

Wasatiyyah in the Age of Algorithms: Challenges and Opportunities of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Education

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Abstract

As extremism and intolerance continue to pose growing threats, the role of Islamic education in Indonesia becomes increasingly vital in nurturing a culture of religious moderation. This research investigates how Islamic educational institutions contribute to advancing religious moderation within the Indonesian context, with particular attention to the dynamics introduced by the digital age and globalization. Employing a qualitative methodology grounded in a literature review, the study draws on data gathered from academic journals, research reports, and scholarly articles pertaining to religious moderation and Islamic education. The results reveal that Islamic educational institutions have made meaningful progress in embedding moderation values within their curricula, with an emphasis on cultivating tolerance, rejecting violence, and honoring diversity. Nevertheless, several obstacles persist, among them inadequate preparation among educators, the detrimental effects of technological influence, and a superficial grasp of religious moderation concepts among students. The study recommends that enhancing educator development programs, mitigating the adverse impacts of technology on the learning environment, and ensuring sustained support from educational institutions are key strategies for reinforcing religious moderation initiatives. This research broadens the understanding of how the forces of digitalization and globalization shape efforts toward religious moderation in Islamic education, while also proposing practical strategies to improve their overall impact.

Keywords: Wasatiyyah, Religious Moderation, Islamic Education, Indonesia.

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INTRODUCTION

As the nation with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia continues to grapple with persistent threats stemming from religious extremism. Organizations like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) have long posed serious concerns due to their entrenched presence and transnational ties, including affiliations with global terrorist networks such as Al-Qaeda (Singh, 2004). While the Indonesian constitution enshrines religious freedom, certain legal frameworks and institutional biases — most notably the Blasphemy Law — tend to compound the problem by

fostering an environment conducive to intolerance (Fenton, 2016; Mu & Burhani, 2019). The propagation of extremist thought has been further amplified through educational channels and digital media, which radical movements exploit to target and radicalize younger demographics, particularly university students (Mulyaningsih, 2022; Sugihartati, Suyanto, & Hidayat, 2020). The convergence of these social, political, and religious forces has introduced new complexities that threaten the fabric of social cohesion and the longstanding tradition of tolerance in Indonesian society.

Amid rising radicalism, Islamic education in Indonesia has emerged as a critical line of defense in advancing the principles of religious moderation. Pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) and Islamic universities occupy a pivotal position in nurturing values of pluralism and tolerance among students (Thanks, 2019). Notably, certain pesantren have adopted pedagogical frameworks that cultivate critical inquiry and openness to diverse perspectives, thereby reinforcing a moderate religious outlook (Subchi, 2022a; Sukur, 2019). Across the educational spectrum — from elementary Islamic schools to higher education institutions — these establishments have functioned as key sites for embedding moderation values centered on peace, inclusivity, and respect for difference (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Within the pesantren system, moderate learning is reinforced through integrated approaches that weave together religious instruction, analytical thinking, and appreciation for diversity (Helmy, Kubro, & Ali, 2021). The influence of educators and the broader community also serves as an essential catalyst in ensuring that these values are meaningfully internalized by students (Alabdulhadi & Alkandari, 2024; Wardi, Fithriyyah, Fathorrahman, & Hidayat, 2023). Curriculum materials — including textbooks explicitly oriented toward tolerance and non-violence — provide additional reinforcement to these educational endeavors (Evaluation, 2023). Collectively, these efforts have enabled Islamic education in Indonesia to cultivate graduates who hold a well-rounded and balanced understanding of their faith, are equipped to engage constructively across differences, and are resilient against radical ideological influence (Mustakim, Ali, & Kamal, 2021; Subaidi, 2020).

A review of prior scholarship on religious moderation in Indonesia reveals a range of interventions and persistent obstacles in embedding moderate values across Indonesian society. The existing body of literature can broadly be organized into three thematic clusters. The first concerns state-led efforts to institutionalize religious moderation, which gained significant momentum from 2019 onward, particularly through programs targeting extremism and radicalism via publication initiatives, capacity-building training, and the development of moderation assessment tools (Cholil, 2022). The formal incorporation of religious moderation into the 2020–2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) reflects a governmental commitment to upholding nationalism, tolerance, anti-radicalism, and respect for indigenous cultural practices (Yusuf, Putra, Witro, & Nurjaman, 2023). Nevertheless, critics have raised concerns that such policies may inadvertently create friction with principles of religious liberty, potentially narrowing the permissible boundaries of religious expression (Cholil, 2022).

The second cluster addresses the determinants that shape individuals' orientation toward religious moderation, encompassing socio-religious traditions, family value systems, and

communal solidarity (Daheri, Warsah, Morganna, Putri, & Adelia, 2023). Emerging research further highlights that intellectual humility and religiosity — assessed across intellectual, ideological, and experiential religious dimensions — are meaningful predictors of moderate religious attitudes (Pajarianto, Personal, & Galugu, 2023; Subchi, 2022a). However, the interplay between these personal and cultural factors and the accelerating pace of globalization and technological change remains insufficiently studied.

The third cluster focuses on the educational dimension, where Islamic higher education institutions — including Islamic boarding schools — have increasingly sought to embed religious moderation values into their curricula, emphasizing national identity, pluralism, and nonviolence (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Targeted academic programs, such as the dedicated religious moderation curriculum developed at IAIN Ponorogo, have been designed to counter conservatism and curb intolerant tendencies (Mukhibat, Effendi, Setyawan, & Sutoyo, 2024). Yet, the growing influence of conservative religious trends in broader society continues to challenge the effectiveness of moderation-oriented education within institutional settings (Zulkifli, Kafid, Nanang, & Fahri, 2023). This suggests that educational reforms alone are insufficient, and must be accompanied by supportive social policies and active community engagement to yield meaningful and lasting outcomes.

Despite the growing body of scholarship affirming Islamic education's contribution to religious moderation, several critical gaps remain inadequately addressed. Much of the existing literature has concentrated on policy-level implementation and structured educational programs, while largely overlooking how contemporary forces such as digitalization and globalization shape the effectiveness of moderation efforts among students and the general public. Furthermore, although the contributions of Islamic educational institutions — especially pesantren and universities — have been well-documented, the relationship between specific pedagogical strategies and measurable outcomes in reducing radicalization tendencies remains underexplored. Additionally, there is limited research on how partnerships between formal educational institutions and local communities can amplify the impact of moderation values across diverse social contexts. This study seeks to address these gaps by offering a deeper investigation into the role of Islamic education in fostering religious moderation within the contemporary context of globalization and digital transformation.

The central objective of this study is to examine how Islamic education in Indonesia contributes to the cultivation of religious moderation amid the dual pressures of globalization and digital advancement. Specifically, it seeks to analyze how moderation-oriented curricula are operationalized within Islamic educational institutions, while also identifying key challenges in that process — including insufficient teacher preparedness, the disruptive potential of digital technologies, and students' superficial comprehension of religious moderation. The study will further propose actionable strategies to enhance the impact and sustainability of religious moderation programming.

Islamic education in Indonesia can be understood as a foundational instrument for advancing religious moderation, with its curricula, institutional policies, and co-curricular activities structured to cultivate values of tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and communal solidarity. This position resonates with transformative learning theory, which underscores

education's transformative capacity in fostering critical consciousness and inclusive engagement with difference (Mezirow, 1991). The theological basis for moderation in Islam — encapsulated in the concept of *wasatiyyah* — is firmly grounded in Qur'anic guidance, including Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which characterizes Muslims as a "middle community," underscoring the centrality of balance and restraint in religious practice. At the policy level, the Indonesian government's inclusion of religious moderation within the 2020–2024 RPJMN further institutionalizes this agenda as a national priority aimed at curbing radicalism and preserving social harmony. The theoretical framework of this research thus draws from the convergence of educational theory, Islamic normative values, and state policy, affirming that Islamic education in Indonesia serves not merely as a vehicle for religious instruction, but as a strategic mechanism for cultivating a society grounded in moderation and mutual respect.

METHOD

This study undertakes a systematic examination of scholarly literature concerning religious moderation and Islamic education within the Indonesian context. The analytical scope encompasses peer-reviewed articles, research reports, and academic publications pertaining to religious moderation, Islamic education, and the broader landscape of Indonesian Islam. Central to the inquiry are studies that illuminate how Islamic educational institutions contribute to embedding moderate religious values and their consequent influence on reducing radicalist tendencies in society. Materials were selected on the basis of their topical relevance and their capacity to enrich the overall understanding of religious moderation initiatives as channeled through Islamic education.

A qualitative methodology grounded in a literature review framework was employed to guide this study. This methodological choice was deemed fitting for mapping and critically evaluating trends, theoretical concepts, and empirical findings from prior scholarship on religious moderation and Islamic education. The library-based research design was adopted given its capacity to enable a thorough and critical synthesis of information drawn from diverse relevant publications, foregoing the necessity of direct fieldwork. This orientation aligns seamlessly with the study's overarching aim of understanding the evolving role of Islamic education in advancing religious moderation, as evidenced by existing scholarly work.

The primary information base for this study derives from scientific publications indexed in Scopus, encompassing both international and national journals with a concentrated focus on Islamic education, religious moderation, and the dynamics of Islam in Indonesia. Supplementary data were also drawn from books, official reports, and academic articles retrieved from other pertinent databases. The selection of Scopus as the principal data source reflects its standing as a highly credible, multidisciplinary database recognized for the rigor and quality of its indexed research.

The data collection procedure involved conducting targeted literature searches using designated keywords, namely "Islamic education," "religious moderation," "Indonesia," and "counter-radicalism." Relevant publications retrieved from the Scopus database were subsequently examined with respect to their thematic focus, methodological approaches, and principal findings. Following collection, the selected articles were organized into sub-thematic

categories to lend coherence and structure to the analytical process. Reference management software, specifically Mendeley, was also utilized to systematically organize and maintain the compiled literature.

The analytical phase of the study was conducted through thematic analysis, a technique through which recurring themes across the literature were identified, categorized, and synthesized to reveal prevailing patterns and trajectories within the domains of religious moderation and Islamic education research. The process commenced with a close and detailed reading of each gathered publication, followed by thematic clustering according to key variables such as educational practice, policy frameworks, and religious moderation. Cross-study comparisons were further incorporated into the analysis to generate a well-rounded and comprehensive perspective on the dynamics of religious moderation as it unfolds across the Indonesian landscape.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Islamic Education, Religious Moderation, and Indonesian Islam

Islamic education refers to a process of instruction and learning that is grounded in Islamic principles, with the ultimate goal of nurturing individuals who possess both a thorough comprehension and active observance of their faith. As noted by Rahman (1982), Islamic education extends beyond the mere transmission of religious law (sharia), encompassing moral, spiritual, and social dimensions that guide individuals toward a well-rounded existence in accordance with the concept of *wasatiyyah* (the Islamic principle of moderation). Furthermore, Islamic education seeks to cultivate a generation equipped with practical competencies for worldly affairs alongside profound religious literacy, enabling them to attain fulfillment in both this life and the next (Al-Attas, 1999).

Islamic education operates across multiple delivery systems, broadly classified as formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal education is structured around Islamic schools and madrasas, spanning primary level (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), junior and senior secondary levels (Madrasah Tsanawiyah and Aliyah), and tertiary institutions including both state and private Islamic universities. Non-formal education, most notably represented by the pesantren or Islamic boarding school, carries significant influence in instilling Islamic values through a residential model and immersive learning environment. Dhofier (1999) highlights the central role of the kiai and the pesantren institution in sustaining traditional Islamic education across Indonesia. Over time, pesantren have evolved considerably, incorporating both general and religious curricula to equip their graduates with competencies across diverse professional fields (Azra, 2015a).

The concept of *wasatiyyah*, or religious moderation, embodies a balanced approach to faith that upholds tolerance, inclusiveness, and an appreciation for diversity. Rooted in Islamic doctrine, this principle discourages extremism in both the interpretation and application of religious teachings. The notion of a moderate community (*Ummatan Wasatan*) is explicitly referenced in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143 of the Qur'an, which calls for equilibrium between worldly and spiritual pursuits. According to Zulkifli (2022), nurturing religious moderation is

essential for sustaining social cohesion in pluralistic societies, particularly in Indonesia, where a rich tapestry of ethnicity, faith, and culture coexists.

Scholars have identified four key dimensions through which religious moderation manifests: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for indigenous culture (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). National commitment is reflected in Indonesia's policy efforts to embed Pancasila principles and moderate religious values within its education system. Tolerance, as a dimension of moderation, involves honoring varying religious perspectives and rejecting extremist tendencies that contradict the Islamic vision of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* — a mercy extended to all of creation. Non-violence entails a firm stance against religiously motivated aggression, while cultural accommodation highlights Islam's capacity to coexist with and honor local customs without compromising its foundational teachings (Subchi, 2022a, 2022b).

The expression of Islam in Indonesia is deeply shaped by the nation's distinctive social, cultural, and political landscape. As the country with the world's largest Muslim population, Indonesia is widely recognized for an Islamic identity characterized by moderation, openness, and inclusivity (Azra, 2015b). Through a long process of cultural assimilation, Indonesian Islamic practices have evolved into forms that, while distinct from those found in other Muslim-majority nations, remain anchored in the universal principles of the faith.

Within Indonesia, Islamic expression takes several forms. Traditionalist Islam, most prominently associated with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), places high value on inherited scholarly traditions and the Ash'ariyyah theological school. In contrast, modernist Islam — as championed by Muhammadiyah — advocates for the reform and rationalization of religious practice, seeking to eliminate elements deemed as doctrinal innovations (Azra, 2015b). A smaller fundamentalist current also exists, pushing for the formal implementation of Islamic law in the public sphere. Alongside these streams, Sufi traditions have taken deep root across the Indonesian archipelago (Ricklefs, 2012). Collectively, these currents illustrate that Indonesian Islam is a fluid, multifaceted tradition that continues to evolve in response to shifting social, political, and global forces.

Islamic Education Curriculum Development

In Indonesia, embedding religious moderation values within Islamic education curricula has emerged as a central priority across a wide range of educational institutions, from universities to Islamic boarding schools. Institutions such as State Islamic Universities and contemporary Islamic boarding schools have restructured their academic programs to incorporate principles of tolerance, opposition to radicalism, and appreciation for local cultural heritage. According to Yani et al. (2023), the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesian higher education strategically merges religious moderation frameworks with national defense principles, with the overarching goal of curbing radicalism and fostering peaceful, nationally conscious commitments among students.

A closer look at curriculum development across multiple universities reveals several recurring patterns. Foremost among these is a strong emphasis on moderation-oriented concepts such as tolerance and the rejection of violence. Alongside this, nationalist values and

anti-radicalism principles have been woven into instructional content. Universities have further enriched their curricula by incorporating locally rooted elements that reflect Indonesia's multicultural identity, demonstrating how Islamic teachings can be contextually adapted. Additionally, the varying lengths and configurations of courses across institutions point to a degree of flexibility in how religious moderation is put into practice (Yani et al., 2023).

Efforts to cultivate religious moderation through curriculum reform are particularly evident in the work undertaken at the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) Ponorogo. The institution introduced dedicated courses on Islamic moderation, centering on themes of national commitment, tolerance, nonviolence, and cultural respect. These courses are embedded within broader higher education programs as part of a deliberate strategy to counteract growing conservatism and intolerance among the student population. One of the more innovative pedagogical tools employed is problem-based learning (PBL), which engages students in critically examining real-world issues while honoring diverse perspectives. This approach has demonstrated measurable success in cultivating moderate orientations among students, meaningfully influencing how they engage with questions of national identity and pluralism (Mukhibat et al., 2024).

Despite these advances, curriculum implementation continues to face notable obstacles. A persistent disparity exists between the educational frameworks of madrassas and public schools, and ensuring equitable access to quality Islamic education across all social strata remains an ongoing challenge. Nevertheless, Islamic universities remain steadfast in their commitment to advancing moderation values, conducting ongoing evaluations to verify that educational outcomes remain aligned with the intended goals of religious moderation (Mukhibat et al., 2024).

Research by Nasir and Rijal (2021) further illuminates how Islamic universities function as vital conduits for transmitting moderation values. Institutions such as Maulana Malik Ibrahim State Islamic University, Darussalam Gontor University, and Ma'had Aly As'adiyah have adopted eclectic curricula and supported religious activities within their pesantren environments as means of nurturing moderate orientations among students. These curricula reflect a holistic vision of Islamic education — one that not only imparts religious knowledge but also cultivates an understanding of moderation as the equilibrium between doctrinal fidelity and openness to local cultural traditions. Beyond formal instruction, Islamic universities serve as strategic environments where moderation is reinforced through extracurricular engagement and the rhythms of communal boarding school life (Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

The central tension in developing religious moderation curricula lies in sustaining a productive balance between orthodox religious instruction and the demands of an increasingly globalized, pluralistic world. Bridging the national curriculum with local and global diversity, while simultaneously expanding educational access to underserved communities, represents an enduring challenge. Ultimately, the effective implementation of such curricula is what determines whether future generations will emerge not only religiously literate but also genuinely committed to the values of moderation and coexistence (Nasir & Rijal, 2021).

As illustrated in Table 1, Islamic education curricula across several Indonesian higher education institutions have been deliberately shaped to advance religious moderation. Through teaching that prioritizes tolerance, national commitment, and respect for cultural and religious plurality, these institutions have developed targeted courses designed to deepen students' understanding of moderation and reduce susceptibility to radicalism.

Table 1 the development of Islamic education curriculum in several institutions in Indonesia

Educational Institutions	Program/Course	Key Values	Teaching Focus
State Islamic University	Religious Moderation and Nationalism	Tolerance, Nonviolence	Respect for difference
IAIN444882	Moderation Education	National Commitment, Anti-radicalism	Interfaith dialogue
Modern Islamic Boarding School	Diversity Studies	Moderation, Pluralism	Local cultural accommodation

The trajectory of Islamic education curriculum development in Indonesia reveals several discernible patterns drawn from available data. A predominant pattern is the systematic embedding of religious moderation principles within the curriculum through dedicated subjects that foreground tolerance and the rejection of violence. Beyond this, the curriculum fosters a sense of national identity and promotes cross-religious dialogue, with education actively underscoring the significance of pluralism and peaceful coexistence within a multicultural society. The operationalization of the religious moderation curriculum further incorporates indigenous values and cultural accommodation, seeking to bridge religious teachings with the local socio-cultural context.

An interpretive reading of these findings indicates that the evolution of Islamic education curricula in Indonesia forms an inseparable part of a wider initiative to advance religious moderation. Grounded in the principles of tolerance, pluralism, and anti-radicalism, the curriculum equips students with a well-rounded appreciation of Islam as a peaceful and inclusive faith. Furthermore, it nurtures national consciousness and dedication to the unity of the nation. Consequently, the adoption of a curriculum interwoven with religious moderation values can serve as a potent instrument in countering radicalism and reinforcing social cohesion across Indonesia.

Enactment of Religious Moderation Policy in Islamic Educational Institutions

The adoption of religious moderation frameworks within Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia has yielded notable outcomes, particularly in nurturing students' sense of national identity and their commitment to embracing diversity. When Islamic religious education is grounded in moderate values, it does more than cultivate an appreciation for

pluralism — it simultaneously deepens students’ attachment to their country. A case in point is the study by Solechan et al. (2024), which demonstrated that merging Islamic religious education with the principles of religious moderation and national defense effectively strengthened nationalist sentiments among students at state Islamic universities. This was evident in students’ growing receptiveness toward religious and cultural differences, as well as their deepened understanding of how religion can serve as a unifying force for the nation.

That said, translating this policy into practice is far from straightforward. Burhanuddin and Ilmi (2022) highlighted the necessity of employing more varied models of religious moderation to address the distinct dynamics present in different educational settings. Compounding this are inadequate information technology infrastructure and insufficient inter-educator dialogue, both of which hinder the effective cultivation of moderate religious values among students. Furthermore, disparities in literacy levels and access to reference materials remain persistent barriers, particularly in student boarding schools — institutions that carry considerable weight in shaping moderate worldviews — where deeper internalization of these values is urgently needed.

Nevertheless, the prospects offered by religious moderation policies in Islamic educational institutions remain considerable. When properly executed, such policies are capable of producing graduates who embody knowledge, competency, and attitudes aligned with moderation, national consciousness, tolerance, and the rejection of violence. Islamic higher education institutions — especially those rooted in the pesantren tradition — occupy a pivotal position in conveying moderate religious values through both structured academic programs and informal educational channels. Through the embedding of these values across curricula and extracurricular activities, Islamic educational institutions have managed to cultivate an environment that nurtures a moderate generation — one that is equipped to navigate the complexities of globalization while remaining anchored in its religious and national identity.

The table below presents a comprehensive overview of the strategies employed by Islamic educational institutions in operationalizing religious moderation policies, along with the associated challenges and opportunities in advancing religious moderation.

Educational Institutions	Implementation Model	Values Applied	Primary Focus of Teaching	Reference
State Islamic University	Curriculum and organizational integration	Tolerance, Nonviolence	National commitment and diversity	Nasir & Rijal (2021)
State Universities	Internalization of religious education	Moderation, Pluralism	Nationalism and interfaith dialogue	Solechan et al. (2024)
Student Boarding School	External programs and activities	Tolerance, Antiradicalism	Communitybased approach	Burhanuddin & Ilmi (2022)

Research findings indicate that Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia have adopted religious moderation frameworks through multi-layered integrative approaches, encompassing structured academic curricula, student-led organizational activities, and active engagement with surrounding communities. The overarching goal of these frameworks is to cultivate tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and a sense of nationalism among learners, with an emphasis on nurturing a generation that embraces differences and maintains an open-minded perspective. In practice, these frameworks are woven into both academic coursework and extracurricular engagements, employing methods that underscore the value of cross-religious discourse while firmly opposing violence and radical ideologies.

Several recurring patterns emerge from the available data. First, religious moderation is embedded within a holistic curriculum and enrichment activities designed to deepen students' grasp of moderate values. Second, Islamic educational institutions leverage community-oriented strategies to reinforce anti-radicalism and promote tolerance at the grassroots level. Third, student organizations serve as key vehicles for nurturing an understanding of pluralism and moderation, particularly within pesantren-based learning environments. Nevertheless, the execution of these frameworks is not without obstacles — inadequate information technology infrastructure impedes productive dialogue among educators, while restricted access to literacy resources and pertinent academic references remains a persistent barrier, as highlighted by Asfiati et al. (2023).

On the whole, the adoption of religious moderation frameworks within Islamic educational institutions plays a pivotal role in embedding the principles of nationalism, tolerance, and anti-radicalism into the student consciousness. These frameworks extend well beyond formal classroom instruction, manifesting through a wide array of non-academic platforms such as student organizations and community-based initiatives. This demonstrates that Islamic education in Indonesia occupies a strategically significant position in shaping a moderate generation — one that holds a well-rounded understanding of faith alongside a steadfast dedication to national cohesion and respect for cultural plurality.

Obstacles in Applying Religious Moderation within Islamic Educational Settings

Embedding religious moderation into Islamic education presents a range of multifaceted difficulties. Among the primary obstacles are the insufficient incorporation of moderation values into existing curricula, inadequate preparation among educators, and the influence of outside forces including digital technology and prevailing student attitudes. These factors collectively hinder the effective internalization of tolerance and peaceful coexistence — core objectives that religious moderation seeks to cultivate within Islamic learning environments. Compounding this issue is the inconsistent level of support across institutions, which further undermines the effectiveness of moderation initiatives in various Islamic educational settings. Addressing these challenges requires a well-rounded and holistic approach encompassing curricular reform, capacity building for teachers, responsible management of technological influences, and the strengthening of institutional commitment at all levels. The key challenges encountered in implementing religious moderation across diverse Islamic educational institutions are outlined in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Challenges of Implementing Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

Challenge	Detail
Curriculum Integration	Inadequate facilitation for critical thinking and internalization of values (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Zulfatmi, 2023).
Teacher Readiness	Lack of training and resources for teachers (Winoto, 2022; Zulfatmi, 2023).
The Influence of Technology	Exposure to intolerant content through devices and social media (Mukhibat et al., 2024).
Student Perception	Superficial understanding of the values of moderation (Afwadzi, Sumbulah, Ali, & Qudsy, 2024).
Institutional Support	Diverse; Some institutions show positive impact (Solechan et al., 2024).

A significant obstacle in religious education reform lies in the difficulty of embedding moderate Islamic values and nurturing analytical reasoning within the student body. Research consistently indicates that prevailing instructional approaches in Islamic schools, including Madrasah Aliyah, fall short of creating meaningful opportunities for students to genuinely comprehend and practice the principles of moderation. Consequently, students demonstrate limited awareness of why tolerance and openness to diversity matter in contemporary society (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Zulfatmi, 2023).

Compounding this issue is the insufficient preparedness of teaching staff to champion religious moderation in their classrooms. A considerable portion of educators lack the necessary professional development and instructional tools to design lessons that meaningfully foster moderate values. Concerns about educator quality persist, particularly as some continue to rely on outdated pedagogical frameworks that are ill-suited to the demands of contemporary moderate Islamic education (Winoto, 2022; Zulfatmi, 2023).

The rapid growth of digital technology and social media platforms has further complicated the teaching of religious moderation. Students frequently encounter intolerant and extremist narratives through their online activities and digital devices — a problem that intensified considerably during the Covid-19 pandemic when screen time surged. Beyond external influences, students' grasp of religious moderation tends to remain surface-level; many conflate it simply with tolerance, without appreciating the fuller and more nuanced ways these values manifest in everyday conduct (Mukhibat et al., 2024; Afwadzi, Sumbulah, Ali, & Qudsy, 2024).

At the policy level, efforts to institutionalize religious moderation have encountered notable resistance, particularly from conservative factions, alongside an absence of coherent directives and meaningful backing from educational authorities (Solechan et al., 2024). Numerous Islamic educational institutions struggle to operationalize moderation programs due to the scarcity of concrete guidance or governmental support. This uncertainty leaves curriculum integration efforts in a precarious state, further aggravated by fears that moderation policies conflict with deeply rooted traditional or conservative orientations

prevalent in certain communities. In the absence of robust institutional backing, moderation initiatives are at risk of becoming ineffectual, ultimately diminishing their capacity to cultivate tolerance and multicultural appreciation among learners. It is therefore imperative that educational authorities provide sustained and substantive support to enable Islamic institutions to implement moderation values in a consistent and enduring manner.

Taken together, these findings underscore the intricate and layered nature of the challenges surrounding religious moderation in Islamic educational settings. Deficiencies in curriculum design, inadequately trained educators, harmful technological influences, and superficial student understanding collectively constitute the primary barriers requiring urgent redress. Left unaddressed, these challenges threaten to undermine the overall effectiveness of moderation programs and impede the cultivation of tolerant and peace-oriented values among students. Robust institutional commitment is indispensable, and meaningful progress will require coordinated efforts among government bodies, educational institutions, and local communities to develop holistic and enduring solutions.

Findings from this study reveal that a number of Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia have made measurable strides in weaving moderation values into their curricula, with a particular emphasis on cultivating tolerance, rejecting violence, and honoring cultural plurality. These initiatives have also contributed to strengthening students' sense of national identity and social cohesion. Nevertheless, persistent obstacles remain — among them, teacher unpreparedness, difficulties in meaningfully embedding moderation into the curriculum, the disruptive potential of digital media, and a tendency among students to engage with religious moderation only at a superficial level. Uneven support across institutions and pushback from conservative quarters have further constrained the reach and impact of these programs. Sustaining momentum will require a multifaceted strategy that prioritizes rigorous teacher professional development, thoughtful management of technological influences, and more consistent backing from educational governance structures.

The findings further demonstrate that when moderation values are deliberately and systematically woven into the Islamic education curriculum, they can effectively nurture tolerance, discourage violence, and deepen students' commitment to national unity. A well-structured curriculum has the capacity to embed these values through pedagogical methods that center diversity and peaceful coexistence. Teacher readiness and institutional infrastructure emerge as pivotal factors in determining how successfully moderation is implemented. When educators lack adequate preparation — whether in training or resources — the internalization of moderation values is significantly hindered. The pervasive influence of technology, particularly social media platforms that frequently amplify intolerant viewpoints, further distorts students' understanding of moderation, leaving their engagement with the concept shallow and underdeveloped.

This study affirms that embedding religious moderation within the Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia serves as an effective mechanism for building tolerance, promoting non-violence, and fostering respect for cultural diversity. This conclusion resonates with Raihani's (2011) argument in favor of a whole-school approach as a comprehensive strategy for advancing tolerance across all dimensions of schooling. A community-engaged orientation

is also evident in the research, as Islamic institutions draw on diverse extracurricular platforms to reinforce moderation values — an approach that mirrors the findings of Zakiah et al. (2023), who highlighted the instrumental role of teachers and their pedagogical strategies in nurturing social tolerance at the primary school level.

At the same time, this study introduces new analytical dimensions by foregrounding the challenges that digital technology poses to moderation education. The proliferation of intolerant content via social media — particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic — represents an underexplored challenge in existing literature. While Sakallı et al. (2021) advocates for the thoughtful integration of technology in tolerance education, this study reveals that, without adequate oversight, digital platforms can actively undermine moderation efforts rather than support them.

From a broader social and historical perspective, these findings affirm that Islamic education in Indonesia serves a function far exceeding the transmission of religious doctrine — it acts as a vital vehicle for advancing inclusive and peace-oriented social values. Ideologically, the moderation framework embedded within Islamic curricula reinforces national belonging and cultivates a spirit of tolerance befitting Indonesia's pluralistic society. This research enriches the scholarly conversation on how formal education can serve as an effective counterforce to radicalism while shaping a generation more receptive to diversity and pluralism.

The study ultimately highlights the curriculum's pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward religious moderation, while also revealing key points of dysfunction — notably, teacher unpreparedness and the tendency of students to engage with moderation in only a cursory manner. Insufficient investment in teacher training and disparities in institutional support carry the potential to erode the effectiveness of moderation programs over time. While Islamic education has demonstrated its capacity to serve as a bulwark against radicalism, the dual threats of unchecked technological influence and superficial comprehension demand deliberate and sustained attention.

In light of these findings, several policy imperatives emerge. First, substantial investment in teacher training is essential to equip educators with the competencies needed to genuinely instill moderation values in their classrooms. Second, targeted policies addressing the management of digital media — including mechanisms for monitoring social media content that may distort student perceptions — are urgently needed. Third, institutional support must be distributed more equitably, underpinned by strengthened collaboration between government, educational institutions, and local communities, to ensure the reliable and effective delivery of religious moderation programs at scale.

CONCLUSION

Research findings indicate that a number of Islamic educational institutions across Indonesia have made notable progress in embedding religious moderation principles within their curricula, placing particular emphasis on fostering tolerance, rejecting violence, and honoring cultural diversity. Beyond academic learning, these programs have demonstrated a positive impact on students' sense of national identity and their dedication to social cohesion.

Nevertheless, the implementation of such programs is not without obstacles. Among the most prominent difficulties are insufficient preparedness among educators, challenges in deeply internalizing moderation values, the adverse effects of digital technology, and a superficial grasp of religious moderation concepts by students. Compounding these issues are disparities in institutional backing and opposition from conservative elements within society, both of which hinder the overall progress of moderation initiatives. Addressing these barriers will require a well-rounded and holistic approach that encompasses robust teacher professional development, responsible management of technological influences, and firmer commitment from educational policymakers.

From a scholarly standpoint, this research enriches the existing body of knowledge by illuminating how formal schooling — especially within Islamic educational settings — can serve as an effective vehicle for cultivating religious tolerance and moderation in diverse, multicultural societies. Notably, the study draws attention to the often-overlooked dimension of regulating and managing technology use within the context of religious moderation education, an area that remains underexplored in academic discourse.

In terms of scope, this study acknowledges its methodological boundaries, as it employs a literature-based qualitative framework dependent on secondary data sources. Future research endeavors are encouraged to venture into field-based investigations using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, so as to generate more robust empirical evidence regarding the real-world application of religious moderation across diverse educational environments. Prospective studies might also delve further into how technology-related policy interventions could be leveraged to reduce students' exposure to intolerant and extremist content online.

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