values within the madrasah environment.

Value Internalization in Islamic Education

The internalization of values is an educational process in which external values, such as justice, tolerance, and social responsibility, become part of an individual's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Lickona (2009, 2013) explains that effective character education does not stop at the acquisition of moral knowledge (*moral knowing*), but must progress toward the formation of *moral feelings* (*moral feeling*) and concrete behavior (*moral action*). Thus, successful character education is indicated by students' ability to apply these internalized moral values in their daily lives.

Internalization of values occurs through three stages: value transformation, value transaction, and value internalization (Lickona, 2013). Value transformation is the process of conveying values through formal learning. The next stage is value transaction, which involves active interaction between teachers and students in understanding and internalizing the meaning of those values. The final stage is transinternalization, in which values become part of students' personalities and are manifested in their daily behavior.

The process of internalizing values is influenced by various factors. Many factors shape the process of value internalization in education. These include teachers' exemplary behavior, school culture, principal's leadership, habit formation, family environment, and student social interactions (Fullan, 2016; Lickona, 2013). The internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values is not just a classroom process but part of *a continuously developed institutional culture*.

Prosocial behavior refers to voluntary actions aimed at benefiting other individuals or groups without prioritizing personal interests (Batson, 2010). Examples of such behavior include helping, sharing, cooperating, showing empathy, respecting others, and participating in social activities that benefit the community (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004).

From a developmental psychology perspective, Eisenberg et al. (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004) explain that prosocial behavior develops through socialization processes involving the family, school, and social environment. Schools play a crucial role because they provide learning experiences that enable students to develop empathy, cooperation, peaceful conflict resolution, and social responsibility.

Prosocial values are closely linked to the principles of Wasathiyyah Islam. The concepts of *ta'āwun* (mutual aid), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), *ihsān* (doing good), and *tasāmuḥ* (tolerance) serve as the normative foundation for the development of prosocial behavior in Islamic education. Thus, the more effective the process of internalizing Wasathiyyah values is, the greater the likelihood that prosocial behavior will develop among students.

Previous Research

Various studies show that implementing religious moderation positively strengthens students' character. Syabuddin (2026) and Muis (2026) explain that education in religious moderation can foster attitudes of tolerance, openness, and appreciation for diversity in Islamic educational settings. Similar findings were reported by Sutrisno et al. (2019), who showed that a school culture that supports religious moderation leads to increased inclusive and harmonious social interactions.

Other research confirms that the success of value internalization is greatly influenced by teachers' exemplary behavior and school culture. Lickona (Lickona, 2013) states that students' character develops optimally when moral values are not only taught but also consistently practiced by the entire school community. Fullan (Fullan, 2016) reinforces this finding by explaining that changes in school culture are a key factor in shaping students' character and social behavior.

On the other hand, research on prosocial behavior shows that a collaborative learning environment can enhance empathy, social concern, and cooperation among students (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004). However, Batson (2010) emphasizes that prosocial behavior is influenced not only by formal education but also by social experiences, the family environment, and an individual's interactions with society. These findings indicate that the

development of prosocial behavior is a multidimensional process involving various factors beyond classroom learning.

Although research on religious moderation and character education has developed quite rapidly, most studies still focus on curriculum implementation, Islamic Religious Education instruction, or normative studies of the concept of Wasathiyyah. Research that integrates learning, teacher role modeling, madrasah culture, institutional regulations, and habit-forming programs as a unified strategy for internalizing values to shape students' prosocial behavior—particularly at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah level—remains relatively limited. This gap highlights the need for research that views value internalization as a holistic educational ecosystem.

Research Gap and Novelty

Based on theoretical analysis and previous research, there are three main gaps. First, previous studies have largely viewed Wasathiyyah as a subject of study or a policy of religious moderation, while the mechanisms for internalizing these values in the daily life of madrasahs have not been extensively examined. Second, studies on prosocial behavior are generally developed from an educational psychology perspective without comprehensively linking them to the Islamic Wasathiyyah paradigm. Third, there is still little research explaining the relationship between learning, teacher role modeling, madrasah culture, institutional regulations, and habit-forming programs as a single system that shapes students' social character.

Therefore, this study offers conceptual novelty in the form of the Wasathiyyah Islamic Values Internalization Ecosystem Model—a perspective that explains that students' prosocial behavior is the result of the integration of five main components: (1) classroom learning, (2) teachers' exemplary behavior, (3) madrasah culture, (4) institutional regulations, and (5) habit-forming programs. This model expands upon previous studies—which tended to focus on curricular aspects—by adopting an approach that positions Wasathiyyah as an institutional culture that continuously shapes students' character.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study illustrates that the values of Wasathiyyah Islam serve as a normative foundation, internalized through five main strategies: integration of learning, teacher role modeling, madrasah culture, institutional regulations, and habit-forming programs. These five strategies form a Wasathiyyah educational ecosystem that subsequently fosters the development of students' prosocial behavior, characterized by increased discipline, tolerance, social concern, cooperation, justice, politeness, and the ability to engage in deliberation. This framework serves as the basis for an analysis explaining how the process of value internalization takes place systematically within the environment of MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus and results in the formation of students' social character.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative (Creswell & Creswell, 2022), phenomenological design to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of internalizing Wasathiyyah Islamic values in shaping students' prosocial behavior at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus (Alsaigh & Coyne, 2021; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows the researcher to uncover the experiences, meanings, and practices of the madrasah community as they implement Wasathiyyah values in their daily lives. The study was conducted at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus, Central Java, which was selected through purposive sampling because this madrasah has a heterogeneous student body and consistently integrates Wasathiyyah Islamic values into both academic and non-academic activities.

Research informants were selected using purposive sampling, specifically, individuals directly involved in the process of internalizing values at the madrasah (Campbell et al., 2020). The informants consisted of the madrasah principal, the vice principal for curriculum, the vice principal for student affairs, Islamic Religious Education teachers, guidance and counseling teachers, subject teachers, and students actively participating in various character-building programs. Informants were selected until data saturation was reached, at which point the information obtained was deemed to adequately represent the phenomenon under study.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document review (Hurst, 2023; Knott et al., 2022; Morgan, 2022). Interviews were used to explore perceptions, experiences, and strategies employed in internalizing the values of Wasathiyyah Islam. Observations focused on the learning process, teacher-student interactions, the enforcement of school rules, religious activities, and various habit-forming programs related to fostering a moderate character. Documentation was used to supplement the data by analyzing the madrasah's vision and mission, school rules, school programs, teaching materials, activity reports, and other relevant documents.

Data validity was ensured through source, methodological, and temporal triangulation (Marlina et al., 2024). Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from various groups of informants. Methodological triangulation was achieved by confirming interview results through observation and documentation, while temporal triangulation was achieved by collecting data at different times to ensure consistency of information. In addition, the researcher conducted member checking with several key informants to confirm that the interpretation of the results aligned with their experiences.

Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of four stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. All interview data were transcribed, followed by an open coding process to identify initial themes. Related codes were then grouped into broader categories through axial coding and synthesized into main themes that explain the strategies for internalizing the values of Wasathiyyah Islam, the supporting and inhibiting

factors, and their implications for the formation of students' prosocial behavior. The analysis was conducted iteratively and reflectively until credible, consistent interpretations were obtained that aligned with the research objectives.

RESEARCH RESULT

Strategies for Internalizing Wasathiyyah Islamic Values in Shaping Students' Prosocial Behavior

The research findings indicate that the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah is carried out through an integrated strategy that extends beyond the classroom. Analysis of data from interviews, observations, and documentation reveals that the madrasah has established an educational ecosystem that integrates learning, teacher role modeling, institutional regulations, madrasah culture, and various school programs as a unified whole to shape students' prosocial behavior. This strategy enables Wasathiyyah values to be not only understood as religious concepts but also internalized as habits and character traits reflected in students' daily lives.

Internalization of Values through Learning

The interview results show that teachers integrate the values of Wasathiyyah Islam into the learning process through a *student-centered* approach. Lessons are designed to encourage students to actively discuss, collaborate, and learn to respect the various perspectives that emerge during the learning process. Teachers not only present religious material conceptually but also relate it to the various social issues' students face.

A teacher of Islamic Religious Education explained:

"We rely more on group discussions so that students get used to expressing their opinions politely while also learning to respect their peers' views. The principle of Wasathiyyah is not only explained but also put into practice throughout the learning process."

Observations show that during discussions, the teacher gives all students equal opportunities to share their ideas, while differences of opinion are resolved through dialogue and deliberation. The teacher also guides students to use polite language and avoid blaming one another. These practices foster a democratic learning environment and cultivate tolerance, cooperation, and respect for diversity.

In addition, teachers apply affective assessment as part of the learning evaluation. The aspects assessed include not only academic ability but also discipline, responsibility, concern for peers, collaboration, and courtesy in communication. Thus, the learning process becomes the primary means of developing a moderate character in line with the values of Islamic Wasathiyyah.

Teachers as Role Models in the Internalization of Values

The research findings indicate that teachers' exemplary behavior is the most dominant strategy in the process of internalizing values. All informants emphasized that students find it easier to imitate teachers' behavior than to simply accept theoretical explanations in the classroom.

The principal of the madrasah stated:

Teachers must be the first to set an example of tolerance, discipline, honesty, and respect for others. Children learn from what they see every day."

The observations show that teachers consistently demonstrate behaviors that reflect the values of Wasathiyyah, such as arriving on time, speaking politely, respecting all students regardless of their social background, and resolving conflicts through dialogue. Teachers also provide guidance to students who are having difficulty adapting or who exhibit behavior that is inconsistent with the values of Islamic Wasathiyyah. This approach positions teachers not only as instructors but also as mentors, motivators, and role models in shaping students' character.

Madrasah Regulations and Culture as a Medium for Habit Formation

An analysis of the documents shows that the madrasah's vision, mission, code of conduct, and various regulations explicitly aim to shape students who possess noble character, are disciplined, and respect diversity. These regulations are reinforced by the madrasah's culture, which is consistently fostered through daily routines.

Observation results show that students are accustomed to shaking hands with teachers upon arrival at school, greeting others, waiting in line in an orderly manner, keeping the environment clean, and respecting teachers and peers. These habits occur naturally and are an integral part of madrasah life.

One student explained:

"We're used to greeting our teachers and shaking their hands every morning. If we have a disagreement with a classmate, we usually resolve it through discussion."

These findings indicate that formal regulations and madrasah culture complement each other in shaping prosocial behavior. Rules provide standards of behavior, while habitual practice allows these values to develop into character traits ingrained in students.

The Madrasah Program as a Means of Strengthening the Internalization of Values

Research also shows that various madrasah programs serve as important tools for strengthening the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values. These programs include implementing government programs focused on the common good, the democratic election of Student Council officers, extracurricular activities such as public speaking and *serving as master of ceremonies*, and guidance through spontaneous interventions when teachers observe student behavior that requires support.

A student council advisor explained:

"The election of the OSIS executive board provides an opportunity for students to learn honesty, accept differences in opinion, engage in deliberation, and take responsibility for collective decisions."

Observations show that each program provides students with hands-on experiences to put into practice the values of responsibility, leadership, cooperation, tolerance, and care for others. Thus, the internalization of these values occurs not only through formal learning but also through the social experiences' students gain in various madrasah activities.

This first finding indicates that the strategy for internalizing Wasathiyyah Islamic values at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah is built through five main, mutually integrated strategies, namely (1) the integration of values into learning, (2) teachers serving as role models, (3) strengthening institutional regulations, (4)

shaping the madrasah culture through habitual practices, and (5) implementing various school programs that provide students with social experiences. The integration of these five strategies forms an ecosystem for the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values that systematically fosters prosocial behavior, such as increased discipline, tolerance, social concern, the ability to collaborate, respect for differences, and the habit of resolving problems through deliberation. These findings indicate that fostering prosocial behavior is not determined by a single strategy but by the synergy of all educational components that consistently internalize the values of Wasathiyyah Islam within madrasah life.

Factors Supporting and Hindering the Internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic Values in Shaping Students' Prosocial Behavior

The research findings indicate that the success of internalizing Wasathiyyah Islamic values at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah is influenced by the interaction between various internal and external factors. Analysis of data from interviews, observations, and documentation indicates that the development of prosocial behavior is determined not only by the madrasah's educational strategies but also by students' readiness, support from the educational environment, family involvement, and the influence of the social environment outside the school. On the other hand, the study also identified several factors that could potentially hinder the process of value internalization, particularly the influence of the social environment and digital media, which are not always aligned with the values of Wasathiyyah Islam.

Students' Intrinsic Motivation as the Foundation for Character Development

Interview results indicate that students' intrinsic motivation is the primary factor determining the success of value internalization. Teachers observed that self-motivated students are more receptive to guidance and better able to implement Wasathiyyah values in their daily lives than students who merely follow rules under supervision.

One teacher explained:

"The success of character education depends heavily on the students' own willingness. Teachers can guide them, but real change occurs when students have the awareness to become better people."

The results of the observations show that students who actively participate in learning activities, organizations, and religious programs demonstrate greater development in discipline, concern for peers, collaboration, and social responsibility. These findings indicate that intrinsic motivation serves as the foundation that strengthens the effectiveness of all value-internalization strategies implemented by the madrasah.

Support from Family and the Educational Environment

In addition to student motivation, the study found that family support significantly contributes to the successful development of prosocial behavior. Teachers noted that the values taught at the madrasah are more likely to take root when reinforced by parents through consistent parenting practices within the family environment.

A homeroom teacher said:

"If parents set a good example at home, children's character development at school usually progresses more quickly. Conversely, if the habits at home are different, it takes teachers longer to guide them."

The observations show that communication between the madrasah and parents occurs regularly to discuss students' academic progress and behavior. This collaboration helps ensure continuity in character education between the school and the family.

Research also shows that the support of the madrasah principal is a key factor in the successful implementation of the values internalization program. The principal grants teachers the flexibility to develop various character-building programs, provides policy support, and ensures that all activities align with the madrasah's vision and mission. These conditions create an organizational climate that supports the sustainable implementation of values-based education.

Madrasah Culture and School Programs as Reinforcing Factors

The research findings show that the madrasah culture and various school programs serve as supporting factors that strengthen the process of internalizing the values of Wasathiyyah Islam. Habits such as shaking hands with teachers, greeting others, maintaining a clean environment, praying in congregation, participating in student organization activities, celebrating Islamic holidays, and engaging in various social activities provide students with opportunities to put into practice the values they learn in the classroom.

A teacher who advises a student organization explained:

"The school program provides students with hands-on experiences to learn how to work together, respect others' opinions, take responsibility, and care for the environment. Experiences like these are more effective in shaping character than classroom lectures alone."

Documentation of madrasah activities shows that nearly all school programs are designed not only to develop academic skills, but also to foster leadership, responsibility, tolerance, and social awareness. These findings demonstrate that the institutional culture and school activities serve as reinforcing mechanisms that ensure the consistent internalization of values in students' daily lives.

Integration of Wasathiyyah Values into School Subjects

An analysis of instructional materials reveals that the Islamic value of Wasathiyyah is not only taught in the Islamic Religious Education course but is also integrated into various other subjects related to character development, such as Pancasila and Civic Education, Social Studies, and co-curricular activities. This integration allows students to reinforce these values repeatedly through various learning contexts, ensuring a more consistent process of internalization.

The teacher explained that a cross-curricular approach helps students understand that the values of tolerance, justice, responsibility, and social concern are not merely religious teachings, but are also an integral part of life in society and as a nation.

The Influence of the Social Environment as a Barrier

Although various strategies have been systematically implemented, research has found that the social environment outside the madrasah remains a major obstacle. Teachers noted that not all of the students' home environments provide role models consistent with the values of Wasathiyyah Islam. Differences in social interactions, community customs, and peer influence sometimes make it difficult for students to maintain the positive behavior they have developed at the madrasah.

One teacher stated:

"At school, they are accustomed to respecting one another, but when they return to a less supportive environment, some students begin to be influenced by different habits."

Observations show that these behavioral changes generally occur after students interact in social environments outside of school that do not reinforce tolerance and social responsibility.

The Influence of Social Media and Digital Technology

The study also identified social media as an increasingly complex challenge in the process of internalizing values. Teachers noted that students have broad access to a variety of information through digital media, but not all of them can critically evaluate content. As a result, students are potentially exposed to information containing hate speech, intolerant behavior, or disrespectful communication patterns.

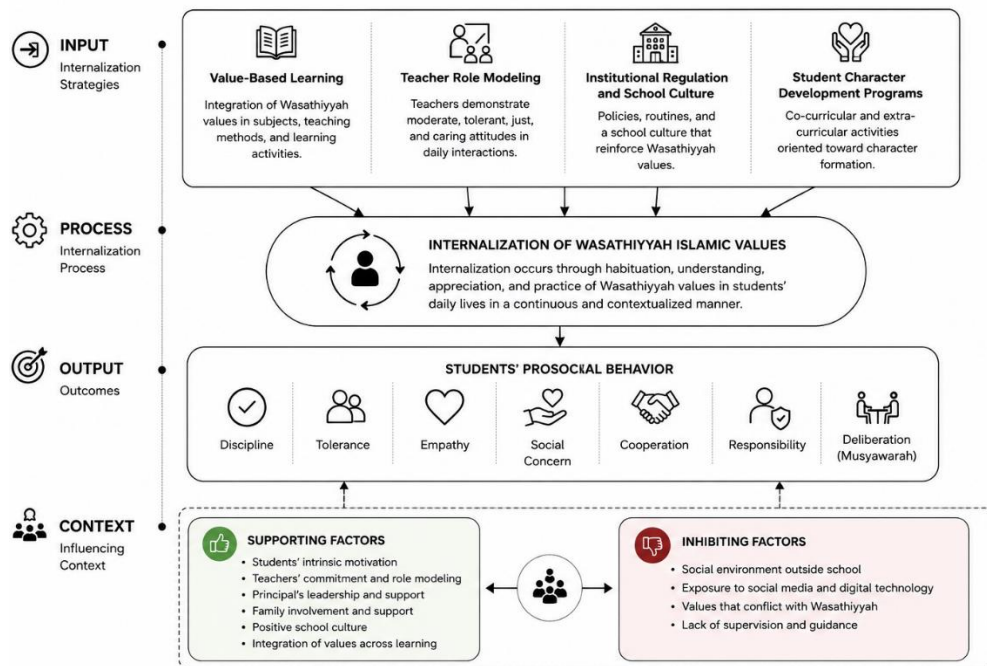
One teacher explained:

"Kids today are very immersed in social media. The challenge is how they can choose good information and not easily follow content that contradicts the values taught at the madrasah."

Observational findings indicate that madrasahs are working to address this situation through guidance, digital literacy, and character education. However, limited supervision outside the school environment means that the influence of digital media remains a challenge that requires the active involvement of families and the community.

The second set of findings indicates that the successful internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values is influenced by the synergy among individual, institutional, family, and social environmental factors. Key supporting factors include students' intrinsic motivation, family support, the commitment of the madrasah principal, teachers serving as role models, the madrasah culture, the integration of values into the learning process, and various school programs that provide direct social experiences. Conversely, the influence of the social environment outside of school and exposure to social media act as inhibiting factors that can weaken the internalization process if not balanced by continuous character education. These findings confirm that the development of prosocial behavior through the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values is a multidimensional process that requires collaboration among madrasahs, families, and the community to ensure the instilled values are consistently embedded in students' lives.

Figure 1. Strategy for Internalizing Wasathiyyan Islamic Education Values and its Influences on Student's Prosocial Behaviour at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah Kudus



DISCUSSION

The internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values in shaping students' prosocial behavior does not occur through a single learning strategy, but rather through an educational ecosystem that integrates classroom learning, teachers' exemplary behavior, institutional regulations, madrasah culture, and various character-building programs. This finding expands our understanding of the implementation of Wasathiyyah in Islamic education. While previous studies have largely framed Wasathiyyah as a subject matter or a policy of religious moderation Syabuddin (2026) and Muis (2026) Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019), this study demonstrates that the success of value internalization is actually determined by the consistency of all madrasah components in fostering a learning environment that supports character development.

The first finding shows that integrating Wasathiyyah Islamic values into the learning process serves as the primary foundation for shaping students' prosocial behavior. Teachers not only convey the concept of religious moderation as knowledge but also integrate it into discussion methods, collaborative learning, problem-solving, and affective assessment. This approach enables students to engage in a participatory learning process, directly practicing the values of tolerance, justice, deliberation, and respect for differences as they learn. These findings support the character education theory proposed by Lickona (Lickona, 2013), which holds that effective character development must integrate the dimensions of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action rather than resting solely on mastery of cognitive aspects. Thus, learning becomes a medium for transforming values rather than merely the transfer of knowledge.

The research findings also reinforce the concept of value internalization in Islamic education developed by Hanafie (2026). According to him, the internalization process occurs through three stages: value transformation, value

transaction, and value internalization. The research findings indicate that these three stages occur simultaneously at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah. Teachers transform values through instruction, foster educational interactions through dialogue and reflection, and then reinforce them through habitual practice, so that the values of Wasathiyyah Islam develop into prosocial behaviors reflected in students' daily lives.

The second finding indicates that teachers' exemplary behavior is the most dominant factor in the successful internalization of values. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as educators, mentors, motivators, and role models who consistently demonstrate behavior consistent with the values of Wasathiyyah Islam. This finding reinforces Bandura's (Bandura, 1977) Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that individuals learn behavior primarily through observing and imitating models they perceive as authoritative. In this study, teachers serve as primary *role models* who shape students' behavior through daily interactions. These findings are also consistent with Lickona (Lickona, 2013), who identifies teachers' exemplary behavior as the most important element in character education because students find it easier to imitate actual behavior than to accept verbal advice.

In addition to teachers' roles, this study found that madrasah culture and institutional regulations play a very significant role in strengthening the process of value internalization. The vision, mission, rules and regulations, as well as various practices such as shaking hands with teachers, greeting others, waiting in line, maintaining cleanliness, and resolving conflicts through deliberation, create a social environment that enables students to repeatedly practice Wasathiyyah values. These findings support Fullan's (Fullan, 2016) theory of educational organizational culture, which posits that changes in students' character cannot be achieved solely through instructional innovation but require an institutional culture that consistently supports behavioral change. In other words, character develops because students live in an environment that continuously reinforces the same values.

Madrasah programs have also proven to serve as a medium for *experiential learning*. Activities such as the election of Student Council officers, speech clubs, student organizations, and various social activities provide students with opportunities to practice leadership, responsibility, respectful communication, and appreciation for diversity. These findings reinforce Kolb's (Hughes et al., 2025; Kolb, 1984) theory of Experiential Learning, which states that learning becomes more meaningful when students gain direct experience in applying the knowledge and values they have learned. Therefore, the values of Wasathiyyah do not remain merely normative concepts but develop into social competencies that can be observed in students' behavior.

This study also shows that the development of prosocial behavior is a key outcome of internalizing the values of Wasathiyyah Islam. Such behavior is manifested through increased discipline, concern for peers, the ability to cooperate, respect for differences, social responsibility, and the habit of resolving conflicts through dialogue. These findings are consistent with the study by Eisenberg et al. (Eisenberg & Spinrad, 2004), which explains that prosocial

behavior develops through a consistent process of socialization within the family, school, and social environment. Batson (Batson, 2010) also emphasizes that prosocial behavior is influenced by the development of empathy and concern for others. In this study, empathy is not formed solely through moral lectures but through repeated social experiences across all madrasah activities.

The findings regarding supporting and inhibiting factors provide insight into how the success of value internalization is influenced by multidimensional factors. Students' intrinsic motivation, support from the madrasah principal, family involvement, school culture, and the integration of values into learning have been shown to strengthen the character-building process. Conversely, the social environment outside of school and exposure to social media pose major challenges because they do not entirely reinforce Wasathiyyah values. These findings support Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Systems Theory, which explains that individual development results from interactions among various environmental systems, ranging from the family, school and peer groups to the broader social environment (Falah et al., 2026). Thus, the success of character education cannot be attributed entirely to the school but requires ongoing collaboration between the madrasah, families, and the community.

Compared to previous studies, this research offers a distinct conceptual contribution. Most studies on religious moderation have focused on curriculum implementation, Islamic Religious Education instruction, or the strengthening of policies on religious moderation (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019; Muis, 2026; Syabuddin et al., 2026). This study demonstrates that the success of value internalization cannot be explained solely by the curriculum dimension but must be understood as the result of the interaction among all educational components that comprise the ecosystem of Wasathiyyah Islamic value internalization. This ecosystem consists of integrated learning, teacher role modeling, institutional regulations, madrasah culture, and character-building programs that mutually reinforce one another in shaping students' prosocial behavior.

Thus, this study expands the discourse on Wasathiyyah Islamic education from a normative to an implementational perspective, positioning the madrasah as an integrated educational system. These findings imply that strengthening religious moderation in educational institutions cannot be achieved merely by adding teaching materials; rather, it requires developing an institutional culture that enables students to experience, practice, and internalize the values of Wasathiyyah Islam on an ongoing basis. This model has the potential to serve as a conceptual framework for developing character education in madrasahs and other Islamic educational institutions, fostering a generation that is moderate, inclusive, and exhibits strong prosocial behavior.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study shows that the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values in shaping students' prosocial behavior at MTs NU Ibtidaul Falah is achieved through an integrated educational ecosystem rather than through religious instruction in isolation. The internalization strategy is developed through five complementary components: integrating Wasathiyyah values into the learning

process; teachers serving as role models and mentors; strengthening madrasah regulations and culture; implementing various character-building school programs; and consistent practice in daily life. The synergy among these components enables students not only to understand the concept of Wasathiyyah cognitively but also to internalize it into prosocial behavior reflected in attitudes of discipline, tolerance, social concern, responsibility, cooperation, and the ability to resolve differences through deliberation.

This study also found that the successful internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values is influenced by multidimensional factors. Students' intrinsic motivation, teachers' exemplary behavior, support from the madrasah principal, family involvement, a conducive school culture, and the integration of values into the learning process are the main factors that strengthen character-building. Conversely, the influence of the social environment outside of school and exposure to social media that is not aligned with Wasathiyyah values pose challenges that can hinder the internalization process if not balanced by strong collaboration between the madrasah, families, and the community. Thus, this study emphasizes that the development of prosocial behavior through Wasathiyyah Islamic education is a process that requires the sustained involvement of the entire educational ecosystem.

The findings of this study indicate that the successful internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values depends not only on classroom instruction but also on the synergy of the entire educational ecosystem. Therefore, madrasahs need to develop more integrated policies by strengthening the connections between the curriculum, teachers' exemplary behavior, madrasah culture, institutional regulations, and character-building programs. Strengthening teachers' competencies in implementing values-based learning and religious moderation must also be a priority to ensure consistent internalization across all academic and non-academic activities. In addition, closer collaboration between madrasahs, parents, and the community must continue to be enhanced to ensure that the values of Wasathiyyah Islam fostered within the school environment are sustainably reinforced in students' lives outside the madrasah.

Although this study provides a comprehensive overview of strategies for internalizing Wasathiyyah Islamic values within the context of a madrasah, the findings remain limited to a single research site and employ a phenomenological qualitative approach. Therefore, future research is recommended to test the ecosystem model of the internalization of Wasathiyyah Islamic values across various types of Islamic educational institutions, including madrasahs, pesantren, and integrated Islamic schools, with distinct social and cultural characteristics. Future research could also employ a mixed-methods approach or a quantitative design based on *structural equation modeling* (SEM) to empirically test the relationships among variables, thereby validating and expanding the conceptual model developed in this study into a broader framework for implementing character education grounded in Wasathiyyah Islam.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Based on the conclusions of this study, it is recommended that future researchers refine their research methodology. Given that this study was limited to one or two research sites (MTs) and employed a qualitative approach, future researchers are advised to conduct mixed-methods research or large-scale classroom action research (CAR) to quantitatively test the effectiveness of specific modules or strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We extend our sincere appreciation to the Rector of Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kudus for facilitating and supporting the implementation of this research. We also express our heartfelt thanks to the teachers and students who participated in and contributed to this study.

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