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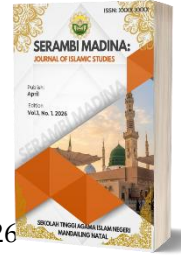
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## The Transformation of Moderate Islamic Education: Weaving Communal and National Harmony

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### Abstract

This article aims to analyze the historical development, implementation, and challenges and opportunities of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia in order to build a tolerant and civilized national character. This study uses library research methods, reviewing scientific literature from the past ten years to obtain a comprehensive overview of the construction of moderate Islamic education. The findings indicate that moderate Islamic education has strong historical roots, from the colonial period to post-independence, through the role of Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasahs (Islamic schools), and Islamic organizations in maintaining values of balance and inclusivity. Curriculum analysis reveals that the value of moderation has been integrated into materials on faith, morals, and social practices, although its implementation remains hampered by a dogmatic curriculum, limited teacher training, and a lack of resources. This research contributes to strengthening the theoretical foundation of moderate Islamic education and provides practical recommendations for curriculum development and educator capacity building. Implications emphasize the importance of policy synergy, strengthening educational institutions, and social literacy to address radicalization and global dynamics, so that moderate Islamic education can serve as a foundation for building a harmonious and responsive society to changing times.

**Keywords:** Character Building; Moderate Islamic Education; Religious Moderation; Educational Challenges.

### Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis perkembangan historis, implementasi, serta tantangan dan peluang pendidikan Islam moderat di Indonesia dalam rangka membangun karakter bangsa yang toleran dan berkeadaban. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode library research dengan menelaah literatur ilmiah sepuluh tahun terakhir untuk memperoleh gambaran komprehensif mengenai konstruksi pendidikan Islam moderat. Temuan

menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam moderat memiliki akar historis kuat sejak masa kolonial hingga pasca kemerdekaan melalui peran pesantren, madrasah, dan organisasi Islam dalam menjaga nilai keseimbangan dan inklusivitas. Analisis kurikulum mengungkap bahwa nilai moderasi telah terintegrasi dalam materi akidah, akhlak, dan praktik sosial, meskipun implementasinya masih terhambat oleh kurikulum yang dogmatis, keterbatasan pelatihan guru, dan minimnya sumber daya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada penguatan landasan teoretis pendidikan Islam moderat serta menyediakan rekomendasi praktis bagi pengembangan kurikulum dan peningkatan kapasitas pendidik. Implikasinya menegaskan pentingnya sinergi kebijakan, penguatan lembaga pendidikan, dan literasi sosial untuk menghadapi radikalisme dan dinamika global, sehingga pendidikan Islam moderat dapat berfungsi sebagai fondasi pembentukan masyarakat yang harmonis dan responsif terhadap perubahan zaman.

**Kata Kunci:** Moderate Islamic Education; Religious Moderation; Educational Challenges; Character Strengthening

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic moderation has become a crucial issue within the dynamics of religious and national life, particularly amidst rising social polarization, intolerance, and the sharp fragmentation of religious perspectives in modern society. (Zuhri, 2022) Religious moderation is presented as a paradigm capable of bridging differences, diffusing identity tensions, and cultivating a religious outlook that is more open, tolerant, and inclusive. Within the context of moderate Islamic education, the internalization of moderating values is gaining momentum, given that educational institutions hold a strategic position in shaping the intellectual orientation, moral character, and religious behavior of the younger generation. Consequently, integrating moderate Islamic values into the education system is not merely a normative necessity, but a strategic move to strengthen social cohesion, national stability, and a culture of mutual respect amidst Indonesia's diversity.

Nonetheless, efforts to implement moderate Islamic education still face various complex challenges. Phenomena such as faith-based radicalism, the spread of hate speech in the digital realm, the emergence of exclusive groups claiming absolute truth, and the prevalence of extreme religious content on social media indicate that moderation has not yet fully taken root in either educational practices or social life. (Afwadzi & Miski, 2022) The complexity of these issues is exacerbated by the nature of the digital space, which disseminates extremist ideas with incredible speed, making students a vulnerable group susceptible to ideologies that oppose moderate values. Under such conditions, moderate Islamic education is required to be more than just a theoretical discourse; it must be a paradigm that is systematically implemented throughout the educational environment.

Beyond religious challenges, there are also national issues that further emphasize the urgency of strengthening religious moderation through education. These include concerns regarding the potential growth of communist ideology (Anzaikhan, 2022), the prevalence of communist symbols and narratives in public spaces (Kartikawati, 2022), as well as the potential weakening of Pancasila values and national identity, indicating that ideological issues remain a persistent concern for Indonesian society. (Sarjito, 2024) On the other hand, the influence of neoliberalism, which fosters individualism (Küçük, 2024) and the free market (Widodo, 2017) also exerts a significant impact on the lifestyles of the younger generation, who are beginning to drift away from the values of solidarity, social concern, and communal morality. (Oktari & Dewi, 2021) These various conditions further emphasize that moderate Islamic education plays a fundamental role in safeguarding the nation's ideological direction and building a generation whose character reflects a balance between religious devotion, national commitment, and humanity.

In this context, moderate Islamic education holds a strategic position as an instrument for shaping a religious character that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), while remaining responsive to both global and local challenges. Strengthening the curriculum, enhancing teacher competency, providing relevant teaching materials, and fostering cross-institutional collaboration are vital elements in the transformation of Islamic education in Indonesia. Nonetheless, academic studies on moderate Islamic education have thus far been dominated by normative-theological approaches focused on theoretical concepts. Meanwhile, discussions regarding implementative aspects, applied strategies, and integrative models that can be adopted within the education system remain extremely limited (Munasir et al., 2024). The need for comprehensive and contextual research is becoming increasingly urgent in order to strengthen religious moderation at the level of praxis.

While previous studies have discussed the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic education, they remain focused on partial aspects and have yet to provide a holistic overview of the transformation of moderate Islamic education from historical, structural, and practical perspectives. No research has comprehensively examined the historical journey, curricular integration, implementation challenges, and strengthening opportunities for moderate Islamic education within a single unified analysis. Furthermore, existing literature has not sufficiently illustrated the relationship between global dynamics, socio-religious developments, and the need for national character building as the broader context of moderation. Consequently, this study aims to fill this gap by conducting a

comprehensive review of the transformation of moderate Islamic education over time, while analyzing the challenges and opportunities in fostering communal and national harmony.

Based on these problems, this study is presented with the aim of comprehensively analyzing the construction of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia by tracing its historical development, examining its implementation in curriculum and instructional practices, and identifying the various challenges and opportunities that influence the effective internalization of moderate values in educational institutions. Furthermore, this research aims to bridge previous research gaps by providing a more complete synthesis of the relationship between government policy, teacher capacity, institutional readiness, and social dynamics as factors contributing to the successful strengthening of religious moderation within the Indonesian Islamic education system.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

General educational theory emphasizes that the educational process is a systematic effort to develop human potential intellectually, morally, spiritually, and socially. According to John Dewey, education is a process of continuous reconstruction of experience, such that students do not merely receive information, but are capable of actively constructing understanding within their social lives (Dewey, 1903). From a modern perspective, education is also understood as an endeavor to build character through the integration of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. As emphasized by Lickona, moral education is not merely the teaching of values, but also the habituation of ethical action in real life (Lickona, 1997).

The concept of moderate Islam is rooted in the principle of *al-wasathiyah*, which signifies balance, justice, and the avoidance of both extremism (*ghuluw*) and the neglect of religious teachings (*ifrath*). Al-Qaradawi defines moderation as a middle-ground stance that rejects fanaticism, violence, and discrimination, while prioritizing tolerance, dialogue, and respect for differences (al-Qaradawi, 2010). This principle is derived from Qur'anic values, specifically the concept of *ummatan wasathan* (QS. Al-Baqarah: 143), which emphasizes the role of the Muslim community as an exemplar in maintaining spiritual, moral, and social balance. Consequently, moderate Islam is not merely a social attitude, but a *manhaj* (methodology) of thought, conduct, and religious practice oriented toward the public interest (*maslahah*) and social harmony.

Moderate Islamic education represents the integration of the *wasatiyyah* principle with the objectives of Islamic education, which emphasize the development of civilized, tolerant, and well-balanced individuals. Al-Attas asserts that Islamic

education aims to instill *adab* (right conduct) so that students are capable of putting things in their proper places, thereby producing individuals who are just and avoid extremist interpretations of religion. (Al-Attas, 1980). Nahlawi adds that Islamic education must be oriented toward the cultivation of character, spiritual strengthening, and the development of social skills through a dialogic approach and compassion (Al-Nahlawi, 1979). Consequently, moderate Islamic education is understood as an educational system that integrates sound creedal values, noble character, intellectual openness, and the ability to live harmoniously within a pluralistic society.

This study discusses the transformation of moderate Islamic education. Based on the literature review, five relevant studies from the past five years were identified that examine religious moderation, Islamic education, and its implementation strategies. While these studies contribute to the understanding of the models, challenges, and developmental directions of moderate Islamic education, they leave a research gap that this study aims to bridge.

The first study was conducted by Hoddin (2023), titled *The Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sumenep*. This research is a case study utilizing interviews and document analysis techniques. Hoddin found that while moderation values are present in Islamic Education materials, they have not been systematically integrated into instructional strategies. Teachers tend to rely on the lecture method, while teaching materials that support the internalization of moderation remain scarce. This study indicates that the effectiveness of implementing moderation depends heavily on teacher readiness and the availability of learning resources. (Hoddin et al., 2023)

The second study was conducted by Mukhibat et al. (2023), titled *Religious Moderation Education in Indonesia*. Employing a literature review method, this research provides an in-depth analysis of the religious moderation policies initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly in the field of education. Mukhibat found that while the religious moderation policy has a strong national foundation, its implementation in schools and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) still faces obstacles such as curriculum limitations, a lack of teacher training, and quality disparities between educational institutions. These findings underscore the importance of strengthening policies and instructional tools to ensure that moderation does not remain merely at the level of discourse (Mukhibat et al., 2023)

The third study was conducted by Wardati (2023), titled *Islamic Religious Education Based on Religious Moderation: An Analysis of Policy, Implementation, and Obstacles*. Using an empirical approach, this research assesses the effectiveness of PAI

(Islamic Education) learning models based on moderation through critical discussion and contextual approaches. The findings indicate that this model can enhance tolerant attitudes, critical thinking skills, and inter-student dialogue. This study reinforces the idea that dialogic teaching methods that are relevant to social reality are more effective in instilling moderation values (Wardati et al., 2023).

The fourth study was conducted by Syahri (2024), titled *Teaching Religious Moderation by Islamic Education Lecturers*. This study employed a qualitative approach through interviews and observations of Islamic Education (PAI) lecturers at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). The results indicate that lecturers have implemented moderation through dialogic methods, critical discussion, and inclusive approaches. However, structural obstacles—such as limited teaching modules, a lack of specialized pedagogical training in moderation, and institutional bureaucracy—remain significant hurdles. These findings underscore the need for the development of standardized modules and continuous professional training for lecturers (Syahri et al., 2024)

The fifth study was conducted by Nur Fadillah Tanjung et al. (2024) in an article titled *The Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education in Schools*. This research employed a descriptive-qualitative approach and was conducted across several secondary schools to examine the process of internalizing moderation values. The findings indicate that moral habituation, project-based learning, and authentic assessment can strengthen students' moderate character. However, the study also notes the need for more systematic policy support to ensure that internalization is implemented uniformly across all educational units.(Putri, 2024)

No	Researcher & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Similarities & Differences
1	Hoddin (2023)	This research analyzes the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) at SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Sumenep through a case study	Moderation is present within the subject matter, yet it has not been systematically integrated into instructional strategies; teachers still predominantly rely on the lecture method	Similarities: Emphasizes the teacher's role in the success of moderation. Differences: Focuses on a specific school and its instructional strategies.

No	Researcher & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Similarities & Differences
2	Mukhibat dkk. (2023)	Examining the Ministry of Religious Affairs' religious moderation policies in the field of education through a literature review	Religious moderation policies are robust at the national level, yet implementation in schools and <i>pesantren</i> is hindered by curriculum constraints, a lack of teacher training, and institutional disparities	Similarities: Emphasizes the need for the systematic integration of moderation. Differences: Focuses on national policy rather than instructional practices
3	Wardati (2023)	Analyzing the policy, implementation, and obstacles of moderation-based Islamic Education (PAI) through an empirical approach	Dialogic and contextual approaches enhance students' tolerance, critical thinking, and dialogue skills	Similarities: Emphasizes the effectiveness of dialogic methods. Differences: Focuses on innovative learning models.
4	Syahri (2024)	Examining the implementation of religious moderation by Islamic Education (PAI) lecturers at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) through interviews and observations	Lecturers implement moderation using dialogic and inclusive methods; however, they are hindered by a lack of modules, insufficient training, and campus bureaucracy	Similarities: Highlights the importance of educator competence. Differences: Focuses on higher education and the role of lecturers.
5	Tanjung dkk. (2024)	Examining the internalization of religious moderation in	Moral habituation, project-based learning, and authentic assessment	Similarities: Discusses the implementation of moderation in

No	Researcher & Year	Research Focus	Key Findings	Similarities & Differences
		schools through a descriptive-qualitative approach	strengthen students' moderate character; however, stronger policy support is required	schools. Differences: Highlights innovative methods such as Project-Based Learning (PBL) and authentic assessment

**Table 1: Analysis of Similarities and Differences with Previous Research**

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a literature review design (Zed, 2004) which focuses on the examination of various written sources relevant to the theme of moderate Islamic education. The entire research process was conducted through a systematic search of available literature within national and international journal databases. The researcher identified and selected sources with direct relevance to the research topic, specifically those published within the last ten years to ensure the analysis remains current and contextual.

In the data collection stage, the researcher searched for literature relevant to Moderate Islamic Education, encompassing approximately 20–28 primary sources from the Google Scholar database. The analyzed studies include theoretical concepts of moderate Islam (al-Qaradawi, 2010; Muir et al., 2022), the development of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia (Anzaikhan, 2022; Gusmita Dewi, 2023), and its implementation in PAI instruction (Hoddin et al., 2023; Mudrik, 2023; Munasir et al., 2024). The researcher also reviewed the role of teachers and educational institutions in strengthening religious moderation (Ikhwan et al., 2023; Wardati et al., 2023). Each source was selected through critical reading and subsequently organized into a literature matrix to facilitate a systematic comparison and analysis process.

The analysis process was conducted using content analysis techniques involving the steps of data reduction, categorization, and interpretation (Krippendorff, 2004). The researcher examined the main ideas of each literature source, identifying similarities, differences, and trends in previous research findings. Each finding was analyzed contextually to build a comprehensive understanding of moderate Islamic education issues, including the supporting and inhibiting factors of its transformation.

The final stage of the research involved synthesizing the findings to produce conclusions relevant to the research objectives. The conclusion-drawing process was conducted logically, taking into account the entirety of the analyzed data. The results of this process then served as the basis for formulating applicable recommendations for stakeholders in strengthening moderate Islamic education in Indonesia.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Moderation prevents the community from falling into extremist tendencies, whether in the form of textual extremism or excessive liberalism. Although there are differing perspectives regarding the relationship between the concept of *wasatiyyah* and Aristotelian virtue ethics, both converge on the aspects of wisdom, prudence, and self-control (Nia'am & Lestari, 2020). Consequently, religious moderation is not merely a theoretical proposition, but a religious strategy that enables Muslims to live harmoniously amidst cultural, religious, and identity diversity

Historically, thought regarding moderate Islam has also evolved as a response to global dynamics. Ulil Abshar Abdalla explains that the discourse on moderate Islam intensified following the events of September 11, 2001, when Islam was frequently associated with violence (Zumrotus Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022). In this development, moderate Islam is understood not only as a religious stance that rejects violence but also as encompassing the moral courage to prevent wrongdoing, enjoin good, and build a just and peaceful social order. Thus, moderate Islam emphasizes the moral responsibility of the community in realizing civilized social harmony.

Debates regarding the concept of moderation have also emerged within the Indonesian context. A major polemic that surfaced was the rejection of moderation exhibited by Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). This group rejected democracy and advocated for the establishment of a caliphate as the form of Islamic governance deemed most legitimate under Sharia law. For HTI, democracy was viewed as contradictory to the principle of sovereignty (Zumrotus Sholikhah & Muvid, 2022). The Indonesian government eventually disbanded the organization in 2017 because it was considered to be in conflict with the Pancasila ideology and threatened national integrity ('The Political Thought And Movement Of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI),' 2020). This event illustrates how rigid religious interpretations can lead to ideological friction within national life.

In the educational context, the distinction between moderate Islamic education and other Islamic understandings can be observed through the values and methodologies taught. Moderate Islamic education prioritizes the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance) as essential foundations in building student character. This approach does not merely teach religious dogma; it also instills

the ability to interact with differences wisely. Religious moderation in education rejects discriminatory attitudes and strives to create a harmonious learning space amidst cultural and religious plurality. Thus, moderation-based education plays a vital role in building the character of a civilized, critical, and tolerant generation.

Meanwhile, several other Islamic understandings tend to exhibit more exclusive and rigid characteristics. A textual and decontextualized approach has the potential to breed intolerance, particularly when teachings are interpreted literally without regard for the surrounding social and cultural factors. In certain contexts, a narrow understanding of religious texts can trigger the emergence of radicalism and violence in the name of religion (Gusmita Dewi, 2023). Groups that reject interfaith or inter-school (*mazhab*) dialogue tend to create strong social boundaries and isolate themselves from alternative perspectives. This exacerbates polarization and hinders the creation of a harmonious life within society.

Rigidity in teaching also impacts the inability to adapt to the changing times. Religious understandings that are unresponsive to social change will feel alien to the younger generation living in a complex global reality (Gusmita Dewi, 2023). In such situations, moderate Islamic education offers a more adaptive, open, and contextual approach, thereby making Islamic values relevant to modern challenges. Religious moderation does not alter the fundamental teachings of Islam; rather, it positions Islam as a welcoming, solution-oriented, and relevant religion for multicultural society. Thus, moderate Islam becomes an essential framework for developing an Islamic education capable of addressing contemporary ideological, social, and cultural challenges.

### **The Historical Development of Moderate Islamic Education in Indonesia**

Moderate Islamic education in Indonesia has undergone significant development alongside the nation's ever-changing social, political, and cultural dynamics. Its history reveals a contestation between moderate, traditional, and radical thoughts, with Islamic educational institutions playing a central role in shaping the direction of this ideological evolution. In a multicultural society like Indonesia, Islamic education serves not only as a means of transmitting religious knowledge but also as an instrument for instilling values of tolerance, diversity, and a religious stance that is welcoming toward differences. The long journey of Islamic education in Indonesia demonstrates that moderation is a fundamental character built through historical interactions between religion, local culture, and social change from the colonial period to the independence era. During the Dutch colonial era, Islamic education faced various pressures from colonial policies aimed at restricting the space for *da'wah* (proselytizing) and the educational activities of the Muslim community. One major

step taken by the colonial government was the formation of the *Priesterraden* in 1882, an institution overseeing Islamic religious life with the authority to control teaching and learning activities and religious instruction across the archipelago (Abdul Muid, Muhammad Ulul Albab, 2024). In 1905, the colonial government tightened these regulations by enacting a rule requiring religious teachers to obtain official permits before they could teach the public, resulting in many Islamic educational activities being hindered by colonial intervention (Amin, 2019). These conditions created significant challenges for the Muslim community in maintaining their educational traditions.

Various forms of Islamic education persisted during the colonial era despite facing pressure and restrictions. As traditional educational institutions, pesantrens played a vital role in teaching religious sciences while serving as centers of cultural resistance against colonial policies deemed detrimental to the Muslim community. Pesantrens functioned not only as learning centers but also as bases for the regeneration of ulama and movement leaders, making their presence crucial in maintaining the existence of Islamic education (Rohani et al., 2022). In addition to pesantrens, madrasahs—as Islam-based schools—also faced various administrative restrictions; in some regions, they were even closed for failing to meet colonial licensing requirements (Rohani et al., 2022). Nevertheless, madrasahs continued to evolve as a manifestation of efforts to reform Islamic education.

Beyond pesantrens and madrasahs, religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) emerged in response to colonial policies and the public's need for more structured educational institutions. Muhammadiyah arose with the idea of modernizing Islamic education by integrating religious sciences with modern knowledge, while NU focused more on preserving religious traditions and strengthening the scholarly foundations of pesantrens (Rohani et al., 2022). These two organizations subsequently played strategic roles in providing distinct models of Islamic education that nonetheless emphasized moderation, tolerance, and harmonious religious life.

Despite intense colonial pressure, Muslim intellectuals continued various efforts to strengthen Islamic education. They established organizations and institutions aimed at enhancing the community's understanding of Islamic teachings while promoting the importance of education as a means of liberation and social empowerment. Muhammadiyah, for instance, introduced a modern education concept based on rationality, integrated curricula, and systematic institutional management, while NU emphasized the reinforcement of pesantren traditions and

local wisdom as the basis for Islamic educational development (Abdul Muid, Muhammad Ulul Albab, 2024). These efforts demonstrate the commitment of Muslim scholars to maintaining the sustainability of Islamic education even under colonial pressure.

The resilience of Islamic education during the colonial era was also evident in the stance of the ulama and kiai, who chose to distance themselves from colonial influence and continued educational activities independently. Many kiai taught in locations beyond colonial surveillance to preserve the purity of religious teachings and the continuity of learning activities (Amin, 2019). Their spirit in defending Islamic education, despite facing numerous limitations, serves as evidence of the Indonesian Muslim community's steadfastness in maintaining their Islamic identity and educational integrity.

Following Indonesia's independence, Islamic education entered a new phase characterized by significant changes, particularly regarding formal state recognition and its integration into the national education system. The foundation for this recognition is enshrined in Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees religious freedom and education, thereby paving the way for strengthening the position of Islamic education within the national framework (Sri Nilawati et al., 2023). With this robust legal basis, the government began implementing various policies to reinforce the presence of Islamic educational institutions.

The development of Islamic education post-independence is evident in the increasing number of Islamic educational institutions in various forms. Madrasahs evolved as institutions that integrate religious and general sciences, while pesantrens were maintained as traditional institutions focused on the in-depth study of religious sciences. Furthermore, public schools began integrating Islamic Religious Education as part of their curriculum, thus expanding access to Islamic education for the public (Fahmi, 2021). At the higher education level, the establishment of various Islamic universities further strengthened the role of Islamic education in scientific development and research.

The government has also endeavored to enhance the quality of Islamic education through various policies, such as curriculum strengthening, teacher competency development, and the provision of more adequate facilities. The integration of religious subjects into the national curriculum became a vital step in ensuring that Islamic values are taught proportionately to all students across various educational levels (Mukhibat et al., 2023). These measures reflect the government's

commitment to advancing an Islamic education that is inclusive, adaptive, and relevant to the changing times.

The objectives of Islamic education following independence have also become increasingly clear: to cultivate religious, principled, and nationalistic students. Islamic education is expected to produce individuals who are faithful, devout, and uphold the values of Pancasila as the foundation of the state. Furthermore, Islamic education emphasizes values of tolerance, respect for diversity, and a harmonious lifestyle among religious communities as part of national character building (Sri Nilawati et al., 2023). Thus, Islamic education plays a role in producing a generation that not only possesses religious knowledge but is also capable of contributing constructively to society and the state.

Although the development of Islamic education post-independence has been quite rapid, various challenges remain. These challenges include resource constraints, a lack of adequate infrastructure, and an imbalance in educational quality among institutions. Furthermore, variations in curricula and teaching methods also affect the quality of Islamic educational outcomes. Nevertheless, various reforms are continuously being implemented to improve educational quality through system strengthening, educator capacity building, and more relevant curriculum updates (Hidayat et al., 2024). This indicates that Islamic education in Indonesia continues to adapt to the needs of the times without losing its moderate and inclusive Islamic identity.

### **Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education**

Moderate Islamic education emphasizes values such as tolerance, balance, and openness as the core of the learning process. These values are considered essential to equip students to face increasingly complex social, cultural, and religious challenges in the modern era. Studies show that Islamic moderation has been integrated into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum at the secondary school level, with an emphasis on interfaith tolerance, appreciation for diversity, and the application of social justice principles in daily life. Thus, the curriculum functions not only as an academic instrument but also as a means of forming a moderate character within students.

Philosophically, the Islamic education curriculum aims to cultivate students' faith and devotion to Allah SWT, accompanied by the habituation of noble character (*akhlak mulia*). More than just a collection of subjects, the curriculum is a set of learning experiences comprehensively designed to develop various aspects of students' lives. These learning experiences encompass spiritual, moral, intellectual, social, and emotional aspects to form a holistic individual who is beneficial to society. In line with

these objectives, the curriculum design must provide space for students to build character and competence in both religious aspects and social skills (Wa Sree Galuatry Rachma & Muamar Asykur, 2024).

The Islamic education curriculum encompasses materials on *aqidah* (creed), *ibadah* (worship), *akhlak* (ethics), *muamalah* (social transactions), the Qur'an, and prayer to instill Islamic values comprehensively. Learning is conducted through lectures, discussions, Q&A sessions, and the habituation of worship practices. Additionally, 21st-century methods such as collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and the utilization of technology are employed to develop critical thinking and collaborative skills (Romdhoni, 2023). This approach enables students to not only understand the material cognitively but also to internalize and practice those values. Learning evaluation is conducted using authentic assessment models such as assignments, observations, and performance assessments, allowing teachers to measure students' ability to apply Islamic values in real-world contexts (Wulandari et al., 2025).

The development of the Islamic education curriculum must consider the principle of religiosity as its primary foundation. Every curriculum component must align with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith to remain within the corridor of Islamic values. Furthermore, the principle of integration is vital to ensure that the curriculum is harmonized with societal needs and contemporary developments, including the integration of information technology as a modern learning tool (Nuridyanto et al., 2024; Rini et al., 2023). An integrated curriculum enables students to obtain learning experiences that are relevant, contextual, and responsive to rapid global changes.

In addition to religiosity and integration, the moderate Islamic education curriculum must also be flexible and oriented toward local wisdom. Flexibility allows students to develop competencies according to their interests and abilities through a variety of diverse learning experiences. Meanwhile, an orientation toward local wisdom serves to instill local moral, ethical, and cultural values that constitute the national identity. The integration of these local values not only strengthens student character but also helps them compete in the modern era without losing their sense of self (Wianto et al., 2023). Thus, the Islamic education curriculum plays a significant role in building a moderate generation that possesses strong character and is adaptive to the changing times.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Moderate Islamic Education in Indonesia**

Moderate Islamic education in Indonesia is not free from various internal challenges that affect the quality of implementing religious moderation values within

the educational environment. One of the primary challenges is a curriculum that still tends to be dogmatic and conservative. Such curricula often limit the space for students to develop a more inclusive understanding, particularly regarding the values of tolerance, pluralism, and interfaith dialogue. When the learning system focuses too heavily on normative aspects without the support of a contextual approach, students find it difficult to understand Islam as a religion that brings mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil-alam*). This condition indicates that curriculum revitalization must be a priority in enhancing the effectiveness of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia (Mudrik, 2023).

In addition to curricular challenges, the limited competency of teachers in delivering religious moderation material is also a serious issue. Many Islamic religious education teachers have not received sufficient training on the concept of moderation and the effective pedagogical strategies required to instill these values. Consequently, teachers often deliver material purely textually, without the ability to link it to broader social realities. The lack of continuous training causes the strengthening of religious moderation in schools to proceed slowly and unevenly. As primary actors in the educational process, teachers should receive special attention through relevant and comprehensive professional development programs (Muhammad Ihyakulumudin, 2024).

Another internal constraint is the limited availability of educational resources, including teaching materials, facilities, and the supporting infrastructure necessary for the learning process. Many Islamic educational institutions, particularly those in peripheral areas, still lack adequate access to references and learning media that support the teaching of religious moderation. Consequently, teachers face difficulties in developing creativity and innovation in their instructional methods. This condition not only hampers the success of moderate Islamic education but also weakens the capacity of educational institutions to form student characters that are tolerant and adaptive to the changing times (Ansyari et al., 2024).

Beyond internal challenges, moderate Islamic education also faces various external challenges that are equally complex. One of these is the rise of radicalization and acts of intolerance in society, which can directly disrupt the process of internalizing religious moderation values in schools. Radical movements with exclusive religious narratives often influence the mindset of certain segments of society and the younger generation. As the tide of radicalism grows more massive, the role of moderate Islamic education becomes increasingly vital in shielding students from ideologies that contradict the peaceful and inclusive principles of Islam (Mansur et al., 2023).

Another external challenge stems from the influence of globalization, which introduces flows of information and new values into society. The younger generation is highly susceptible to exposure to diverse foreign cultures, including ideologies that may not align with moderate Islamic values. Globalization also triggers ideological competition; therefore, Islamic education must respond by preparing students who are critical, selective, and globally minded without losing their Islamic identity. Consequently, there is a need to integrate moderation values into education that can address global challenges constructively and proportionately (Mansur et al., 2023).

The perception of certain segments of society toward Islamic education also presents its own challenge. Some people still view Islamic education, particularly traditional-based systems, as rigid and exclusive. This image makes some less interested in supporting the strengthening of moderate Islamic education, even though, in reality, moderate Islamic education emphasizes the principles of tolerance, dialogue, and openness. Correcting this perception is crucial so that the public understands that moderate Islamic education contributes significantly to building a harmonious and inclusive religious life (Larassati, 2020).

Amidst these various challenges, there is a great opportunity for the development of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia. Government policy, particularly through the implementation of the 2013 Curriculum, has provided extensive space for strengthening moderation values in learning. This curriculum emphasizes cooperation, tolerance, and character development, which are relevant to the spirit of religious moderation. These government efforts serve as important capital to systematically and purposefully strengthen moderate Islamic education, thereby creating a peaceful younger generation that values diversity (Rohmatin, 2020).

Another vital opportunity is Indonesia's cultural diversity, which can serve as a strong foundation for moderate Islamic education. In a pluralistic society like Indonesia, the values of tolerance and mutual respect can be cultivated through harmonious social interaction. The existence of various forms of Islamic educational institutions—such as *pesantrens*, *madrasahs*, Islamic schools, and religious higher education institutions—also serves as a strategic strength in spreading Islamic values as *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a mercy to all worlds). With the increasing public awareness of the importance of religious moderation, moderate Islamic education has a significant opportunity to evolve into a mainstream movement in the effort to build an Indonesian society that is peaceful, inclusive, and deeply appreciative of differences (Ikhwan et al., 2023).

## CONCLUSION

This research concludes that moderate Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping student character to be tolerant, inclusive, and capable of responding positively to global developments. Historical analysis demonstrates that Islamic education in Indonesia has possessed resilience and adaptability from the colonial era through to the modern age. The implementation of a moderate curriculum underscores the importance of integrating religious and social values so that learning is not merely theoretical but also applicable in real life. Challenges such as curricular dogmatism, limited teacher training, radicalization, and the impacts of globalization demand collaborative strategies, while opportunities—including government policy support, cultural diversity, and increasing public awareness—provide a strong foundation for strengthening religious moderation. However, this study has several limitations. First, the library research approach prevents the findings from directly capturing empirical reality, thus underrepresenting field dynamics. Second, the scope of the study focuses more on historical and policy aspects and has not yet discussed in depth the implementation models or evaluation of moderation learning across various educational levels. Third, the dominance of conceptual literature potentially introduces perspective bias, and the absence of a comparative analysis with moderation practices in other countries limits the breadth of this research's viewpoint. Nonetheless, this study provides an important contribution as a theoretical basis for the development of a more responsive and applicable moderate Islamic education.

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