

Revitalizing Religious Moderation in Islamic Education: Strategies for Preventing Radicalism and Building Peace

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of increasing radicalism in various levels of society, including in educational environments, poses a serious challenge to building peaceful and harmonious religious life. This condition requires the strengthening of religious moderation values that can be integrated into the education system, particularly Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The revitalization of religious moderation is seen as a strategic step in preventing the development of extremist ideologies that have the potential to threaten national unity and integrity. This study aims to analyze the concept and strategies of revitalizing religious moderation in education as an effort to prevent radicalism and build a culture of peace. The research method used is qualitative research with a descriptive approach through library research on various scientific literature, books, and government policies related to religious moderation. The results show that religious moderation rooted in the concept of *wasathiyah* contains values of balance, justice, and tolerance that can suppress the potential for radicalism. On the contrary, radicalism grows as a result of a shallow understanding of religion, narrow interpretation of texts, and a lack of understanding of social realities. In the context of education, strengthening values such as civility, exemplary behavior, citizenship, balance, justice, equality, and tolerance is key to shaping the character of students to be moderate and virtuous. In conclusion, the revitalization of religious moderation in education is not only an effort at deradicalization, but also a foundation for creating a just, civilized, and peace-loving society.

Keywords: *Religious moderation; Islamic education; Radicalism; Peace.*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, a country with high diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion, religious moderation is an important foundation for maintaining social harmony and preventing the spread of extremist ideologies. Etymologically, the term moderation comes from the Arabic word *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which means to be in the middle, fair, and balanced (Lady Eka R, 2024). This concept describes an attitude that is neither excessive nor deficient in understanding and practicing religious teachings. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI, 2025), moderation is defined as an effort to reduce violence and avoid extreme attitudes, which shows balance and reasonableness in thought and action. The essence of religious moderation is to foster a fair, tolerant, and proportional attitude oriented towards human values, justice, and a spirit of togetherness.

Conversely, radicalism emerges as a deviation from the values of balance that form the basis of religious moderation. Terminologically, the term radicalism comes

from the word *radix*, which means root, and refers to an ideology that is extreme and fanatical towards a particular belief (Rahman, 2020). In a socio-religious context, radicalism is characterized by the emergence of closed-mindedness, intolerance, and a tendency to use violence in expressing beliefs (Bahrul Khoir, 2021). This phenomenon did not occur spontaneously, but was triggered by various factors, including a superficial understanding of religion, literal interpretation of religious texts, excessive attitudes in determining what is forbidden, and a lack of awareness of social dynamics (Widiarni et al., 2025). This condition poses a serious threat to the realization of peace and social harmony in Indonesia's diverse society.

In an effort to curb the spread of radicalism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia has initiated a program to strengthen the values of religious moderation in various fields, including education. In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays an important role as a means of internalizing moderate values through a learning process that focuses on strengthening civility (*ta'addub*), exemplary behavior (*qudwah*), citizenship (*muwathanah*), balance (*tawazun*), justice (*i'tidal*), equality (*musawah*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*) (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022). With a comprehensive approach, education serves as a medium for shaping the character of students so that they are able to think critically, respect differences, and uphold the values of humanity and peace.

Previous research entitled *The Relevance of Islamic Religious Education to Religious Moderation and Radicalism* (Rama Armedi et al., 2025) emphasizes that the development of an Islamic Religious Education curriculum based on the values of religious moderation is very important for shaping a balanced, tolerant, and inclusive religious understanding among students. Through the development of contextual learning materials and methods, Islamic Religious Education plays a major role in instilling the values of religious moderation in the school environment. Meanwhile, the study *Internalization of Religious Moderation Values in the Independent Learning Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education* (Hilmin, 2024) shows that PAI seeks to instill moderate education, sourced from the values of justice, equality, mutual respect, and balance as contained in the Qur'an. Educational institutions are effective means of fostering these values in society. The instillation of religious moderation in educational institutions is very important because Islam is a religion of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a blessing for the universe) that upholds respect for differences. Thus, religious moderation is one of the strategic efforts to prevent divisions between religious communities and strengthen the social stability of the nation.

Therefore, reinforcing the values of religious moderation in education is a strategic step to prevent the growth of radicalism and foster a culture of peace. The

integration of moderate values into the Islamic Education curriculum is expected to raise students' awareness of the importance of tolerance and balance in religion. Based on this, this study focuses on efforts to revitalize religious moderation in education as an effective strategy in countering radicalism and building a harmonious, just, and civilized life in the midst of Indonesia's diverse society.

METHODS

Subject of Research

The subject of research in this study is conceptually rooted in the theoretical landscape of Islamic education, specifically focusing on the revitalization of religious moderation. Rather than utilizing human participants in a clinical or field setting, the inquiry centers on a comprehensive examination of scholarly literature regarding the mitigation of radicalism and the cultivation of a culture of peace. The scope of the study is defined by the interplay between educational policies, pedagogical strategies, and theological interpretations that contribute to a harmonious social framework, treating these concepts as the primary objects of analysis.

Instrument

Regarding the research instruments, this study posits the researcher as the key instrument for data selection and interpretation. The research relies upon a library research design, utilizing a curated selection of academic repositories and digital libraries as the functional tools for information retrieval. These bibliographic resources serve as the medium through which valid scientific literature is identified. The instrumentation process is governed by specific inclusion criteria, ensuring that only sources demonstrating high relevance to the themes of religious moderation and educational reform are selected for the review process.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection and analysis procedures were conducted through a rigorous qualitative approach utilizing descriptive analysis methods. The data collection phase involved the systematic identification and retrieval of secondary data, primarily comprising peer-reviewed journals, academic articles, and previous research findings that align with the study's objectives. Following the accumulation of these resources, the analysis proceeded through a literature review framework. This involved a critical reading and synthesis of the selected texts, where information was not merely compiled but deconstructed and reorganized to draw meaningful conclusions. By employing descriptive analysis, the study elucidates complex theoretical relationships, ultimately synthesizing diverse academic perspectives to provide a holistic understanding of how Islamic education can be effectively leveraged to prevent radicalism and sustain peace.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The term moderation comes from the Arabic word *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which has similar meanings to *tawassuth* (middle ground), *i'tidal* (fairness), and *tawazun* (balance). In *Mu'jam Mufahras li Alfadzil Qur'an al-Karim*, the word *wasath* and its derivatives are mentioned four times in the Qur'an, including in Surah Al-Baqarah (2):143, Al-'Adiyat (100):5, Al-Ma'idah (5):89, and Al-Qalam (68):28 (Lady Eka R., 2024). According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI, 2025), moderation is defined as “reducing violence” and “avoiding extremism.” Therefore, a moderate person is an individual who is reasonable, not excessive, and able to maintain balance. The essence of religious moderation is a fair and balanced attitude in understanding, responding to, and practicing religious teachings. This principle requires a balance between reason and revelation, physical and spiritual aspects, rights and obligations, as well as individual and community interests. Essentially, religious moderation is oriented towards justice, humanity, and equality. The term *wasathiyah* itself is opposite in meaning to *tatarruf*, which indicates a tendency towards extremism, radicalism, and excessive attitudes (Hilmin, 2024).

The term radicalism comes from two words, namely “radical” and “ism.” The word radical means root, while *ism* means belief or school of thought. According to Horby, radical describes an attitude that is extreme, fanatical, revolutionary, and fundamental (Rahman, 2020). The meaning of radical can vary depending on the perspective used. Generally, radical groups are characterized by excessive fanaticism, which fosters monolithic, exclusive, and intolerant radicalism. Based on this definition, radicalism can be understood as a narrow-minded and conservative movement that often uses violence to spread its beliefs. Acts of terror that cause fear are one manifestation of this. In addition, radicalism is also an extreme social, political, or religious view that contradicts the values recognized by the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), thus having the potential to trigger social, political, and interfaith conflicts and disrupt public order (Bahrul Khoir, 2021). However, radicalism does not always lead to acts of terror; some of its adherents only express extreme ideas without being directly involved in acts of violence.

Radicalism does not arise on its own, but there are factors that influence it. Understanding these factors is very important to prevent the spread of radicalism. These factors include (Widiarni et al., 2025):

- a. Super Shallow Religious Understanding: People with limited religious knowledge tend to interpret teachings in a partial way. They haven't been able to dig deep into the essence, purpose, and true meaning of religious teachings.
- b. Literal Interpretation of Texts: Radical groups generally adhere strictly to the literal meaning of religious texts without considering the context, intent, or

- purpose behind them. They tend to reject methods of interpretation that use analogy or legal reasoning (qiyas) in understanding new issues.
- c. Focus on Minor Issues: They often focus on debates over minor issues and branches of doctrine, thereby neglecting more essential issues, such as the welfare of the people, the continuity of existence, and the strengthening of identity.
 - d. Excessive Attitude in Prohibiting: People who have limited understanding of Sharia law tend to be rigid and inflexible. They often exaggerate the restrictions on things that are considered haram and display an extreme point of view.
 - e. Lack of Understanding of Reality: A lack of understanding of history, natural laws (sunnatullah), and the realities of life is also a significant factor. This limited knowledge makes it difficult for individuals to adapt and understand the changes and dynamics that occur within society.

Therefore, in an effort to prevent the emergence of radicalism, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has established the application of religious moderation values that can be adopted by educational institutions. As one of the government's programs, religious moderation requires continuous strengthening and development. This responsibility lies primarily with Islamic Religious Education (PAI), which plays an important role in fostering awareness and understanding of religious moderation. The approach used must be comprehensive, emphasizing respect for differences, critical thinking, and respect for diversity (Ikhwan et al., 2023). In this context, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has formulated a number of main themes of religious moderation values that are applied in educational units (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2022) as follows:

- a. Civilized (ta'addub), which means upholding noble moral values and possessing strong character, identity, and integrity as khairu ummah in living a civilized life in society.
- b. Exemplary behavior (qudwah), which includes pioneering spirit, exemplary behavior, inspiration, and serving as a role model for others. Thus, it can be interpreted as an attitude that inspires and pioneers positive actions for the sake of the common good.
- c. Citizenship and nationality (muwatanah), which is an attitude that shows acceptance of religious diversity, reflected through the behavior and spirit of nationalism of citizens. This attitude is manifested in obedience to applicable regulations, compliance with state laws, and commitment to preserving Indonesian culture.

- d. Taking the middle path (*tawassut*), which is a form of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a balanced manner, without being excessive or neglecting the values of religious teachings themselves.
- e. Balance (*tawazun*), which is the way of understanding and practicing religious teachings proportionally by balancing worldly and spiritual aspects, as well as having firmness in upholding principles to distinguish between what constitutes deviation and what is merely a difference.
- f. Straightforward and decisive (*I'tidal*), which is an attitude that reflects the ability to be fair by putting everything in its proper place, as well as carrying out rights and obligations in a balanced and appropriate manner.
- g. Equality (*musawah*), which means not discriminating against others because of differences in beliefs, traditions, or backgrounds.
- h. Consultation (*Shura*), whereby every issue is resolved through a consultation process to reach a mutual agreement based on the principle of prioritizing the greater good above all else.
- i. Tolerance (*tasamuh*), which is respecting and accepting diversity, both in terms of religion and in various other aspects of life.
- j. Dynamic and innovative (*tathawwur wa ibtikar*), meaning open to various changes in line with the times and striving to create innovations for the good and progress of humanity.

In general, the results of this study confirm that efforts to prevent radicalism can be achieved through the strengthening or revitalization of religious moderation values integrated into educational themes. In this case, Islamic religious education has an important role and a great responsibility in fostering an understanding of religious moderation as a preventive measure against radicalism and to create a peaceful and harmonious life.

CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to analyze scholarly literature to understand the conceptual landscape of religious moderation and radicalism and to investigate the strategic role of revitalizing religious moderation values within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) as an effective strategy for countering radicalism and fostering social harmony in Indonesia. The study confirmed that religious moderation (*wasathiyah*) is fundamentally characterized by an attitude that is balanced, fair, and proportional (*tawassuth, i'tidal, tawazun*), focusing on human values and justice. Conversely, radicalism is driven by factors such as shallow religious understanding, literal interpretation of texts, excessive rigidity (*tatarruf*), and a lack of awareness of social dynamics. The findings highlight the significant role of educational institutions as an effective medium for fostering a tolerant and inclusive

religious understanding (*rahmatan lil 'alamin*). This study reinforces the theoretical notion that integrating moderate values into the PAI curriculum is a strategic intervention that strengthens social stability and prevents interfaith division. It provides conceptual support for policymakers and educators by delineating specific, actionable themes (*ta'addub, qudwah, muwathanah*, etc.) that can be used to shape students' character, encouraging critical thinking and respect for Indonesia's high diversity. The primary limitation of this study lies in its conceptual nature and library research design. The study centered on the theoretical landscape of educational policies and theological interpretations, relying exclusively on secondary data (academic articles and previous research). Consequently, the conclusions, while robust conceptually, lack empirical validation regarding the actual effectiveness or on-the-ground implementation of these moderation values within specific PAI classrooms or institutions. Future research should prioritize empirical field studies utilizing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches (e.g., case studies, action research) to assess the practical implementation, pedagogical strategies, and efficacy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' ten moderation themes in various PAI settings. Further research could also explore the impact of digital media on radicalization and moderation processes among students.

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