

Islamic Religious Education and Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Context of Indonesian Multiculturalism

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in building religious moderation amid Indonesia's diverse society. This study examines the role of IRE in strengthening religious moderation through a systematic literature review of 20 scientific articles published between 2020 and 2025. The results show that PAI contributes significantly to instilling values of tolerance, anti-radicalism, and respect for differences through three main strategies: integrating multicultural values into the curriculum, developing dialogical and inclusive learning methods, and strengthening the role of Islamic boarding schools and educational institutions as centers of religious moderation. The concept of wasathiyyah (middle path) is the philosophical foundation for the implementation of religious moderation in various educational institutions. The main challenges faced include uneven understanding among educators, limited teacher competence, cultural resistance, and a lack of systemic support. This study recommends strengthening the capacity of educators through continuous training, developing a more inclusive and contextual curriculum, and synergistic collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community to ensure that the values of religious moderation are continuously internalized in the life of Indonesia's multicultural society.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia as a nation characterized by profound religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity, faces substantial challenges in maintaining social harmony and national cohesion. While such diversity represents a valuable national asset, it simultaneously carries the potential for conflict if not managed wisely. In this context, religious moderation has emerged as a critical issue requiring serious attention from all sectors of society, particularly educational institutions, which hold a strategic role in shaping the religious character and worldview of younger generations (Arimatea & Sukarna, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) as an integral component of the national education system bears significant responsibility in instilling the values of religious moderation among students (Sumadiyah & Wahyuni, 2024). IRE is not merely tasked with transmitting religious knowledge; rather, it must shape moderate, tolerant, and

diversity-appreciating religious attitudes and behaviors (Nurbayani & Amiruddin, 2024). In the Indonesian context, religious moderation does not imply diminishing religious commitment; instead, it refers to understanding and practicing religion in a balanced manner, respecting differences, and rejecting all forms of extremism (Syahrin et al., 2023).

The urgency of strengthening religious moderation through IRE has intensified alongside growing phenomena of intolerance, radicalism, and even terrorism carried out in the name of religion (Pratama et al., 2025). Various studies indicate that radical ideologies occasionally infiltrate educational environments, including through biased instructional materials or educators who hold exclusive religious interpretations (Zalnur et al., 2023). Therefore, systematic and well-designed efforts are required to ensure that IRE at all educational levels truly serves as an effective medium for disseminating the values of religious moderation.

Although numerous studies have addressed IRE and religious moderation, gaps remain regarding comprehensive understanding of how IRE can concretely reinforce religious moderation within Indonesia's multicultural context (Mala & Hunaida, 2023). This study is essential for several reasons. First, Indonesia possesses a unique multicultural landscape with a Muslim majority alongside diverse internal Islamic traditions and multiple other officially recognized religions. Second, Indonesia's experience in managing pluralism through education offers valuable insights for other multicultural nations (Rantung 2024). Third, educational practitioners require evidence-based guidance on effective strategies for implementing religious moderation in IRE.

This study aims to identify the strategic role of IRE in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia, analyze effective strategies and pedagogical models for instilling moderation values, evaluate challenges and barriers in implementing religious moderation through IRE, and formulate recommendations to enhance IRE as an effective instrument of religious moderation. The study is grounded in a conceptual framework that integrates Islamic educational theory, the concept of religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*), and multicultural education theory (Usman et al., 2025). *Wasathiyyah*, or moderation in Islam, refers to the principle of the middle path, avoiding extremism and seeking balance in all aspects of religious life, consistent with the Qur'anic notion of Muslims as *ummatan wasathan* (a just and moderate community) (Idi & Priansyah, 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a systematic literature review approach to examine and synthesize findings from various research studies related to Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and religious moderation within the context of Indonesian multiculturalism. This method was selected because it enables a comprehensive analysis of trends, strategies, and empirical evidence from existing scholarly works, thereby providing a holistic understanding of the role of IRE in strengthening religious moderation.

Research data were obtained from scientific journal articles published between 2020 and 2025, with a specific focus on the Indonesian context. This time frame was chosen as it represents a period during which religious moderation became a national priority, particularly following the Indonesian government's structured initiatives to strengthen religious moderation across educational institutions. A total of 20 journal articles were used as primary data sources, selected based on their relevance to the research theme.

The inclusion criteria consisted of articles published in scientific journals between 2020 and 2025, studies focusing on Islamic Religious Education, religious moderation, or multicultural education in Indonesia, research conducted across different educational levels from primary to higher education, and publications that demonstrated methodological rigor and appeared in accredited journals. Exclusion criteria included articles focusing solely on theological aspects without educational relevance, studies lacking substantive discussion on implementation or educational strategies, and publications with unclear methodologies or questionable academic quality.

Data analysis was carried out through several stages. The first stage involved collecting and categorizing literature, where each article was reviewed comprehensively to extract essential information, including research objectives, methodologies, key findings, and recommendations. Articles were grouped according to core themes, such as curriculum integration and implementation, the role of pesantren and local wisdom, multicultural challenges and strategies, and the role of stakeholders in promoting religious moderation. The second stage consisted of thematic synthesis to identify recurring patterns, emerging trends, and dominant themes across the literature. This process included identifying pedagogical strategies, mapping best practices, and outlining consistent challenges reported by scholars. The third stage involved comparative analysis to evaluate differences in approaches and implementation contexts, thus identifying determining factors contributing to the success of religious moderation initiatives. The final stage was integrative synthesis, which consolidated insights from all sources to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework illustrating the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education in reinforcing religious moderation in Indonesia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Framework and Foundations of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

Religious moderation, or *wasathiyyah*, in Islam constitutes a fundamental conceptual and philosophical foundation for developing an inclusive and tolerant Islamic Religious Education (IRE) framework (Idi & Priansyah, 2023). Rooted in Qur'anic teachings, the concept derives from the designation of Muslims as *ummatan wasathan*, a community characterized by moderation, balance, and moral responsibility toward humanity. Within the Indonesian context, *wasathiyyah* is interpreted as a balanced religious orientation that harmonizes steadfast commitment to one's own faith with profound respect for the religious practices and beliefs of others (Syahrin et al., 2023). In educational settings, this principle serves as a normative guide for cultivating learners who are religiously grounded yet capable of embracing diversity and participating productively in a pluralistic society. The principle of moderation thus functions not merely as a theological ideal but as a pedagogical imperative that shapes learning objectives, instructional practices, and character formation in Islamic education.

Research indicates that the implementation of religious moderation within Indonesia's Islamic education system is operationalized through four core values: national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Aruman et al., 2024). These values provide a normative compass for curriculum development, teaching strategies, and institutional culture, enabling the creation of an educational environment that nurtures inclusivity, civic responsibility, and cultural harmony. Islamic educational institutions, particularly Islamic higher education institutions, perform a strategic role in safeguarding the middle path in religious life (Idi

& Priansyah, 2023). Beyond their function as centers for transmitting religious knowledge, they act as intellectual and moral fortresses that prevent the penetration of ideological extremism, whether emanating from radical conservatism or excessive liberalism. Through structured curricular frameworks, scholarly discourse, and community engagement, these institutions mediate between traditional religious teachings and contemporary socio-cultural dynamics, ensuring that religious education remains relevant, balanced, and socially constructive.

A multidisciplinary approach to understanding religious moderation has become increasingly essential. The integration of theological, sociological, pedagogical, and cultural perspectives strengthens the theoretical and practical dimensions of moderation, allowing for more comprehensive and contextually grounded implementation (Aruman et al., 2024). Such an approach recognizes that religious moderation is not solely a theological doctrine, but also a sociocultural construct that evolves in response to Indonesia's pluralistic realities. By situating *wasathiyyah* within broader theoretical paradigms including multicultural education, peace education, and civic-ethical education scholars and practitioners are better equipped to formulate educational models that cultivate critical thinking, empathy, intercultural competence, and peaceful coexistence. This multidisciplinary lens also highlights the importance of adaptive pedagogy, community partnerships, and policy alignment to ensure that moderation values are internalized at both institutional and societal levels. Ultimately, strengthening religious moderation in Islamic education necessitates intellectual depth, contextual sensitivity, and sustained collaboration across educational stakeholders, policymakers, and community leaders.

Curriculum Strategies and Implementation of Religious Moderation

The Islamic Religious Education (IRE) curriculum plays an essential role in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia (Sumadiyah & Wahyuni, 2024). The development of a curriculum grounded in multicultural values and religious moderation has become a priority within the Islamic education system, reflecting a broader national agenda to cultivate pluralistic and harmonious citizenship. Research indicates that an effective IRE curriculum for fostering moderation is one that systematically integrates religious teachings with values of nationalism, humanity, and cultural diversity (Usman et al., 2025). This integration is not merely an addition of thematic content related to tolerance; rather, it involves a fundamental reorientation of the pedagogical paradigm, emphasizing Islamic principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* Islam as a mercy for all creation. In this sense, curriculum design shifts from doctrinal instruction toward a transformative educational approach that nurtures ethical sensibility, empathy, and cross-cultural awareness.

The implementation of moderation-oriented curricula in Islamic higher education institutions demonstrates varied yet promising approaches (Huda 2024). Some institutions adopt an integrated model in which moderation values are embedded across all courses, ensuring continuous exposure and reinforcement throughout the learning process. Others utilize a stand-alone course framework, offering religious moderation as an independent subject with designated credit hours. Comparative evaluations reveal that the integrated model tends to be more effective in internalizing moderation values, as students engage with the principles of moderation across multiple learning contexts and disciplinary perspectives (Huda 2024). Nevertheless, this approach also presents significant pedagogical challenges, particularly with respect to the required competency

of educators, who must demonstrate not only mastery of religious content but also the ability to embed moderation narratives within diverse instructional materials and learning scenarios.

In addition to integration strategies, the development of a multicultural curriculum in IRE emphasizes the contextualization of Islamic teachings within Indonesia's socio-cultural realities (Mala & Hunaida, 2023). This perspective recognizes that Indonesia's pluralistic social fabric necessitates pedagogical strategies that transcend theological and ritualistic instruction, encouraging learners to examine how Islamic values can serve as constructive frameworks for addressing societal challenges such as intolerance, discrimination, and intergroup conflict. By grounding religious learning in lived realities, the curriculum fosters a critical, reflective, and socially engaged understanding of Islam, equipping students with the intellectual and moral capacity to navigate complex religious phenomena in the contemporary world (Nurbayani & Amiruddin, 2024). Contextualization thereby becomes a vital pedagogical tool, enabling learners not only to grasp doctrinal truths but also to apply religious principles to promote peace, justice, and cooperative coexistence within a multicultural society.

Furthermore, a moderation-based curriculum requires alignment between epistemic orientation and pedagogical practice, ensuring that learning environments cultivate dialogic participation, interfaith literacy, and ethical reasoning. This orientation strengthens the role of IRE as a mechanism for character formation rather than mere doctrinal transmission, positioning Islamic education as a proactive force in shaping inclusive civic identity. In sum, curriculum strategies that emphasize integration, contextualization, and experiential learning constitute essential pathways for embedding religious moderation in the fabric of Islamic education in Indonesia.

The Role of Pesantren and Local Wisdom in Strengthening Religious Moderation

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, play a unique and pivotal role in fostering religious moderation (Hanif et al., 2025). Unlike conventional formal educational institutions, pesantren possess distinctive characteristics through their holistic learning system, which encompasses not only cognitive development but also affective and psychomotor growth fostered through intensive interaction between santri (students) and kiai (religious leaders). Research indicates that pesantren are particularly effective in cultivating moderation values through habituation and daily practice, rather than relying solely on formal classroom instruction (Wardi et al., 2023). This immersive environment positions pesantren as transformative spaces where learners internalize religious teachings through lived experience, moral example, and sustained communal engagement.

One of the defining strengths of pesantren in cultivating religious moderation lies in their ability to accommodate and integrate local wisdom with Islamic teachings (Hanif et al., 2025). Many pesantren across Indonesia creatively synthesize indigenous traditions with Islamic values, producing a harmonious blend that reinforces local cultural identity while preserving authentic Islamic principles. This cultural synthesis not only enriches the intellectual and cultural landscape of Islam Nusantara but also instills in students a deep appreciation of cultural plurality and respect for diverse traditions. Examples of such practices include pesantren in Java that incorporate Javanese arts and traditions into Islamic learning, or pesantren in Sulawesi that integrate local cultural rituals into religious life. These practices serve not merely as cultural expressions but also as pedagogical tools that encourage openness, dialogue, and cultural adaptability, demonstrating that Islam can

coexist fluidly and constructively with local cultural expressions.

Modern pesantren have also initiated a range of specialized programs to strengthen religious moderation among students (Wardi et al., 2023). Some pesantren host programs designed specifically for university students from diverse higher education institutions, offering structured learning in Islamic disciplines alongside interfaith dialogue initiatives and community-based social engagement. Such programs have proven effective in internalizing moderation values, as participants encounter religious diversity not only in theoretical form but also as a lived social reality. By interacting with individuals from various cultural and religious backgrounds, learners acquire experiential understanding of tolerance, empathy, and peaceful coexistence. This experiential learning approach reinforces theoretical knowledge with real-world practice, producing a more profound and authentic grasp of moderation and religious tolerance (Idris & Putra, 2021).

Moreover, the pesantren model embodies a deeply rooted socio-religious philosophy that positions communal ethics, humility, and service as integral to religious development. The close mentorship between kiai and santri, embedded ritual practices, community service programs, and collective living arrangements create a value-laden learning environment conducive to nurturing moderate religious identity. As pesantren continue to evolve in response to societal developments, their adaptive capacity and cultural embeddedness position them as strategic institutions in safeguarding Indonesia's pluralistic and multicultural fabric. Through their pedagogical, cultural, and community roles, pesantren remain vital agents in shaping a generation of Muslims who are rooted in religious tradition yet responsive to diversity, social cohesion, and national unity.

Inclusive and Dialogic Pedagogical Approaches

Instructional methods play a critical role in determining the effectiveness of strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education (IRE) (Bahri et al., 2025). Existing research consistently demonstrates that inclusive and dialogic pedagogical strategies are significantly more effective in cultivating moderation values than transmissive, didactic, and monologic methods traditionally applied in religious instruction. In this context, inclusive learning refers to the creation of learning environments where all students—regardless of their religious, ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic backgrounds—feel respected and valued (Bahri et al., 2025). Such learning environments require educators not only to teach about tolerance but also to embody and model it through everyday interactions within the classroom. Thus, inclusivity is practiced not merely as a curricular theme but as an ethical and relational commitment that informs instructional behavior, classroom climate, and student engagement.

Dialogic pedagogy emphasizes reciprocal communication between educators and students, as well as among students themselves (Pratama et al., 2025). Within IRE contexts oriented toward religious moderation, structured discussions and guided dialogues become essential mechanisms for exploring diverse perspectives on complex and sensitive religious issues. By engaging in carefully facilitated conversations, students are encouraged to listen to differing viewpoints, reflect critically on their own assumptions, and develop nuanced understandings of religious diversity. Dialogic learning also strengthens critical thinking skills, which are vital for confronting extremist ideologies that often present oversimplified, binary framings of religious identity and moral truth (Arimatea & Sukarna, 2025). Therefore, dialogic engagement functions not only as a pedagogical method but also as a preventive measure against ideological

radicalization by nurturing intellectual humility, cognitive flexibility, and ethical reasoning.

Experiential and project-based learning approaches have also proven highly effective in strengthening religious moderation (Rantung 2024). Various schools and universities have implemented community-engaged learning initiatives and cross-cultural immersion programs designed to expose learners to real-life pluralistic environments. These initiatives include community service activities in religiously diverse neighborhoods, interfaith collaboration projects, and student exchange programs with institutions representing different religious traditions. Such experiential encounters allow learners to move beyond theoretical abstractions of diversity and instead engage directly with lived social realities. Through authentic interaction with individuals from diverse belief systems, students cultivate empathy, mutual understanding, and a profound sense of shared humanity. As a result, experiential learning offers deeper and more transformative insights into religious moderation than classroom-based instruction alone, reinforcing the principle that effective religious education must integrate intellectual learning with social practice and emotional experience.

Ultimately, inclusive, dialogic, and experiential pedagogies work synergistically to foster democratic classrooms where respect, active listening, collaborative inquiry, and mutual understanding become foundational practices. By integrating these approaches, IRE can move beyond mere transmission of doctrinal content and function as a transformative educational process that prepares students to contribute meaningfully to Indonesia's multicultural and multireligious society. These pedagogical strategies not only strengthen religious moderation as an educational objective but also support broader national aspirations for social cohesion, peaceful coexistence, and civic pluralism.

The Role of Educators and Competency Development

Educators both Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers in schools and lecturers in Islamic higher education institutions, serve as key actors in the implementation of religious moderation (Aziz et al., 2024). Their competencies, personal dispositions, and pedagogical practices substantially influence the effectiveness of transmitting moderation values to students. Research highlights that educators who possess a strong conceptual understanding of religious moderation, demonstrate openness toward diversity, and apply competent pedagogical strategies are markedly more successful in internalizing these values among learners (Sumadiyah & Wahyuni, 2024). Conversely, educators who adhere to rigid and exclusive religious interpretations may inadvertently hinder efforts to promote moderation and, in some cases, contribute to the formation of intolerant attitudes among students. This indicates that the educator's worldview and professional attitude are not secondary factors but central determinants of educational impact.

A significant challenge in strengthening educator competence lies in the fact that not all IRE educators possess sufficient understanding of the conceptual framework of religious moderation or the pedagogical skills required to operationalize it within classroom practice (Zalnur et al., 2023). Many educators continue to employ conventional teaching approaches that emphasize ritualistic and jurisprudential (fiqh) aspects of Islam, without engaging the ethical, spiritual, and socio-humanitarian dimensions necessary to cultivate balanced religious understanding. Additionally, some educators may personally adhere to theological orientations that are less aligned with moderation principles, making pedagogical transformation even more urgent. In response to these challenges,

comprehensive and continuous professional development programs are indispensable (Huda et al., 2024). Such programs must not only enhance educators' theoretical knowledge of moderation but also transform attitudes, strengthen intercultural communication skills, and equip educators with inclusive and dialogic pedagogical techniques. Effective professional development should therefore encompass cognitive, affective, and practical domains to ensure meaningful integration of moderation within instructional practice.

Beyond classroom educators, ulama and religious leaders hold a complementary and influential role in the broader ecosystem of religious moderation in Indonesia (Araniri et al., 2023). In a society where religious authority plays a pivotal role in shaping communal beliefs and values, ulama function as essential opinion shapers and moral guides for the public. Studies indicate that moderate and open-minded ulama can serve as powerful agents of change by promoting tolerance, facilitating interfaith understanding, and countering extremist narratives (Araniri et al., 2023). Their credibility and cultural authority allow them to engage communities in ways that formal education alone may not achieve. Accordingly, collaboration between educational institutions and local religious leaders becomes a strategic necessity to ensure consistency and reinforcement of moderation values across formal and community-based learning spaces. By establishing synergy between schools, pesantren, universities, and religious institutions, the process of value internalization becomes more holistic and socially embedded, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustained and meaningful behavioral transformation among learners.

Students as Agents of Religious Moderation

University students, particularly those enrolled in Islamic higher education institutions, possess significant potential to act as agents of religious moderation within society (Pratama et al., 2025). As a young intellectual cohort with access to advanced knowledge, critical discourse, and broad social networks, students are positioned to serve as amplifiers of moderation values and catalysts for strengthening societal tolerance. Empirical studies indicate that students who actively participate in extracurricular organizations promoting interreligious dialogue and community-based civic engagement typically demonstrate greater openness, inclusivity, and tolerance toward religious diversity (Pratama et al., 2025). Their exposure to structured dialogue, social interaction, and collaborative initiatives nurtures cognitive flexibility and moral awareness, thereby equipping them to contribute meaningfully to inclusive social transformation.

Several universities have implemented specialized programs designed to cultivate students as trained facilitators of religious moderation, yielding highly promising outcomes (Wardi et al., 2023). Such programs commonly encompass conceptual training on moderation, dialogic communication skills, conflict resolution, and direct involvement in community engagement activities. Students who complete these programs subsequently serve as facilitators of interfaith dialogue, campus-based peacebuilding initiatives, and moderation-focused outreach within their respective communities. Peer-to-peer models employed in these programs have proven particularly effective, as messages delivered by fellow students are often perceived as more relatable and credible than those communicated by formal authorities.

Digital platforms further enhance students' strategic role in advancing religious moderation (Aziz et al., 2024). In the digital era, extremist narratives and misinformation circulate rapidly across social media ecosystems, necessitating proactive intervention.

Trained students function as counter-narrative agents, producing and disseminating content that promotes moderation, tolerance, and accurate interpretations of Islamic teachings. Several universities have established dedicated student teams to monitor harmful online content and respond with constructive, moderation-based messaging. Through their digital engagement, students extend the sphere of moderation outreach beyond physical boundaries, contributing to the cultivation of a balanced and peace-oriented digital public sphere.

Challenges and Structural Barriers to Implementation

Despite the proliferation of strategies and initiatives, the implementation of religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education continues to face multifaceted challenges (Pratama et al., 2025). A primary challenge lies in the uneven conceptual understanding of religious moderation among educators and educational stakeholders (Zalnur et al., 2023). Misinterpretations persist, with some viewing moderation as an attempt to weaken religious commitment or impose Westernized religious values. Such misconceptions hinder the institutionalization of moderation practices and necessitate systematic socialization, clarification, and educational outreach initiatives to align collective understanding with authentic Islamic teachings.

In addition, constraints in human and material resources present notable barriers (Sumadiyah & Wahyuni, 2024). Not all Islamic educational institutions possess adequately trained educators capable of implementing moderation-oriented pedagogy. Financial limitations also impede the development of structured training programs and specialized learning resources. Many schools and madrasas, particularly those in remote and underserved regions, continue to grapple with fundamental challenges such as teacher shortages, limited infrastructure, and inadequate access to quality learning materials. In such contexts, religious moderation may not be prioritized over urgent basic educational needs.

Cultural and social resistance within certain communities represents another critical obstacle (Syahrin et al., 2023). In regions characterized by strong conservative traditions, efforts to promote tolerance and respect for religious diversity may be met with suspicion or rejection. Some parents and community leaders fear that moderation initiatives may lead to ideological liberalism or erode traditional Islamic values. Addressing such resistance requires culturally sensitive pedagogical strategies, constructive engagement with community stakeholders, and persuasive demonstration that religious moderation aligns with authentic Islamic teachings grounded in justice, balance, and compassion (Nurbayani & Amiruddin, 2024).

Moreover, systemic coordination challenges exacerbate implementation difficulties (Zalnur et al., 2023). Although the government has formally elevated religious moderation as a national strategic priority, program implementation at the institutional level often remains fragmented and inconsistently coordinated across ministries and agencies. Limited parental involvement further complicates efforts, as some parents remain unaware of the importance of moderation education or inadvertently reinforce contradictory messages at home. Strengthening systemic alignment and parental engagement is therefore essential to cultivate a coherent moderation ecosystem.

Strengthening Strategies and Solutions

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and multidimensional strengthening strategy (Mala & Hunaida, 2023). Central to this effort is the enhancement

of educator competence through sustained, high-quality professional development programs. Training must extend beyond conceptual knowledge to include attitudinal transformation and the development of inclusive, dialogic, and culturally responsive pedagogical skills (Huda et al., 2024). Mentorship mechanisms and communities of practice can facilitate ongoing reflection, collaborative learning, and the exchange of best practices among educators.

Curricular and instructional materials must also be refined to ensure systematic and contextual integration of moderation values (Usman et al., 2025). Islamic Religious Education curricula must undergo continuous evaluation to align with Indonesia's pluralistic realities, incorporating case studies, community narratives, and multimedia resources relevant to learners' socio-cultural contexts (Yasmadi et al., 2024). Engaging learners through varied media formats supports diverse learning styles and fosters greater conceptual internalization.

Collaborative synergy across government agencies, educational institutions, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and media actors is likewise paramount (Idris & Putra, 2021). Coordinated interinstitutional partnerships can foster policy coherence, resource sharing, and unified public messaging. Strengthening parental engagement through structured parenting programs and community outreach can reinforce moderation values at home, creating a supportive multilayered learning environment.

Finally, leveraging digital technologies significantly expands the reach and impact of moderation initiatives (Aziz et al., 2024). Digital platforms offer scalable educational content accessible across geographical boundaries, while social media campaigns amplify positive narratives of tolerance and peaceful coexistence (Pratama et al., 2025). Virtual interfaith exchange programs and online dialogue forums can connect learners from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, fostering mutual understanding and intercultural competence in a globalized learning landscape.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Islamic Religious Education holds a strategic and fundamental role in strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia. Through a systematic analysis of scholarly literature published between 2020 and 2025, the study identifies that Islamic Religious Education contributes significantly to cultivating values of tolerance, anti-radicalism, and respect for diversity through three primary pillars: the development of inclusive and multicultural-based curricula, the implementation of dialogic pedagogical methods that foster deep understanding of diversity, and the optimization of the role of pesantren and Islamic educational institutions as centers of religious moderation that integrate local wisdom with universal Islamic principles.

The concept of *wasathiyyah*, or the middle path in Islam, serves as a strong philosophical foundation for developing moderate and inclusive Islamic Religious Education. The implementation of this concept in educational practice has been shown to shape balanced religious attitudes and behaviors, characterized by respect for differences and rejection of all forms of extremism. Successful implementation, however, largely depends on educator competence and attitudes, the quality of curricula and learning resources, and systemic support from various stakeholders, including government bodies, educational institutions, religious leaders, parents, and the broader community.

The study also identifies significant challenges that continue to hinder the effective implementation of religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education. These include uneven understanding of moderation among educators and communities, limited human and material resources, cultural and social resistance, and insufficient coordination across institutions. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, sustained, and collaborative approach involving all relevant stakeholders. Recommended strategies include strengthening educator competence through continuous professional development, developing more contextual and engaging curricula and learning materials, enhancing synergistic collaboration among stakeholders, and leveraging digital technologies and media to broaden the reach and impact of religious moderation initiatives

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