

A Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society

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ABSTRACT

Religious moderation has become a strategic educational agenda in multicultural societies as a response to the increasing challenges of religious intolerance, radicalism, and socio-cultural polarization. Although numerous studies have examined the relationship between Islamic Religious Education (IRE) and religious moderation, existing research generally focuses on individual educational components, such as curriculum, teachers, learning strategies, or institutional policy, without explaining the systematic relationship among these components. This study aims to develop a Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society. The study employed a Systematic Library Research (SLR) approach by analyzing peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2020 and 2025 and indexed in Scopus, Web of Science, DOAJ, and SINTA. The selected literature was synthesized using Thematic Analysis to identify recurring concepts and reconstruct theoretical relationships. The findings reveal five interconnected dimensions of the proposed framework, namely Input (*Wasatiyyah* values, multicultural society, and national commitment), Islamic Religious Education (curriculum, teacher competence, learning strategies, school culture, and digital literacy), Internalization Process (dialogue, reflection, habituation, experiential learning, and collaborative learning), Output (religious character, tolerance, justice, inclusiveness, and mutual respect), and Outcome (religious moderation, social harmony, and a peaceful multicultural society).

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Religious Moderation; Wasatiyyah; Conceptual Framework; Multicultural Society; Systematic Library Research.

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of globalization, digital transformation, and the increasing intensity of multicultural interactions have significantly reshaped the religious landscape worldwide. Although globalization facilitates intercultural communication and knowledge exchange, it also creates new challenges, including religious intolerance, identity polarization, hate speech, extremism, and radicalism disseminated through digital media. In many multicultural societies, these phenomena threaten social cohesion and weaken national integration. Indonesia, recognized as one of the world's most culturally, ethnically, and religiously diverse countries, faces similar challenges in maintaining harmonious relationships among its pluralistic communities. Consequently, strengthening religious moderation has become one of the strategic priorities of national development, particularly within educational institutions, because education serves as the primary instrument for shaping citizens' attitudes, values, and social behavior¹.

¹ Yaqut Cholil Qoumas, Rosila Bee Binti Mohd Hussain, and Rahimin Affandi Bin Abdul Rahim, "The Dissemination of Religious Moderation Through the Policy of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs," *QIJIS (Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies)* 12, no. 1 (July 2024): 147–76, <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v12i1.27552>; Rahmadi Rahmadi and Hamdan Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has consistently emphasized religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) as a national strategy for preserving social harmony while preventing religious radicalism and intolerance. Religious moderation is understood as a balanced religious attitude that encourages individuals to uphold their religious beliefs while simultaneously respecting diversity, rejecting violence, maintaining national commitment, and accommodating local cultural traditions². Such an approach reflects the Islamic principle of *wasatiyyah*, which promotes justice (*'adl*), balance (*taw zun*), tolerance (*tas mu*), equality (*mus wah*), and peaceful coexistence. Therefore, religious moderation should not be interpreted as reducing religious commitment but rather as strengthening religious understanding that is contextual, inclusive, and responsive to multicultural realities³.

Recent studies indicate that religious moderation has evolved from a theological discourse into a multidisciplinary educational paradigm encompassing curriculum development, educational policy, pedagogical innovation, character education, and institutional transformation. Burhanuddin and Ilmi⁴ demonstrate that Indonesian higher education institutions implement diverse typologies of religious moderation according to their institutional contexts, indicating that moderation cannot be effectively promoted through a single educational approach. Similarly, Nasir and Rijal⁵ argue that mainstreaming religious moderation within Islamic higher education requires the integration of curriculum, institutional policy, academic culture, and leadership commitment. These findings imply that strengthening religious moderation requires a comprehensive educational ecosystem rather than isolated educational interventions.

Among various educational approaches, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a strategic position because it functions not merely as a subject transmitting religious knowledge but also as a process of cultivating ethical awareness, religious character, and responsible citizenship. Islamic Religious Education is expected to transform students' cognitive understanding into attitudes and behaviors that reflect Islamic values in everyday social interactions. Consequently, the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education should not only be measured by students' mastery of religious concepts but also by their ability to demonstrate tolerance, social responsibility, inclusiveness, and respect for diversity within multicultural communities⁶.

The strategic role of Islamic Religious Education has attracted increasing scholarly attention over the past decade. Mulyana⁷ reveals that religious moderation values have been incorporated into Islamic Religious Education textbooks in Indonesia; however, their implementation remains highly dependent on teachers' pedagogical competence and contextual

Institutions in Indonesia,” *Khazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam Dan Humaniora* 21, no. 1 (July 2023): 59–82, <https://doi.org/10.18592/khazanah.v21i1.8487>.

² Qoumas, Hussain, and Rahim, “The Dissemination of Religious Moderation Through the Policy of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.”

³ Rahmadi and Hamdan, “Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia”; Arbanur Rasyid et al., “The Actualization of the Concept of National Fiqh in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia,” *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, July 16, 2022, 433–64, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss2.art5>.

⁴ Nunu Burhanuddin and Darul Ilmi, “Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions,” *JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAM* 16, no. 2 (December 2022): 455–79, <https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.2.455-479>.

⁵ Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, “Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (December 2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>.

⁶ Bakhrudin Fannani and A. Samsul Ma'arif, *Integrasi Pendidikan Islam Dengan Budaya Awig-Awig Pawongan Sebagai Pijakan Pendidikan Yang Toleran: Studi Kasus Di Pondok Pesantren Bali Bina Insani, Melingling Tabanan Bali*, 2021, <http://repository.uin-malang.ac.id/9693/>; Raito Raito, Husnan Sulaiman, and Hafsa Fauziah, “The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation in Indonesia,” *EDUKASIA Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* 5, no. 2 (December 2024): 877–88, <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v5i2.1983>.

⁷ Rohmat Mulyana, “Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (June 2023): 8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8592>.

interpretation. Likewise, Basri et al.⁸ demonstrate that integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) into Islamic Religious Education significantly enhances students' critical understanding of religious diversity while simultaneously strengthening moderation values. These findings indicate that moderation cannot be effectively developed through doctrinal instruction alone but requires reflective, dialogical, and problem-based learning approaches.

Furthermore, curriculum innovation has become an essential strategy for strengthening moderation within Islamic educational institutions. Mukhibat et al.⁹ explain that higher education institutions have increasingly reconstructed their curricula to integrate religious moderation into learning outcomes, instructional strategies, and institutional evaluation systems. This transformation aims to produce graduates capable of responding wisely to social diversity while maintaining strong Islamic identities. Similar findings are reported by Suhendi et al.¹⁰, who emphasize that an integrative curriculum combining Islamic values with multicultural perspectives significantly contributes to preventing radicalism among university students.

Beyond curriculum development, several scholars underline the importance of teachers, learning strategies, and institutional culture in fostering moderation. Ma'arif et al.¹¹ argue that dialogical learning, collaborative discussion, and contextual religious instruction create educational experiences that facilitate the internalization of moderation values. Sodikin and Ma'arif similarly report that implementing moderate Islamic values within university classrooms encourages students to develop balanced religious perspectives and respect for differences. In Islamic boarding schools, Widjaja et al.¹² further demonstrate that anti-radicalism strategies become more effective when integrated into institutional culture, teacher role modelling, and students' daily religious practices rather than being limited to formal classroom instruction.

In the contemporary digital era, strengthening religious moderation also requires educational adaptation to technological developments and changing patterns of religious communication. Azizah et al.¹³ argue that the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has transformed the dissemination of religious knowledge, making digital literacy an indispensable component of Islamic Religious Education. Students must be equipped not only with religious knowledge but also with critical literacy skills that enable them to evaluate religious information circulating through digital platforms. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education should function as a transformative educational process that integrates religious values, critical thinking, digital literacy, multicultural awareness, and ethical responsibility in preparing students to become moderate Muslims capable of contributing positively to peaceful multicultural societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Library Research (SLR) approach to synthesize existing knowledge and construct a conceptual framework of Islamic Religious Education for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies. Unlike traditional narrative

⁸ Hasan Basri et al., "Applying Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) to Strengthen Students' Religious Moderation at Madrasah Aliyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 8, no. 2 (December 2022): 207–20, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.21133>.

⁹ M. Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia," *Cogent Education* 11, no. 1 (December 2024): 2302308, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>.

¹⁰ Saca Suhendi, Wagdy Abdel-Fatah Sawahel, and Kafil Yamin Abdillah, "Preventing Radicalism through Integrative Curriculum at Higher Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (June 2020): 79–94, <https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v6i1.8498>.

¹¹ Fannani and Ma'arif, *Integrasi Pendidikan Islam Dengan Budaya Awig-Awig Pawongan Sebagai Pijakan Pendidikan Yang Toleran*.

¹² Gunawan Widjaja et al., "Anti-Radicalism Islamic Education Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia* 6, no. 2 (April 2022): 74–85, <https://doi.org/10.35316/jpii.v6i2.405>.

¹³ Nurul Azizah et al., "Religious Moderation in The Industrial Era 4.0: Deradicalization Through The Development of Intellectual Traditions at Fadhlu Fadhlan Islamic Boarding School Semarang," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 2 (December 2023): 233–46, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i2.7771>.

reviews, Systematic Library Research follows a transparent, structured, and reproducible procedure for identifying, selecting, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant scientific literature¹⁴. The objective of this approach was not merely to summarize previous findings but to integrate diverse scholarly perspectives into a coherent conceptual framework that explains the relationship between Islamic Religious Education, *wasatiyyah* values, and religious moderation.

Database Selection

The literature search was conducted between January and March 2025 using internationally and nationally recognized academic databases to ensure the credibility and quality of the retrieved publications. The databases included Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), Dimensions, Crossref, Google Scholar, and the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ). To strengthen the Indonesian context, additional searches were conducted in SINTA-indexed journals, particularly journals ranked SINTA 1–3 that publish studies related to Islamic education, religious moderation, multicultural education, and educational policy.

The search employed combinations of the following keywords; *Islamic Religious Education, Religious Moderation, Wasatiyyah, Islamic Education, Multicultural Education, Religious Tolerance, Islamic Educational Institution, Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Agama Islam*. Boolean operators ("AND", "OR") were applied to refine the search strategy and improve the relevance of the retrieved publications.

Inclusion Criteria

The literature included in this study was selected based on several predefined inclusion criteria to ensure the quality, relevance, and credibility of the synthesized evidence. First, only publications published between 2020 and 2025 were considered in order to capture the most recent developments in Islamic Religious Education and religious moderation. Second, the selected studies were required to be published in peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), or Science and Technology Index (SINTA), thereby ensuring their academic quality and scholarly credibility. Third, all publications were required to possess an active Digital Object Identifier (DOI) to guarantee traceability and citation reliability. Furthermore, the included studies had to address one or more themes directly related to the objectives of this research, including Islamic Religious Education, religious moderation, *wasatiyyah* values, multicultural education, Islamic educational policy, and character education. Only articles published in English or Indonesian and available in full-text format were included in the review. Finally, the selected literature was required to contain conceptual, empirical, or systematic review findings that substantially contributed to the development of the proposed conceptual framework of Islamic Religious Education for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they:

1. Were conference abstracts, editorials, book reviews, opinion papers, or unpublished manuscripts.
2. Did not undergo peer-review.
3. Did not provide sufficient methodological information.
4. Focused exclusively on political or legal perspectives without discussing educational dimensions.
5. Were duplicated across multiple databases.
6. Were inaccessible in full text.

¹⁴ Yu Xiao and Maria Watson, "Guidance on Conducting a Systematic Literature Review," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 39, no. 1 (March 2019): 93–112, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X17723971>; Hannah Snyder, "Literature Review as a Research Methodology: An Overview and Guidelines," *Journal of Business Research* 104 (November 2019): 333–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039>.

Literature Screening Process

The literature selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA 2020) framework (Page et al., 2021). Initially, publications were identified through database searches using predefined keywords. Duplicate records were subsequently removed before title and abstract screening was conducted to assess relevance. Eligible articles then underwent full-text assessment based on the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. Finally, only publications demonstrating strong relevance to Islamic Religious Education and religious moderation were included in the thematic synthesis.

Thematic Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using Thematic Analysis, following the six-phase analytical framework developed by Braun and Clarke¹⁵. This approach was selected because it provides a systematic and flexible procedure for identifying, organizing, interpreting, and synthesizing recurring patterns across diverse bodies of literature. Rather than merely summarizing previous studies, thematic analysis enabled the identification of key concepts and the reconstruction of theoretical relationships relevant to the development of a conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education and religious moderation.

The analytical process began with familiarization, during which all selected publications were read repeatedly to obtain a comprehensive understanding of their objectives, theoretical perspectives, methodologies, and principal findings. The second stage involved initial coding, whereby significant concepts, keywords, and recurring ideas related to Islamic Religious Education, religious moderation, multicultural education, and *wasatiyyah* values were systematically identified and coded. Subsequently, the coded data were examined to search for recurring themes, allowing conceptually related categories to be grouped into broader thematic patterns.

In the fourth stage, the preliminary themes were reviewed and refined to ensure conceptual consistency, eliminate redundancy, and strengthen coherence among categories. The fifth stage consisted of defining and naming the themes, during which each theme was clearly conceptualized according to its theoretical contribution to the research objectives. Finally, the identified themes were integrated into a comprehensive conceptual framework, explaining the systematic relationship between Islamic Religious Education and the strengthening of religious moderation in multicultural societies.

The thematic synthesis resulted in six overarching themes that constitute the analytical foundation of this study: (1) Religious Moderation, (2) Islamic Religious Education, (3) Wasatiyyah Values, (4) Educational Strategies, (5) Internalization Process, and (6) Multicultural Society. These interconnected themes were subsequently synthesized to reconstruct the proposed Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society, which represents the principal theoretical contribution of this study.

Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the review, several trustworthiness strategies were employed. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing findings across Scopus, WoS, DOAJ, and SINTA-indexed publications. Second, methodological triangulation was achieved by integrating conceptual, empirical, and systematic review studies. Third, the consistency of coding and thematic interpretation was continuously evaluated throughout the analytical process. Finally, only peer-reviewed publications possessing verified DOI numbers and clear methodological descriptions were included to enhance the reliability and validity of the synthesized findings.

Overall, the Systematic Library Research approach enabled this study to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of Islamic Religious Education as an integrated educational ecosystem for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies. Rather

¹⁵ Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (January 2006): 77–101, <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>.

than merely describing previous studies, this approach facilitated theoretical reconstruction through systematic evidence synthesis, thereby producing a conceptual framework that contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational scholarship.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Conceptualizing Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education

Religious moderation has emerged as one of the central paradigms in contemporary Islamic education, particularly within multicultural societies characterized by religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. In the Indonesian context, religious moderation (*moderasi beragama*) represents a balanced religious attitude that encourages Muslims to uphold their religious commitments while simultaneously respecting diversity, rejecting violence, maintaining national commitment, and accommodating local wisdom¹⁶. Rather than positioning moderation as a compromise of religious doctrine, Islamic scholarship understands it as the practical manifestation of *wasathiyyah*, a Qur'anic principle that guides Muslims toward justice, balance, and peaceful coexistence¹⁷. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education should not merely transmit religious knowledge but should function as a transformative educational process that internalizes moderation values into students' character and social behavior.

The first conceptual foundation of religious moderation is *wasathiyyah*, which refers to the principle of moderation, balance, and excellence in Islamic teachings. Derived from the Qur'anic concept of *ummatan wasatan* (Q.S. Al-Baqarah: 143), *wasathiyyah* reflects an educational philosophy that rejects both religious extremism and excessive liberalism. Within Islamic Religious Education, *wasathiyyah* provides the normative basis for developing inclusive learning environments where students are encouraged to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively while appreciating religious diversity and social plurality¹⁸. Therefore, *wasathiyyah* serves as the philosophical foundation upon which all moderation values are constructed.

The second dimension is *taw zuun* (balance), referring to the harmonious relationship between religious devotion and social responsibility. Islamic Religious Education should cultivate learners capable of balancing textual understanding with contextual reasoning, spiritual commitment with civic responsibility, and personal piety with social engagement. This balanced perspective enables students to respond wisely to contemporary issues without falling into rigid literalism or excessive relativism. Recent curriculum reforms also emphasize the importance of integrating cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains in strengthening moderation values through holistic educational experiences¹⁹.

The third principle, *tas mu* (tolerance), represents the willingness to acknowledge and respect religious, cultural, and ideological diversity while maintaining one's own religious identity. In multicultural societies, tolerance becomes one of the primary educational outcomes expected from Islamic Religious Education. Learning activities that promote dialogue, collaborative problem-solving, multicultural interaction, and reflective discussion contribute

¹⁶ Rahmadi and Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia"; Qoumas, Hussain, and Rahim, "The Dissemination of Religious Moderation Through the Policy of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs."

¹⁷ Rasyid et al., "The Actualization of the Concept of National Fiqh in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia."

¹⁸ Rahmadi and Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia"; Rasyid et al., "The Actualization of the Concept of National Fiqh in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia."

¹⁹ Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia"; Burhanuddin and Ilmi, "Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions."

significantly to nurturing tolerant attitudes among students²⁰. Consequently, *tas mu* should not be interpreted merely as passive acceptance but as active engagement in fostering mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence.

Another essential principle is *i'tid l*, which denotes justice, proportionality, and ethical consistency. Islamic Religious Education should encourage students to make balanced judgments based on fairness rather than prejudice, emotional bias, or ideological extremism. Educational practices emphasizing critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, and ethical reflection contribute substantially to developing students' capacity for objective and just decision-making. Such educational practices are particularly important in preventing radicalism and strengthening democratic citizenship within pluralistic societies²¹.

The final dimension is *mus wah* (equality), which emphasizes equal human dignity regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, gender, or social background. Equality represents one of the essential characteristics of Islamic social ethics and constitutes a fundamental principle for building inclusive educational environments. Islamic Religious Education should therefore promote equal participation, mutual respect, and social justice by creating learning environments free from discrimination and intolerance. The integration of equality into educational practice encourages students to recognize diversity as a divine reality that should be appreciated rather than contested²².

Collectively, these five principles—*wasathiyyah*, *taw zun*, *tas mu*, *i'tid l*, and *mus wah*—constitute the normative and philosophical foundations of religious moderation within Islamic Religious Education. Rather than functioning as isolated moral values, these principles interact dynamically to shape students' religious perspectives, ethical awareness, and social behavior. Islamic Religious Education therefore serves as an integrated educational ecosystem in which moderation values are continuously internalized through curriculum, pedagogy, teacher role modelling, school culture, and social interaction.

The synthesis of previous studies indicates that religious moderation cannot be reduced to a single educational value but should instead be understood as a multidimensional construct composed of interconnected Islamic principles. Existing studies generally examine *wasathiyyah*, *tas mu*, or *taw zun* independently, whereas limited attention has been devoted to explaining their systematic relationship within Islamic Religious Education. This fragmentation has resulted in educational practices that frequently emphasize individual values without developing a comprehensive pedagogical framework for moderation.

Based on the thematic synthesis conducted in this study, religious moderation is conceptualized as an integrated educational construct in which *wasathiyyah* functions as the philosophical foundation, *taw zun* provides epistemological balance, *tas mu* guides social interaction, *i'tid l* ensures ethical decision-making, and *mus wah* establishes inclusive social relations. The interaction among these five dimensions forms the conceptual basis for strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education.

The proposed conceptualization has several implications for Islamic educational practice. First, curriculum development should integrate the five moderation principles as interconnected learning outcomes rather than separate instructional topics. Second, teachers should employ dialogical, collaborative, and reflective pedagogical approaches that facilitate the internalization of moderation values through authentic learning experiences. Third, educational institutions should develop school cultures that reinforce tolerance, justice, equality, and balanced religious understanding through both formal and informal educational activities. Finally, this conceptualization provides the theoretical foundation for developing an

²⁰ Fannani and Ma'arif, *Integrasi Pendidikan Islam Dengan Budaya Awig-Awig Pawongan Sebagai Pijakan Pendidikan Yang Toleran*; Basri et al., "Applying Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) to Strengthen Students' Religious Moderation at Madrasah Aliyah."

²¹ Burhanuddin and Ilmi, "Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions"; Widjaja et al., "Anti-Radicalism Islamic Education Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools."

²² Nasir and Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path"; Raito, Sulaiman, and Fauziah, "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation in Indonesia."

integrated conceptual framework of Islamic Religious Education, which will be elaborated in the subsequent sections of this study.

Strategic Role of Islamic Religious Education

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in strengthening religious moderation because it serves not only as a medium for transmitting religious knowledge but also as a transformative educational process that develops students' religious character, ethical awareness, and social responsibility. In multicultural societies, Islamic Religious Education is expected to produce graduates who possess balanced religious understanding, appreciate diversity, reject extremism, and actively contribute to peaceful social coexistence. Achieving these objectives requires the integration of multiple educational components, including curriculum, teachers, learning strategies, school culture, and the hidden curriculum. These components function as an interconnected educational ecosystem that collectively facilitates the internalization of moderation values²³.

The curriculum constitutes the primary institutional instrument for embedding religious moderation within Islamic Religious Education. A moderation-oriented curriculum should not merely introduce concepts of tolerance and peaceful coexistence but should systematically integrate *wasatiyyah* values into learning outcomes, instructional materials, teaching methods, and assessment practices. Curriculum development should encourage students to critically examine religious diversity, appreciate local wisdom, and develop inclusive perspectives rooted in Islamic teachings. Mukhibat et al. demonstrate that curriculum reconstruction emphasizing religious moderation significantly strengthens students' understanding of multiculturalism and democratic citizenship. Similarly, Suhendi et al.²⁴ argue that integrative curricula combining Islamic values with multicultural education contribute substantially to preventing radicalism and strengthening social cohesion.

Besides curriculum, teachers represent the most influential educational agents in fostering religious moderation. Teachers function not only as knowledge transmitters but also as facilitators, mentors, and moral role models who shape students' attitudes through everyday interactions. Their pedagogical competence, religious perspectives, communication styles, and ethical behaviour substantially influence students' acceptance of moderation values. Ma'arif et al.²⁵ emphasize that teachers who adopt dialogical, reflective, and participatory instructional approaches create learning environments conducive to developing critical religious understanding and mutual respect. Likewise, Mulyana²⁶ found that although moderation values are incorporated into Islamic Religious Education textbooks, successful implementation largely depends on teachers' capacity to contextualize these values within classroom practices.

The effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education also depends on the quality of the learning process. Learning should extend beyond cognitive knowledge acquisition toward experiential and transformative educational experiences that encourage reflection, dialogue, collaboration, and problem-solving. Student-centred pedagogies such as collaborative learning, case-based learning, project-based learning, and reflective discussion enable learners to internalize moderation values through authentic social experiences rather than memorization alone. Basri et al.²⁷ further demonstrate that integrating Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS)

²³ Rahmadi and Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia"; Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia."

²⁴ Suhendi, Sawahel, and Abdillah, "Preventing Radicalism through Integrative Curriculum at Higher Education."

²⁵ Fannani and Ma'arif, *Integrasi Pendidikan Islam Dengan Budaya Awig-Awig Pawongan Sebagai Pijakan Pendidikan Yang Toleran*.

²⁶ Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia."

²⁷ Basri et al., "Applying Higher Order Thinking Skill (HOTS) to Strengthen Students' Religious Moderation at Madrasah Aliyah."

into Islamic Religious Education strengthens students' critical reasoning, enabling them to evaluate religious issues objectively while resisting radical narratives.

Another strategic component is school culture, which functions as the social environment in which moderation values are continuously practiced and reinforced. School culture encompasses institutional norms, interpersonal relationships, leadership practices, extracurricular activities, and daily interactions among students, teachers, and administrators. Educational institutions characterized by inclusive leadership, democratic participation, respect for diversity, and collaborative learning environments are more likely to cultivate moderate religious attitudes than institutions emphasizing doctrinal instruction alone. Nasir and Rijal²⁸ argue that mainstreaming religious moderation requires educational institutions to integrate moderation into institutional governance, organizational culture, and academic traditions rather than limiting it to classroom instruction.

In addition to formal educational structures, the hidden curriculum significantly contributes to the internalization of religious moderation. Hidden curriculum refers to implicit educational experiences transmitted through institutional values, social interactions, behavioural norms, teacher attitudes, peer relationships, and everyday school practices. Students often learn moderation more effectively through observation, habituation, and participation in inclusive school communities than through formal religious instruction. Widjaja et al.²⁹ demonstrate that anti-radicalism education in Islamic boarding schools becomes effective because moderation values are embedded within daily religious activities, institutional traditions, and exemplary leadership. Similarly, Ma'arif³⁰ emphasize that the successful implementation of moderate Islamic values depends largely on continuous habituation within the educational environment.

Collectively, curriculum, teachers, learning strategies, school culture, and hidden curriculum constitute complementary dimensions of Islamic Religious Education that work synergistically to strengthen religious moderation. Rather than functioning independently, these components interact dynamically to create educational experiences that shape students' religious understanding, ethical reasoning, and multicultural competence. Therefore, Islamic Religious Education should be viewed as an integrated educational ecosystem where institutional structures and pedagogical processes collectively facilitate the formation of moderate Muslim citizens.

The thematic synthesis reveals that previous studies generally examine curriculum, teachers, learning strategies, or institutional culture as separate determinants of religious moderation. However, the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education cannot be adequately explained through isolated educational variables. Instead, religious moderation emerges from the interaction among institutional, pedagogical, cultural, and behavioural dimensions that reinforce one another throughout the educational process.

Based on the synthesized literature, this study conceptualizes the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education as an interconnected educational system. The curriculum establishes normative direction, teachers translate moderation values into pedagogical practice, learning strategies facilitate value internalization, school culture reinforces behavioural consistency, and the hidden curriculum ensures continuous habituation. The absence or weakness of any single component reduces the effectiveness of moderation education because religious character develops through cumulative educational experiences rather than isolated instructional activities.

The findings imply that strengthening religious moderation requires a holistic educational reform rather than curriculum revision alone. Educational policymakers should integrate moderation values into curriculum design, teacher professional development,

²⁸ Nasir and Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path."

²⁹ Widjaja et al., "Anti-Radicalism Islamic Education Strategy in Islamic Boarding Schools."

³⁰ Fannani and Ma'arif, *Integrasi Pendidikan Islam Dengan Budaya Awig-Awig Pawongan Sebagai Pijakan Pendidikan Yang Toleran*.

institutional governance, and school culture simultaneously. Teachers should employ dialogical, collaborative, and reflective pedagogies that encourage critical engagement with religious diversity, while educational institutions should establish inclusive environments that reinforce moderation through both formal and informal educational practices. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education should be understood as a comprehensive educational ecosystem in which institutional structures, pedagogical processes, and cultural environments collectively contribute to the sustainable internalization of religious moderation.

Challenges in Strengthening Religious Moderation

The implementation of religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education has demonstrated significant progress in Indonesian educational institutions. Nevertheless, numerous structural, pedagogical, socio-cultural, and technological challenges continue to hinder its effective internalization. These challenges indicate that strengthening religious moderation cannot rely solely on curriculum reform but requires comprehensive educational transformation involving institutional commitment, teacher professionalism, learning innovation, and community participation.

One of the most significant challenges is the rapid development of digital information technology. Digital media have transformed the way religious knowledge is produced, disseminated, and consumed. While digital platforms provide broad opportunities for Islamic learning, they also facilitate the spread of radical narratives, religious misinformation, hate speech, and ideological polarization. Students increasingly obtain religious knowledge from social media, online influencers, and unverified digital sources, which often present exclusive and intolerant interpretations of Islam. Consequently, Islamic Religious Education institutions are challenged to strengthen students' digital literacy and critical thinking skills to enable them to evaluate religious information objectively³¹.

Another challenge concerns the fragmented implementation of religious moderation within educational curricula. Although moderation has been incorporated into national educational policies, curriculum implementation remains inconsistent across educational institutions. In many cases, moderation is introduced only as supplementary content rather than being systematically integrated into learning objectives, teaching materials, assessment systems, and extracurricular activities. Mukhibat³² argue that curriculum transformation requires institutional commitment and continuous evaluation to ensure that moderation values become an integral component of educational practice rather than merely administrative requirements.

Teacher competence also represents a crucial challenge. Teachers play a central role in facilitating moderation values, yet differences in pedagogical competence, religious perspectives, and professional development often influence the quality of moderation education. Some teachers continue to emphasize doctrinal learning without providing sufficient opportunities for dialogue, critical reflection, and multicultural engagement. Consequently, students may acquire religious knowledge without developing the social competencies necessary for living harmoniously in multicultural environments³³.

Institutional culture further influences the sustainability of moderation education. Educational institutions characterized by hierarchical communication, limited participation, and rigid religious interpretation may unintentionally restrict students' opportunities to develop inclusive attitudes. Conversely, schools that promote democratic leadership, collaborative learning, intercultural dialogue, and participatory decision-making create environments more conducive to internalizing moderation values. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation requires not only curriculum reform but also the development of inclusive institutional cultures that consistently reinforce moderation through daily educational experiences³⁴.

Beyond institutional factors, broader social and cultural dynamics continue to influence students' religious attitudes. Increasing political polarization, identity politics, economic

³¹ Azizah et al., "Religious Moderation in The Industrial Era 4.0."

³² Mukhibat et al., "Development and Evaluation of Religious Moderation Education Curriculum at Higher Education in Indonesia."

³³ Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia."

³⁴ Nasir and Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path."

inequality, and social fragmentation frequently shape religious discourse within communities. Students are therefore exposed to conflicting religious narratives both inside and outside educational institutions. This situation requires Islamic Religious Education to strengthen learners' critical reasoning, ethical judgment, and intercultural competence so that moderation values remain applicable within rapidly changing social contexts ³⁵.

Overall, these findings suggest that the challenges of strengthening religious moderation are multidimensional and interconnected. Educational reform should therefore address institutional, pedagogical, technological, and socio-cultural dimensions simultaneously to ensure that moderation values become sustainable educational practices rather than isolated educational initiatives.

The synthesis of previous studies demonstrates that the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening religious moderation is influenced by the interaction of internal educational factors and external social dynamics. Internal challenges include curriculum integration, teacher competence, learning strategies, institutional culture, and hidden curriculum, whereas external challenges involve digital transformation, ideological polarization, socio-political dynamics, and multicultural complexity. The interdependence of these factors indicates that religious moderation should be approached through a systems perspective rather than isolated educational interventions.

From a conceptual perspective, educational institutions possess considerable strengths in promoting moderation through curriculum, teachers, and school culture. However, weaknesses remain in implementation consistency and pedagogical innovation. Simultaneously, technological development and increasing public awareness of moderation create significant opportunities for educational transformation, while radical digital narratives and social polarization constitute persistent external threats. These interactions provide the rationale for developing an integrated conceptual framework capable of connecting institutional resources with broader societal challenges.

Table 1. SWOT Analysis of Challenges in Strengthening Religious Moderation

Strengths	Weaknesses
Religious moderation has become a national educational policy.	Curriculum implementation is inconsistent across institutions.
Islamic Religious Education provides strong normative foundations.	Teachers' competence in moderation pedagogy varies considerably.
Availability of moderation-based curriculum and learning resources.	Learning often remains cognitive rather than transformative.
Institutional support from the Ministry of Religious Affairs.	Hidden curriculum is not systematically managed.
Opportunities	Threats
Digital learning innovations supporting moderation education.	Radical and intolerant narratives spread rapidly through social media.
Increasing public awareness of multiculturalism.	Identity politics and religious polarization.
Curriculum reform emphasizing character education.	Religious misinformation and hate speech.
International collaboration on peace education.	Socio-cultural fragmentation and ideological extremism.

The identified challenges imply that future Islamic Religious Education should adopt a holistic educational strategy integrating curriculum reform, teacher professional development, digital literacy, multicultural learning, and institutional culture. Policymakers should

³⁵ Rahmadi and Hamdan, "Religious Moderation in the Context of Islamic Education: A Multidisciplinary Perspective and Its Application in Islamic Educational Institutions in Indonesia"; Burhanuddin and Ilmi, "Typologies of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education Institutions."

strengthen educational policies supporting moderation across all educational levels, while educational institutions should establish inclusive learning environments encouraging dialogue, collaboration, critical reflection, and intercultural engagement. Such comprehensive reform is expected to strengthen the resilience of educational institutions against radicalism while preparing students to become moderate citizens capable of contributing positively to multicultural societies.

Table 3. Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society

Framework Components	Dimensions	Educational Functions	Expected Outcomes
Input	Wasathiyyah Values (Wasathiyyah, Tawazun, Tasamuh, I'tidal, Musawah)	Establish the philosophical and ethical foundation of Islamic Religious Education	Balanced Islamic worldview
	Multicultural Society	Provide socio-cultural context characterized by diversity, tolerance, and intercultural interaction	Contextual understanding of diversity
	National Commitment	Strengthen commitment to Pancasila, the Constitution, democracy, and national unity	Responsible citizenship
Islamic Religious Education	Curriculum	Integrate moderation values into learning outcomes, teaching materials, assessment, and educational objectives	Moderation-oriented curriculum
	Teacher Competence	Facilitate, mentor, and model religious moderation through pedagogical and professional competence	Teacher as role model of moderation
	Learning Strategy	Apply dialogical, collaborative, reflective, and student-centered learning	Critical and inclusive religious understanding
	School Culture	Build an inclusive educational environment through institutional values, leadership, and daily interaction	Supportive educational ecosystem
	Digital Literacy	Develop students' critical ability to evaluate digital religious information and counter radical narratives	Responsible digital citizenship
Internalization Process	Dialogue	Encourage open discussion and interreligious communication	Mutual understanding

	Reflection	Develop critical self-awareness and ethical reasoning	Internal commitment to moderation
	Habituation	Reinforce moderation through continuous educational practice	Sustainable behavioural change
	Experiential Learning	Connect Islamic values with authentic social experiences	Practical application of moderation
	Collaborative Learning	Promote teamwork, empathy, and collective problem solving	Social competence
Output	Religious Character	Develop Islamic moral character	Personal integrity
	Tolerance	Respect religious and cultural diversity	Peaceful coexistence
	Justice	Promote fairness and objectivity in social interaction	Ethical decision-making
	Inclusiveness	Encourage openness and equal participation	Inclusive community
	Mutual Respect	Strengthen appreciation of human dignity and diversity	Harmonious interpersonal relationships
Outcome	Religious Moderation	Develop balanced religious attitudes grounded in Islamic values	Moderate Muslim citizens
	Social Harmony	Strengthen peaceful interaction among diverse communities	Social cohesion
	Peaceful Multicultural Society	Promote sustainable peace through Islamic Religious Education	Harmonious multicultural society

Based on a literature review, this conceptual model suggests that religious moderation is not a direct result of Islamic Religious Education, but rather the product of a systematic internalization process. The values of *wasathiyah* serve as the philosophical foundation (input), which is then translated into the core components of Islamic Religious Education (institutional process), internalized through various pedagogical approaches (internalization process), resulting in a moderate religious character (output), and ultimately shaping a harmonious multicultural society (outcome).

This model also emphasizes that the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education is determined not only by the curriculum but by the dynamic interaction between teacher competencies, learning strategies, school culture, digital literacy, and the process of instilling values. Thus, the promotion of religious moderation is the result of the integration of philosophical, institutional, pedagogical, and social aspects that mutually reinforce one another within a single educational ecosystem.

Analysis and Research Synthesis

The synthesis of previous studies demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education possesses substantial potential to strengthen religious moderation within multicultural societies. However, the effectiveness of this educational function cannot be explained by individual educational components alone. Rather, religious moderation emerges through the dynamic interaction among philosophical values, institutional structures, pedagogical processes, and socio-cultural environments. Existing studies predominantly investigate curriculum, teachers, instructional strategies, institutional policy, or school culture as independent variables. Consequently, the current body of literature remains fragmented and has not yet produced a comprehensive conceptual explanation describing how these educational components interact systematically to cultivate moderate religious character.

The thematic synthesis conducted in this study reveals that religious moderation should be understood as a multidimensional educational construct rather than a single learning outcome. The internalization of moderation values begins with the philosophical foundation of *wasathiyyah*, which is subsequently translated into institutional educational practices through curriculum development, teacher competence, learning strategies, school culture, and digital literacy. These institutional components facilitate continuous pedagogical processes—including dialogue, reflection, habituation, experiential learning, and collaborative learning—that gradually transform religious knowledge into religious character. Consequently, religious moderation represents the cumulative outcome of interconnected educational experiences rather than the direct consequence of religious instruction alone.

Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize curriculum reform or moderation policies, this study conceptualizes Islamic Religious Education as an integrated educational ecosystem in which philosophical values, institutional capacity, pedagogical practice, and multicultural engagement reinforce one another continuously. The proposed conceptual framework therefore extends existing scholarship by explaining the educational mechanism through which Islamic values are transformed into moderate religious behaviour and social harmony within multicultural societies.

Based on the thematic synthesis, three conceptual propositions are formulated to explain the theoretical relationships identified in this study.

Proposition 1.

The effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in strengthening religious moderation depends on the systematic integration of wasathiyyah values into curriculum design, pedagogical practice, teacher professionalism, institutional culture, and digital literacy.

This proposition indicates that religious moderation cannot be achieved through curriculum reform alone. Rather, moderation values become educational outcomes only when philosophical principles are consistently embedded across all educational dimensions. Curriculum provides normative direction, teachers facilitate pedagogical implementation, school culture reinforces behavioural consistency, while digital literacy enables students to critically evaluate contemporary religious information.

Proposition 2.

The internalization of religious moderation occurs through continuous interaction between learning experiences, teacher role modelling, reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and multicultural social engagement.

This proposition emphasizes that religious moderation develops gradually through experiential educational processes rather than cognitive instruction alone. Students internalize moderation values by actively participating in dialogical learning, observing exemplary behaviour, engaging in reflective practice, and interacting constructively with individuals from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Consequently, moderation should be viewed as an educational habit cultivated through continuous social experience.

Proposition 3.

Islamic Religious Education contributes to religious moderation only when cognitive understanding is transformed into ethical behaviour and social practice through contextual learning, value habituation, and authentic multicultural engagement.

This proposition extends previous discussions by highlighting that educational success should not be measured solely by students' religious knowledge but also by their ability to demonstrate tolerance, justice, inclusiveness, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence in everyday life. Therefore, contextual learning and continuous value habituation constitute the essential mechanisms linking religious understanding with practical social behaviour.

Collectively, these propositions constitute the theoretical contribution of this study and form the foundation of the proposed Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society. The framework explains that religious moderation is not an isolated educational objective but the product of systematic interaction among philosophical values, institutional educational components, pedagogical internalization processes, character formation, and multicultural social engagement. This conceptualization contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational scholarship by providing a comprehensive theoretical model that can guide curriculum development, teacher professional development, educational policy, and future empirical research concerning religious moderation in multicultural contexts.

Theoretical Implications

The proposed framework contributes to the literature on Islamic Religious Education by extending previous implementation-oriented studies toward a comprehensive conceptual model of religious moderation. It positions Islamic Religious Education not merely as a subject of religious instruction but as an integrated educational ecosystem capable of transforming Islamic values into sustainable religious character through interconnected institutional, pedagogical, and socio-cultural processes. Consequently, this framework offers a theoretical foundation for future empirical validation and model development across diverse multicultural educational settings.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic Religious Education represents a strategic educational ecosystem for strengthening religious moderation in multicultural societies. The findings indicate that religious moderation cannot be developed solely through the transmission of religious knowledge or curriculum reform but requires the systematic integration of *wasathiyyah* values into educational philosophy, curriculum design, teacher professionalism, learning strategies, school culture, digital literacy, and value habituation. The internalization of moderation values occurs through continuous pedagogical processes involving dialogue, reflection, experiential learning, collaborative learning, and authentic multicultural engagement. Consequently, religious moderation should be understood as the cumulative outcome of interconnected educational experiences that transform Islamic values into religious character, ethical behaviour, and social responsibility.

The principal novelty of this study lies in the development of a Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society. Unlike previous studies that predominantly examined curriculum, teachers, institutional policy, or moderation practices separately, this study reconstructs Islamic Religious Education as an integrated educational system consisting of five interconnected dimensions: (1) Input (Wasathiyyah Values, Multicultural Society, and National Commitment); (2) Institutional Educational Components (Curriculum, Teacher Competence, Learning Strategy, School Culture, and Digital Literacy); (3) Internalization Process (Dialogue, Reflection, Habituation, Experiential Learning, and Collaborative Learning); (4) Educational Output (Religious Character, Tolerance, Justice, Inclusiveness, and Mutual Respect); and (5) Educational Outcome (Religious Moderation, Social Harmony, and Peaceful Multicultural

Society). This framework explains the systematic mechanism through which Islamic Religious Education transforms Islamic values into sustainable moderation within diverse social contexts.

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the advancement of Islamic educational scholarship by extending existing implementation-oriented discussions toward a comprehensive conceptual model that integrates philosophical values, institutional structures, pedagogical processes, and multicultural social engagement. The three conceptual propositions formulated in this study provide a theoretical foundation for understanding religious moderation as a multidimensional educational construct rather than merely an educational objective. Accordingly, the proposed framework enriches contemporary discourse on Islamic Religious Education by offering a systematic explanation of how moderation values are internalized through educational processes and subsequently manifested in individual character and social harmony.

Practically, the proposed framework offers strategic guidance for policymakers, curriculum developers, educational leaders, and teachers in designing moderation-oriented Islamic Religious Education. Educational institutions should integrate moderation values across curriculum development, instructional design, teacher professional development, institutional governance, school culture, and digital literacy initiatives. Such a holistic approach is expected to strengthen educational resilience against radicalism, religious intolerance, and social polarization while fostering inclusive citizenship and peaceful multicultural coexistence.

Despite its theoretical contribution, this study is limited by its conceptual nature, as the proposed framework has not yet been empirically validated across different educational contexts. Therefore, future research should employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method approaches to examine the relationships among the framework components and to test its applicability in schools, madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and higher education institutions. Comparative studies across different cultural, religious, and national contexts are also recommended to evaluate the adaptability of the proposed framework and to further refine Islamic Religious Education models for strengthening religious moderation in increasingly diverse multicultural societies.

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