



Religious Moderation in Islamic Education as a Strategy for Strengthening the Character of Tolerance and Prevention of Violence

Ahmad Akbar Fauzi¹, Fadhilla Nangroe Anggraini², Ghifary Bimo Aryoseno³,
Muhammad Shobarin Syakur⁴

^{1,2}Master of Islamic Religious Education, Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta, Indonesia

³Psychology and Counseling Guidance, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi, Turkey

⁴Sociology and Anthropology, International Islamic University Malaysia, Malaysia

o100250019@student.ums.ac.id

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Islamic Education;
Religious Moderation;
Social Cohesion;
Tolerance.

Abstract: The increasing intolerance, radicalism and identity-based violence among Indonesian youth underscores the urgency of how higher commitment to Islam education on tolerance. This research reveals the moderation of religious thought in Islamic education as a strategy for peace and conflict prevention in a pluralistic society. This study, employing a qualitative and desk-based research design, scrutinizes academic papers, books, policy papers, and university reports that observe religious moderation as well as character education in Indonesia. The analysis of data applied was the content analysis technique, by categorizing and coding the key themes contained in relevant literature to find patterns [which] support religious moderation [in Islamic education]. The findings imply that wasatiyah internalization in the curriculum, teaching methods, school culture and digital literacy efforts are indicators of inclusive and resilient character towards non-violence. This research connects religious moderation with structural-functional theory, also social learning theory. It calls for policy support, better teacher preparation and more empirical research to facilitate better implementation in the future.

Kata Kunci:

Pendidikan Islam;
Kohesi Sosial;
Moderasi Agama;
Toleransi.

Abstrak: Meningkatnya intoleransi, radikalisme, dan kekerasan berbasis identitas di kalangan pemuda Indonesia menggarisbawahi urgensi komitmen yang lebih tinggi terhadap pendidikan Islam yang berfokus pada toleransi. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan moderasi pemikiran keagamaan dalam pendidikan Islam sebagai strategi perdamaian dan pencegahan konflik dalam masyarakat pluralistik. Studi ini, menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif dan berbasis pustaka, meneliti makalah akademis, buku, makalah kebijakan, dan laporan universitas yang mengamati moderasi keagamaan serta pendidikan karakter di Indonesia. Analisis data yang diterapkan adalah teknik analisis isi, dengan mengkategorikan dan mengkodekan tema-tema utama yang terdapat dalam literatur terkait untuk menemukan pola yang mendukung moderasi keagamaan dalam pendidikan Islam. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi wasatiyah dalam kurikulum, metode pengajaran, budaya sekolah, dan upaya literasi digital merupakan indikator karakter inklusif dan tangguh terhadap non-kekerasan. Penelitian ini menghubungkan moderasi keagamaan dengan teori struktural-fungsional, serta teori pembelajaran sosial. Hal ini menyerukan dukungan kebijakan, persiapan guru yang lebih baik, dan lebih banyak penelitian empiris untuk memfasilitasi implementasi yang lebih baik di masa mendatang.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a multicultural year with a very diverse religio-ethnic background (Badrun et al., 2024). Based on the 2024 national population statistics, the vast majority (more than 87%) of Indonesians are Muslim while a minority consists of Christians or Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Confucianists and people from other faiths spread out among 17,000 islands which stretch over scenes that are almost impossible to understand from one place in one's head (Wikipedia contributors, 2026). Such sociological structure reveals that social harmony is a basic condition for the stability of a nation's livelihood. But in recent months, the threat to harmony has grown (Firdaus & Suwendi, 2025). According to Setara Institute's (2024) data, there were 217 cases of violations on freedom of religion/belief throughout 2023–2024, with an alarming pattern indicating rising intolerance issues regarding identity in public sphere, which also takes place within educational setting (Yosafat, 2025). This is in line with the findings of Ministry of Religion and the Archipelago Islamic University (UNINUS) that shows intolerance among students is still high, where more than one third (40%) hold intolerant views towards different religious group or beliefs (Edi, 2024). This evidence also indicates that despite the presence of inclusivity in higher education institutions in Indonesia, forced or violent intolerance could still mostly be found among students themselves who are supposed to become actors of change (Syukurman et al., 2024; Widyawati, 2024).

Moreover, BNPT report (2024) mentions that adolescent and student are still the first target of distributing extreme ideology through digital media. The BNPT even proved that at least 112 children had been influenced by radicalism in online games, which is utilized as praxis of recruitment and the publicity for ideologies underhand "of course" through virtual communication features (Batampus, 2025). From this situation, it is clear that the anonymous and slightly supervised digital environment has become one of only several strategic areas for transmitting poisonous thoughts; hence juvenile patients are lying within an umbrella of minimal distance between them and extreme ideology. In the same year, ministry of culture and education, research and technology (2024) data showed over 3,800 instances where educational institutions across the 23/24 school year experienced various forms of violence or bullying including religiously motivated hate speech (KumparanNEWS, 2024). This shows that digital radicalism has moved beyond discourse into intolerant off-line actions even bordering on violence takes place on campuses (Isabella & Nofrima, 2024; Mølmen & Ravndal, 2023). This calls for systematic solutions, such as greater attention to online media literacy and carrying the message of religious moderation into higher education itself.

This condition shows the urgency of strengthening the character of tolerance and anti-violence through systematic education, especially in religious education. Islamic education, as a key pillar of character building, plays an important role in instilling the value of rahmatan lil 'alamin which includes peace, compassion, and respect for diversity (Hidayah et al., 2023). The spirit of wasathiyah (religious moderation) is enthusiastically required to inculcate inclusive values, to eliminate conflicts on identity basis, and make religion as an instrument for unity (Mulyanti & Muhajarah, 2025; Wahyu & Arif, 2024). Nevertheless, the exercise of religious moderation is still encountering difficulties among others normative-doctrinal learning, not yet integrating the values of tolerance in a curriculum, and has not found pedagogical models in strengthening character (Sya'bani, 2021). Thus, a profound investigation is imperative for the incorporation of religious moderation in Islamic education as an effort to solidify the character of tolerance and non-violence in the plurality society.

Various research into religious moderation in Islam education illustrates that the inclusion of the values of moderation are essential in the education curriculum to prevent radicalism and intolerance. For example, Saekan et al. (2022) discovered in their study on religious moderation and quality of Islamic education that moderate Islamic education can form student characters who are not extremists but tolerant (Saekan et al., 2022). Syatar et al. (2024) found that the model of reinforcing religious moderation in Islamic universities had been able to positively promote tolerance and minimize radicalism among students (Syatar et al., 2024). Khoir et al. (2024) found that through the

internalization of moderate religious attitudes in SMPN 1 Prambanan it proved that education can form an attitude and respect for diversity (Khoir et al., 2024). Research of Huda (2022) also revealed that PAI learning management in the value perspective of religious moderation can heighten tolerance and decrease violence (Huda, 2022). And lastly, the study of Mustakim et al. (2021) demonstrates that the importance of Islamic moderation is significant to minimize extremism and violence in Islamic universities through student empowerment (Mustakim et al., 2021).

While there are numerous studies on religious moderation in Islamic education, many concern the curriculum or teaching at the higher education level madrasah (school that emphasizes a particular topic such as Arabic language, Qur'an reading, or law) and do not delve into issues Muslim or Islamic educators experience during primary and secondary schooling. Such studies have also yet to discuss systematically on how religious moderation is incorporated into the national curriculum of Islamic Education and its implications for establishment of a tolerant and non-violent mentality among the young generation. Therefore, this study aims to explore the practice of religious moderation in Islamic education in Indonesia at different educational levels and the challenges that educators have encountered when applying it as well as its potential relation to diminishing religion-based violence and radicalisation in Indonesia.

The objectives of this study are to explore the moderates' role in Islamic education as an effort to forming character tolerance and anti-violence. This study is expected to suggest an alternative direction for a more accommodative curriculum and also gain attention among educators, policy makers as well as the public on significance of moderate education in shaping better harmony. It also seeks to unearth the hurdles for teachers of religion and suggestions for making religious moderation work in their classrooms. Furthermore, this paper will show that religious moderation in Islamic education can be beneficial to social harmony and lowering religion-based violence, as well as educational policy implications and potential interaction among faith-based communities.

B. METHOD

The method employed in this study is library research that is an approach of collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data from various-literature (Akbar et al., 2025). This approach is taken to identify the different point of views and results on religious moderation in the Islamic education set up as well as its influences on cultivating tolerant character and violence prevention. The source of the data in this study is books on Islamic education, and religious moderation, tolerance and anti-violence scientific articles. In addition, research reports in educational institutions or organizations which relevant with the religious education and tolerance as well as official documents (e.g., Indonesian education policy) related to the issue of religious education curriculum in Indonesia are also used a reference in this study. Sources that were sampled by their inclusion criteria are publications within the last 5 years, adjusted to include indexed journals based on Sinta and Scopus either in English or Indonesian language, and with discussion directly related to thematic this research including religious education and tolerance.

This study uses literature studies to explore the scientific literature related to religious moderation and its application in Islamic education. To collect this data, the researcher searches reliable sources such as scientific journals, books, and reports on issues that will give deeper understanding of religious moderation's impact on education. Furthermore, document analysis also examines relevant education policy documents to gain an idea of how religious moderation is implemented in education (Wankhade & Siddiqui, 2022). This study uses a qualitative library research design with systematic content analysis to uncover literature about religious moderation and its role in fostering peace and extremism in Islamic education. Data were extracted from selected peer-reviewed journal articles, books and policy relevant documents using purposive sampling. Data analysis was performed through three stages: (1) and organize/coding of the chosen texts by using thematic analysis to find recurring ideas and patterns; (2) categorizing into key themes such as their

concept model regarding religious moderation, how it was implemented in learning environments, and its effects on character formation; and (3) making analytical interpretation of the findings to measure if religious moderation succeeded in generating tolerant and peaceful attitudes (Khan et al., 2022). To clarify the research design used in this study, please refer to Figure 1 below.

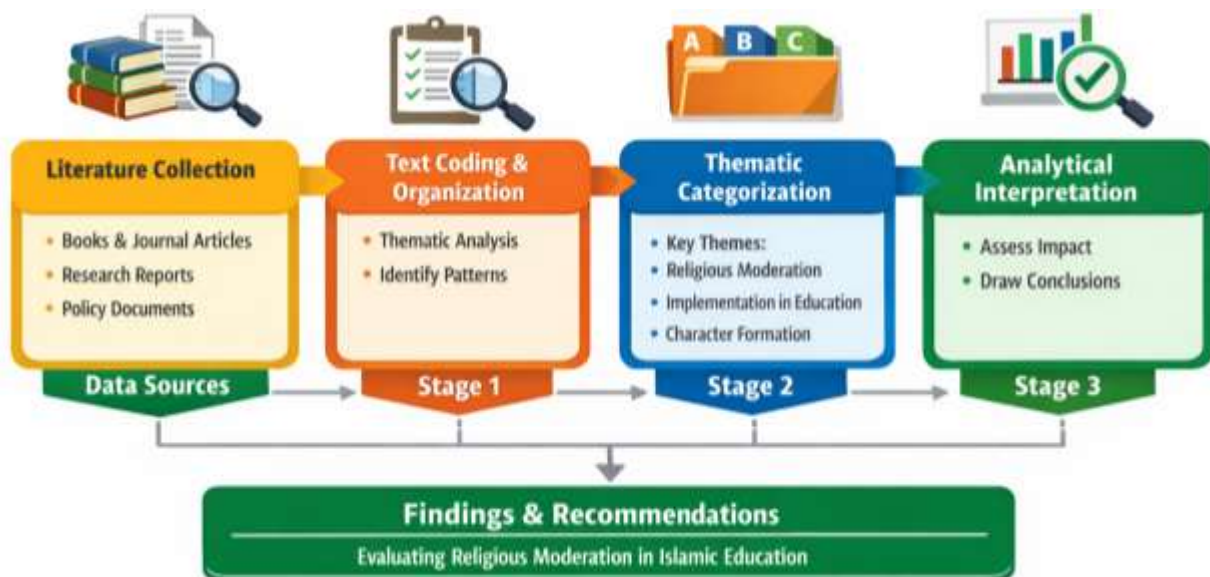


Figure 1. Research Stages Flow

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

Religious moderation in Islam has a basic principle that underlies the attitude of Muslims to practice religious teachings in a balanced manner, without being trapped in extremism (Aditya & Abdul, 2023). This principle of moderation teaches the ummah to always be in the middle of religion, known as *wasathiyah*, as written in Surah Al-Baqarah: 143, which states that Muslims are a just ummah and an example for other ummah. The concept of *wasathiyah* contains an important meaning in the form of a balance between the correct understanding of religion and an open attitude to differences, be it religion, culture, or ethnicity. This verse emphasizes that Islam teaches its people not to be trapped at extremes, both in terms of religious beliefs and social behavior (Ahmad, 2021; Putri & Fadlullah, 2022). In this context, religious moderation includes not only belief in the true teachings of religion, but also tolerance for diversity and maintaining a balance between rights and obligations in religion. As explained by Anwar (2023), the concept of *wasathiyah* serves as a basic principle for maintaining harmony in social life, both in relations with fellow Muslims and with adherents of other religions (Anwar et al., 2023). Thus, religious moderation is an effort to avoid radical attitudes that can trigger conflict, as well as to strengthen the values of peace, justice, and brotherhood in the midst of a pluralistic society, making religious moderation not only a spiritual but also a social obligation that must be applied in all aspects of life, including in Islamic education.

The inculcation of religious moderation in the Islamic education curriculum needs a holistic approach so that the values of moderation can be accepted and understood by the learners. In such context, as part of Islamic education's curriculum it is incumbent for teaching in order to instill the values of tolerance, peace and respect on differences (Hayati et al., 2025). One of the ways used is through designing teaching tools that accommodate the principles of *wasathiyah* in some learning media, for example, *fiqh*, *aqidah* and *akhlak*. So, if promoted positively the integrated values of WE and PA could indeed serve as a powerful tool for preventing religion-based conflicts by fostering inclusive attitudes among students (Anam & Syaehotin, 2025).

Consistent with the above, the study of Imamah (2023) indicates that religious moderation values including tolerance, justice, balance, simplicity, openness and humanity need to be inserted in Islamic Education curriculum. Such values can be shared through inclusive teaching materials, assuming the crucial mediator function of teachers for selecting such materials and their wise delivery as well as to facilitate open learning environment in classrooms. This method allows student to appreciate and understand religious diversity, and learn moderation. Further, PAI curriculum integrated religious moderation should be performed continuously examined and supervised in order to meet the objectives and the relevance of curriculum for community development (Imamah, 2023). Through this move, it is hoped that the Islamic education system will produce inclusive and peaceful students that, in turn contribute to realising a harmonious society. Moreover, religious moderation supported instruction methods are highly significant to practice in the school / madrasa as well. The utilization of discussion and dialogue techniques are perfect in setting up a place for the students to express opinions, learn both sides, and that it is okay to always accept other's point. (Fasyiransyah et al., 2025; Siregar & Nasution, 2024). An integrative education, which links religious moderation via character education constitutes a strategic formation of a generation that is not only able to know and understand religious teachings in the normative way but also be able to apply them in social life by prioritizing the values such as tolerance, peace, and non-violence (Ichsan et al., 2024).

It is consistent with the ethos of Islamic education to ensure that students are educated in an environment in which differences contribute to a cohesive and peaceful society. Study conducted by Faid Kholidi (2025) in MI Syamsul Jinan indicates *tasamuh*, *tawassuth*, *i'tidal* and *muwathanah* are internalized through the learning context, religious activity and school culture. Educators employ the discussion, case studies, role play and reflection to help student skill up on how to moderate their social contacts. Strengthened by the role model of their leader and teachers, embedded in the ambience of a multicultural pesantren, despite limitations such as insufficient materials, untrained teachers and exposure to radical social media (Faidkholidi & Fajri, 2025). Therefore, Strengthening the curriculum, Teacher capacity building and development of digital literacy become important stages to make internalization of religious moderation and shaping a generation that is tolerant, democratic and anti-radicalism can be sustainable.

2. Religious Moderation in Islamic Education for Social Harmony

Moderate religiosity in Islamic education as the basis for instilling social harmony at a diverse society. Values of *tawassuth* (middle way), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and *i'tidal* (justice) serve as lenses through which students can see differences as social inevitable, not threats (Hidayat et al., 2023). 'Moderate' Islamic education, does not only supply the religious knowledge but also create social character in which concord is a public ethics (Amiruddin, 2025). In this way, a moderate religion could serve as an instrument for guiding personal relations between people towards the spirit of peace, security and mutual respect.

Regarding learning process, the moderate Islamic education put attention on interfaith harmony as well as strengthening unity in diversity. Students are supposed to be encouraged to develop communicative features such as empathy, dialogical communication and cooperation across groups (Shonhaji, 2025). When the value of moderation is internalized, people are able to perceive religion as a source of value that help humans understand each other and extend solidarity inhuman boundaries, not as a basis for self-justification to shut off from others or look down on them. It is crucial to note that school represents the prefatory context for the development of social practices subsequently transferred to family and community life (Siregar & Ismaraidha, 2025).

According to Gordon Allport's Contact Hypothesis, it's conceivable that the reinforcement of religious tempering is due to well-managed intergroup interactions. They can, in fact, decrease prejudices, especially if they take place under conditions not too unequal of power, have a common

goal, work together and are maintained by clear norms/authorities' (Pettigrew, 2021). In terms of Islamic education, the spirit of moderation studies is to provide a "framework" that guarantees these differences will not become identity quarrels, but rather an experience directed by learning. Kids who participate in schools where there is conversation, co-operation and validation of universal human values all at the same time, will more easily develop positive perceptions of people from other groups, so that any potential prejudices or stereotypes are diminished (Afriyanto & Anatansyah, 2024).

He truth is, religious moderation plays a key part in averting social polarization and promoting harmonious coexistence. Polarization often arises when differences are understood in black-or white terms and when religion identity is characterized as an exclusive boundary that separates one group from another. By adopting a moderate Islamic education, students can learn how to treat different viewpoints with tolerance, can respect other people's faiths while still remaining true to their own beliefs (Yudin et al., 2025). Consequently, should this course continue unimpeded, religious moderation will not only become an accepted category in education circles but also provide society with real social resources for constructing a peaceful, all-inclusive, and resistant antidote to military conflict provocations.

3. Implications of Religious Moderation for Education and Community Policy

Adoption of religious moderation in Islamic education has an immediate effect on the national educational policy. When values such as tolerance, fairness, equity and respect for diversity are integrated into the curriculum it changes education from being a doctrinaire program to a dialogical one that supports inclusiveness. The curriculum changes, teaching materials, teacher training and assessment systems that are required to promote religious moderation have meager evidence base of measurable impact. Government and educational offices have a role in the enactment of Islamic values into practice both as means to transmit religious knowledge through education, and constructing a national character that is plural.

In addition, reinforcing religious moderation in the Islamic school relates to establishing an institutional climate of diversity. The school is the first social space for students, leading us to consider it a key social environment where an inclusive and non-discriminatory pattern of interaction can be implanted (Supriyadi et al., 2025). When education policies promote interfaith dialogue, cross-group collaboration, and affirmation of universal human values, students develop skills in being able to handle diversity through mature approaches. This finding corresponds to what Albert Bandura proposed in his Social Learning Theory, which suggests that attitudes are learned through observation and imitation of norms and examples in their community (Feri & Husna, 2022). If harmonious and balanced methods are the school's common practice, and such practices are promulgated through partnership among schools, families and communities, then the concept of tolerance will be more internalized. With continuous guidelines and institutional support religious-based moderate education may be a helpful tool to discourage exclusivity and social polarization.

Religious tolerance as the target of Islamic education support social integration and national stability, besides it can promote an open attitude that have negative effect on the spread of extreme ideologies and religious conflict (Mukhibat et al., 2023). In terms of sociology, the culture of moderation will contribute towards fostering social interaction in society inter-community and international levels, thereby immune us against intolerance and foster national unity among diversity (Liu et al., 2025). Talcott Parsons proposed that in the light of Structural Functionalism, education becomes a strategic institution to socialize values for the sake of social integration and balance. Implanting religious moderation in Islamic education preserves common shared values and consolidates the cohesiveness of society in a pluralistic setting (Fanshurna & Isnadi, 2025; Demirdağ, 2023). So religious moderation in Islamic education influences individual character development, as well as structurally affecting networks of peaceful, inclusive living. This ensures that the nation-of-life will continue.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Religious moderate in Islamic Education is important for the vigour of tolerance and anti-violence to which strength pluralism community life in Indonesia. Internalization with *wasathiyah* values, like *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, *i'tidal* and *muwathanah* guide inclusivity attitude to minimize the extreme. Islamic education, thought to be a product other than mere doctrinal approaches brings about empathy, dialogue and interaction among others with peaceful coexistence. The value of moderation is inculcated through curricula and didactic materials, classroom interaction and school ethos so as to develop non-violent character traits capable of withstanding extreme discourse being disseminated by digital media. Schools can become sites of prevention through intentional pedagogy, role modelling and inclusion. Therefore, tempering religiosity in Islamic education is an effective way to cultivate social cohesion and prevention the conflict rooted in identity.

Conceptually, this study makes a theoretical contribution to the field of Islamic education by proposing religious moderation as both pedagogical framework and socio-structural mechanism for social cohesion. It applies synthesises through-*wasathiyah* point of view Contact Hypothesis, Social Learning Theory and structural Functionalism on how values of moderation being socialized internally and socially reproduced. The findings are supportive for the Talcott Parsons opinion of education as such as system for value socialization which promotes social integration. It builds upon prior research by stressing that successful implementation is critically dependent on teacher capacity, digital literacy and institutional culture, while contending that Islamic education should be a strategic weapon for the national stability and social cohesiveness in multicultural societies.

This study is a secondary data analysis and does not include primary field observations or quantification of the change in behaviors. It does not investigate differences of implementation across education level, region or sociocultural context in Indonesia and it lacks longitudinal evidence on the program effect after a period of years. Furthermore, digital radicalization and social media exposure challenges need more empirical analysis. The use of mixed-method or field-based analyses, comparative research and policy impact evaluations are needed to further refine our understanding of how religious moderation produces tolerance and reduces violence.

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