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Affirming Religious Moderation as a State Doctrine: a Study of Government Regulations, Programs, and Implementation Challenges

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Abstrack
Religious moderation plays a pivotal role in sustaining social harmony and ensuring an inclusive and equitable society. This study examines the relationship between religious moderation and the political–legal system shaping its implementation, with a specific focus on Islamic educational institutions. Employing a qualitative approach that integrates literature review and field observations, this research aims to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with embedding religious moderation within the education system from political and legal perspectives. Findings reveal that, despite multiple initiatives to promote religious moderation, several barriers persist, including resistance from certain ideological groups, inadequate legal frameworks, and inconsistent curriculum integration. Moreover, the absence of structured policies and limited government interventions further hinder the effective implementation of moderation principles. Therefore, comprehensive strategies are required, involving stronger political commitment, the establishment of binding legal regulations, and systematic incorporation of moderation principles into educational curricula. Strengthening religious moderation through structured policies and legal mechanisms can institutionalize it as a fundamental component of national education, fostering tolerance and coexistence within Indonesia's diverse society. This study emphasizes the importance of a holistic approach in addressing the political and legal dimensions of religious moderation to ensure its long-term sustainability.

Keywords: *Religious moderation, political system, legal framework, Islamic Religious Education.*

Introduction

Religious moderation, as an alternative approach to understanding religious teachings, did not emerge in a vacuum. It arose in response to social tensions rooted in exclusive interpretations of religion (Viktorahadi, 2022). Historically, such exclusivist religious understandings have often generated conflict at both local and global levels. Religious moderation thus seeks to create balance in interpreting and practicing religious teachings so that they remain aligned with humanitarian values and harmonious coexistence, prioritizing moderation, tolerance, and justice (Azkya Ramadhan et al., 2024).

In the political sphere, a moderate religious understanding contributes to building a more stable and inclusive governance system. Strong collaboration among the government, religious leaders, and society in strengthening religious moderation programs forms a foundation for inclusive national development (Khairul Fikri & Warseto, 2024). Furthermore, a moderate religious orientation ensures the sustainability of national development. In the era of globalization, where social and economic dynamics rapidly evolve, state stability greatly depends on society's ability to coexist harmoniously. Religious moderation promotes tolerance and openness, which are essential for fostering an environment conducive to innovation, investment, and inclusive economic growth.

However, in practice, the implementation of religious moderation has not proceeded smoothly. Although the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) has promoted the program since 2018, exclusive, intolerant patterns of religious practice remain prevalent. In some contexts, extreme religious understandings persist, manifesting as hate speech, discrimination, extremism, and fundamentalism (Wijaya et al., 2023).

Data from the National Police Intelligence and Security Agency show that between 2019 and 2023, Indonesia recorded at least 65 cases of intolerance, with West Java being the highest contributor with 17 cases (Ridwansyah, 2023). A Setara Institute survey (2023) also found that 83% of high school students believed Pancasila is not a permanent ideology and can be altered in accordance with contemporary developments (Eka, 2025) .

Studies on the implementation of religious moderation and its challenges in educational institutions have been conducted by several scholars. Albana (2023) based on a literature review, found that programs for strengthening religious moderation in schools are carried out through

extracurricular approaches, special school programs and activities, and classroom learning (Albana, 2023). Rofik and Misbah (2021) conducted research in educational institutions in Banyumas Regency regarding the implementation of religious moderation programs. Their study concluded that the programs for strengthening religious moderation in Banyumas educational institutions were well implemented due to strong collaboration between the Banyumas Ministry of Religious Affairs Office and Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in schools (Rofik & Misbah, 2021). through their research on the implementation of religious moderation in salafiyyah-based Islamic boarding schools (pondok pesantren), found that religious moderation in salafiyyah madrasahs is practiced with moderate, courteous, peaceful, and non-coercive attitudes. The teaching of religious moderation is conducted not only through textual methods but also through contextual approaches (Rambe et al., 2022).

These various studies generally indicate that the implementation of religious moderation has been carried out by educational institutions at different levels. The research also highlights the creativity demonstrated by each institution in running religious moderation programs. However, there remains an academic gap that has not been adequately addressed—namely, the implementation of religious moderation programs through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) from political and legal perspectives.

This study offers practical contributions to strengthening religious moderation policies. From a policy standpoint, it can serve as a reference for stakeholders in designing more effective regulations. Academically, this research enriches the existing body of knowledge by offering a different perspective on the implementation of religious moderation in Indonesian educational institutions. In addition, the findings of this study may serve as a foundation for developing a more inclusive curriculum aligned with the principles of religious moderation. Thus, this study holds relevance both in academic discourse and policy development, supporting the enhancement of religious moderation within educational institutions.

Methods

This study used a qualitative approach using a literature review method to analyze various relevant academic sources. This method enables the researcher to explore concepts, theories, and previous empirical findings in order to gain an in-depth understanding of religious moderation

within the context of Islamic education (Suwandi et al., 2022). The reviewed sources include scholarly journals, online news and information, policy reports, and official documents related to religious moderation policies in educational institutions. Through this approach, the researcher is able to identify patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the implementation of religious moderation from political and legal perspectives..

Data triangulation was conducted to enhance the validity, reliability, and overall quality of the data (Moon, 2019; Nightingale, 2020; Noble & Heale, 2019). T riangulation involved compiling and cross-checking multiple sources of information collected throughout the research process. Data gathered from observations and literature reviews were carefully compared to ensure their consistency and credibility. This process aimed to minimize bias and strengthen the accuracy of the findings. Consequently, the research is expected to yield more objective and trustworthy conclusions.

Theoretical Framework

Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is closely linked to the intellectual tradition of Islamic scholarship, particularly the concept of *wasathiyah*, or the middle path. In Islam, *wasathiyah* refers to a balanced religious attitude that avoids extremism on both ends—whether excessively loose liberalism or overly rigid radicalism (Azizah, 2020). This concept aligns with Qur'anic teachings that emphasize balance, justice, and tolerance in religious practice (Mibtadin et al., 2024). Classical scholars such as Al-Ghazali asserted that maintaining balance in understanding religion must be grounded in a comprehensive interpretation of religious texts and their social context (Al-Hayali, 2024; Kirabaev & Al-Janabi, 2023).

In academic discourse, discussions on religious moderation continue to evolve. Muslim intellectual Nurcholish Madjid offered a new perspective on understanding Islam. He stressed the importance of taking a middle course between secularism and an Islamic state by emphasizing substance rather than form in Islamic political thought (Nurdin, 2016). He rejected the idea of establishing a caliphate and instead promoted a religious approach rooted in tolerance and acceptance of diversity (Lahaji & Faisal, 2023; Safitri et al., 2022).

From another perspective, religious moderation has been formally defined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia as the government's official stance. The Ministry defines religious moderation as a worldview, attitude, and practice of religion that prioritizes balance in understanding and implementing religious teachings. In the Ministry's framework, religious moderation emphasizes four core principles: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. This definition serves as a guideline for various policies initiated by the Ministry, including the development of Islamic education curricula, training for educators, and community empowerment programs.

Pancasila as the State Ideology

Pancasila is the ideological foundation of the Indonesian nation, functioning as the philosophical basis and collective identity of a culturally diverse society (Latif, 2018; Madung & Mere, 2021). t serves as the fundamental cornerstone of national and state life. As an ideology, Pancasila provides guidance for the development of governmental, legal, and social systems grounded in national values. Its five principles embody the foundational norms that must be applied across all aspects of statecraft, ranging from divinity, humanity, unity, and democracy to social justice (Ningsih, 2021).

As an ideology born from the nation's historical struggle, Pancasila also plays a crucial role in maintaining political stability and national resilience. Since the early years of independence, Pancasila has formed the basis for formulating state policies in areas such as economics, education, and international relations. The values embedded within Pancasila ensure that Indonesia's governance operates within a framework of just democracy, upholds human rights, and prioritizes the welfare of its citizens (Aminullah, 2023).

Challenges to the existence of Pancasila as the nation's ideology continue to emerge from both domestic and international contexts. These challenges include internal threats such as calls to alter the state's foundational principles, the spread of misinformation that fuels identity-based politics, and the potential risk of national disintegration (Noersyaheri et al., 2022; Situru, 2019). Moreover, globalization, technological advancements, and shifting social values frequently test the extent to which Pancasila remains relevant in contemporary state governance. The rise of

transnational ideologies, such as radicalism and extreme liberalism, also poses significant threats to the integrity of Pancasila's core values.

Integrative Legal Approach

The integrative legal theory emphasizes the capacity of law to adapt to societal values and its role in reflecting substantive justice. Nonet and Selznick's concept of responsive law asserts that effective law must be integrated with social values and capable of dynamically responding to social change (Nonet & Selznick, 2017). This approach is grounded in the idea that law is not merely a set of normative rules but an instrument that embodies the values upheld by society (Asa et al., 2021). In their seminal work *Law and Society in Transition: Toward Responsive Law* (1978), Philippe Nonet and Philip Selznick argue that effective law is not one that relies solely on formal rules, but rather one that is able to align itself with prevailing social values. They contend that the law must be dynamic and responsive to social shifts rather than stagnant

The integrative approach to law also underscores the need to balance law as a tool of social control with law as a reflection of prevailing moral values. Gustav Radbruch, a prominent legal philosopher, developed a legal theory that highlights three fundamental values: justice, legal certainty, and utility (Krishty et al., 2023). According to Radbruch, good law is not only that which provides normative certainty but also that which upholds justice and safeguards human rights (Bogdan & Serediuk, 2024). This view aligns with the integrative legal concept, which maintains that law should not be confined to the literal text of regulations but must be interpreted within its broader social context to ensure wider societal benefit.

In terms of implementation, the integrative legal theory is further supported by the ideas of Satjipto Rahardjo, who developed the concept of progressive law. Rahardjo emphasizes that law should be oriented toward humanity rather than rigidly adhering to formalistic rules (Bogdan & Serediuk, 2024). In his view, the law must remain flexible and adaptive to societal needs, particularly within a diverse nation such as Indonesia. This demonstrates that the integrative legal approach is not only relevant for understanding how law functions within society but also serves as a foundation for designing legal policies that are more responsive to social dynamics and evolving concepts of justice..

Discussion

Islamic Moderation in Contemporary Discourse

The emergence of discourse on Islamic moderation in the modern era is closely intertwined with political dynamics. The idea of adopting a moderate religious understanding arose in response to various challenges confronting the Muslim world, including colonialism, modernization, and ideological contestations at the global level (Asrori & Ismail, 2024). During the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Islamic world experienced profound upheavals due to Western colonial expansion, which introduced concepts such as secularism, nationalism, and liberalism. These developments generated diverse reactions among Muslims, ranging from groups that completely rejected Western influence to those who sought a middle ground between Islam and modernity (Stepaniants, 2017). It was within this context that the notion of Islamic moderation began to develop as an effort to navigate the social and political transformations of the time.

Among the early thinkers who promoted Islamic moderation were Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–1897) and Muhammad Abduh (1849–1905) (Nurhakim et al., 2024). They pioneered Islamic reformist thought that sought to bridge the gap between Islamic tradition and modern scientific rationality. Al-Afghani emphasized the importance of unity within the Muslim world (pan-Islamism) as a counterweight to Western domination, whereas Abduh advocated for the reinterpretation of Islamic teachings to make them more compatible with contemporary developments. Abduh's ideas were further advanced by his student, Rashid Rida (1865–1935), who underscored the need for strong, yet flexible, Islamic political institutions capable of addressing the challenges posed by modernity (Fauziah et al., 2021; Septiana & Rofiah, 2024).

In the mid-20th century, the idea of moderate Islam expanded further amid the rise of new ideologies such as Arab nationalism, socialism, and Islamism. In this context, several Muslim thinkers—most notably Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Fazlur Rahman—attempted to formulate a more moderate Islamic approach that emphasized the importance of *ijtihad* (contextual interpretation of Islamic law) while rejecting extremism. They argued that Islam should serve as a civilizational force capable of adapting to democratic values and human rights without compromising the essence of Islamic teachings (Khaeruman, 2016).

At the global level, the issue of Islamic moderation gained increased attention in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks, when Islam was frequently associated with terrorism. Muslim-majority countries began promoting the concept of moderate Islam as a diplomatic strategy to counter negative stereotypes. For instance, Saudi Arabia—through its Vision 2030 program—has sought to shift the image of Islam from rigid conservatism toward greater openness and moderation. Turkey, Malaysia, and Indonesia have likewise actively championed the notion of tolerant Islam in various international forums as part of their soft-power strategies to cultivate more harmonious global relations.

The emergence of Islamic moderation is also linked to the role of international institutions such as Al-Azhar University in Egypt, which has advocated moderate Islam as a core principle in Islamic preaching and education (Siswanto & Ngadri, 2022). Al-Azhar emphasizes the importance of *wasathiyah* in interpreting Islam to bridge sectarian differences and prevent extremism. Moreover, the United Nations (UN), through several of its initiatives, has encouraged Muslim-majority countries to develop policies that foreground religious moderation as a means of promoting social and political stability.

In Indonesia, the idea of Islamic moderation gained significant momentum during the Reform Era of the late 1990s. Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah had long represented moderate Islam by emphasizing values of tolerance, pluralism, and openness to modern scientific knowledge (Darojat & Chair, 2019). After the reform period, this concept was further reinforced by scholars as a strategy to counter radicalism and to strengthen social harmony within a multicultural society. The term *Islam Wasathiyah* (middle/moderate Islam) increasingly appeared in academic discourse, signaling that the expression of Islam in Indonesia is inherently peaceful and inclusive.

A variety of definitions of Islamic moderation have been offered by scholars. Azyumardi Azra, in his book *Islam in the Indonesian World: Tradition and Modernity*, argues that Islamic moderation in Indonesia developed as a response to the challenges of modernization and globalization. He highlights the inclusive and tolerant character of Indonesian Islam, which enables Muslims to adapt to societal changes without losing their religious identity (Putra et al., 2021). According to Azra, Islamic traditions in Indonesia, exemplified by NU and

Muhammadiyah, have served as key pillars in promoting a moderate and nationally oriented form of Islam..

Azra's ideas were later expanded by Komaruddin Hidayat, former Rector of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, who emphasized that Islamic moderation is not a compromise of religious values, but rather an effort to balance religious texts with the ever-changing social context. Komaruddin advocates a hermeneutical approach to understanding the Qur'an and Hadith, enabling Muslims to respond wisely to contemporary issues (Qorib, 2020). He maintains that Islamic moderation is crucial for confronting radicalism and extremism that threaten social harmony.

Another important contribution comes from Rumadi Ahmad, a senior researcher at the Wahid Foundation, who conceptualized *Islam Nusantara* in his book *Islam Nusantara: Dari Ushul Fiqh hingga Paham Kebangsaan*. Rumadi asserts that Islam Nusantara—an idea promoted by NU—is a concrete embodiment of Islamic moderation. He explains that Islam Nusantara not only accommodates local values but also fosters constructive dialogue between Islam and local culture. According to Rumadi, this approach has successfully shaped a form of Islam that is friendly, tolerant, and deeply relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic context.

Despite the strong theoretical foundations provided by scholars, the concept of Islamic moderation has not been universally accepted without resistance (Amri et al., 2024). On one side, many view Islamic moderation as a solution for bridging religious traditions with the demands of modernity, especially within Indonesia's plural society. This group argues that moderation enables Muslims to remain faithful to Islamic teachings while adapting to social, political, and cultural changes (Islam & Khatun, 2015). However, on the other side, there are groups who are skeptical or even reject the idea of Islamic moderation, perceiving it as a compromise that dilutes the purity of religious doctrine (Ebrahimi et al., 2022).

These debates have become increasingly visible in public discussions, especially on social media, where issues related to Islam frequently provoke heated controversy. Those who oppose Islamic moderation often fear that the concept opens the door to religious relativism, blurring the boundaries between what is lawful (halal) and unlawful (haram). They also suspect that Islamic moderation is a political project driven by global interests, intended to suppress Islamic movements perceived as radical.

Institutionalizing Islamic Moderation as a State Paradigm

The government plays a crucial role in strengthening religious moderation because this program aligns with the values of Pancasila as the nation's ideology (Gumuruh, 2023; Hidayatulloh & Saumantri, 2023). As the state's foundational philosophy, Pancasila emphasizes the principles of divinity with civility, just and civilized humanity, and the unity of Indonesia. Religious moderation—by stressing balance between religious observance and national life—directly supports these principles. Through its involvement in promoting religious moderation, the government not only reinforces the state ideology but also ensures that religion serves as a source of harmony and unity rather than division.

Although discussions on religious moderation as an alternative perspective have long been explored by scholars, the government is expected to intervene to ensure that the concept does not remain confined to elite discourse but reaches the broader public. Scholars have provided a strong theoretical foundation for religious moderation, yet its implementation requires institutional support and policy frameworks that only the government can provide (Malik & Busrah, 2021; Muhlisin et al., 2023). Without state intervention, efforts to promote religious moderation may fail to achieve significant impact.

The academic discourse on religious moderation gained substantial momentum when the government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), formalized its definition and implemented it as an official program. On 18 October 2019, under the leadership of Minister Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Ministry took a strategic step by formalizing the definition of religious moderation and adopting it as a government program (Junaeni, 2023; Sudrajat et al., 2021).

The formalization of religious moderation by the Ministry of Religious Affairs marked a new chapter in the evolution of this concept. According to the Ministry, religious moderation is defined as a worldview, attitude, and religious practice that emphasizes balance between the application of religious teachings and the responsibilities of citizenship. This definition encompasses not only theological dimensions but also social, cultural, and political aspects. Conceptually, the Ministry articulates four core principles that characterize moderate religious expression: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture (Haitomi et al., 2022; Mardiansyah & Fadlullah, 2023).

National commitment (komitmen kebangsaan) underscores the importance of awareness and loyalty to the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), in which religious adherents are expected to place the nation's interests above group or sectarian interests, uphold Pancasila as the state ideology, and safeguard national unity. **Tolerance (toleransi)** teaches the importance of respecting and honoring differences in religious beliefs and practices, promoting peaceful coexistence, and recognizing each individual's right to worship in accordance with their faith without disturbing public order.

Anti-violence (anti-kekerasan) ejects all forms of violence—physical or verbal—committed in the name of religion, reaffirming that religion must be a source of peace rather than a tool for conflict or hostility; thus, disputes should be resolved through dialogue and peaceful means. **Accommodation of local culture** (a**komodatif terhadap kebudayaan lokal)** refers to appreciating and integrating religious values with positive local traditions and cultural practices, as long as they do not contradict core religious principles. Through this synergy, religion and culture can enrich one another and support the preservation of local wisdom as part of the nation's identity.These four principles form the foundation for cultivating a moderate religious attitude, which is expected to foster a harmonious, peaceful, and just society.

The implementation of religious moderation as an official government program began with the launch of the Religious Moderation Movement in 2019. This program was designed to cultivate interreligious harmony and inclusivity among the populace (Qoumas et al., 2024; Wijaya et al., 2023). The Ministry of Religious Affairs collaborated with various stakeholders, including major Islamic organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, to ensure its effective execution. Through this initiative, the government aims to foster a more tolerant and harmonious society that is capable of responding to global challenges without losing its religious identity.

The religious moderation program has been implemented through a range of social and religious activities. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has organized seminars, workshops, and interfaith dialogues to promote a more inclusive understanding of religion (Sudrajat et al., 2021). The program also involves mass media and digital platforms to disseminate messages of religious moderation to a wider audience. In this way, religious moderation is not merely an elite discourse but reaches grassroots communities across the country.

Another key aspect of the religious moderation program is its integration into the education system. The Ministry of Religious Affairs instructed that concepts of religious moderation be incorporated into religious education curricula in schools and madrasahs (Sutrisno, 2019). This integration aims to instill moderation values from an early age so that younger generations can understand and practice religion in a balanced and contextual manner. In addition, the program includes training for religious teachers, university lecturers, and community leaders to enable them to serve as agents of change who can disseminate the principles of religious moderation within their respective environments.

With the formalization of its definition and the implementation of its programs, religious moderation has entered a new phase as a "state doctrine." This signifies that religious moderation is no longer merely a debated academic concept but has become an official policy adopted by the government. As a state doctrine, religious moderation possesses strong political and institutional legitimacy, allowing it to be implemented more systematically and structurally. This development creates greater opportunities for fostering a more harmonious, tolerant, and inclusive society.

Challenges and Barriers to the Implementation of Religious Moderation

The implementation of religious moderation is often confronted with complex challenges and obstacles (Wijayati & Fuad, 2024), particularly regarding its compatibility with religious teachings, especially Islam. One of the central debates concerns whether religious moderation can be accepted as part of religious doctrine or whether it should be viewed as a form of compromise with secular values. Some groups regard moderation as an effort to reconcile universal values—such as tolerance, justice, and humanity—with religious teachings. However, others argue that religious moderation may blur the boundaries between what is lawful (*halal*) and unlawful (*haram*), or even perceive it as a threat to the purity of religious doctrine. This debate frequently involves divergent interpretations of religious texts, with literalist groups tending to reject moderation, while contextualist groups are more open to flexible interpretive approaches (Malahayati et al., 2024; Yanto et al., 2023).

Another serious challenge is the politicization of religious moderation. In several countries, including Indonesia, this issue is often instrumentalized for electoral purposes or to legitimize political power (Nego & Pasang, 2023). Certain groups use religious narratives to mobilize public

support, ultimately fueling polarization and social conflict. Additionally, some actors exploit the discourse of religious moderation to justify repressive actions against other groups, such as banning religious activities deemed "deviant" (Wijayati & Fuad, 2024). his demonstrates that the implementation of religious moderation is not only a theological issue but also deeply intertwined with political interests and power dynamics.

The implementation of religious moderation within the education sector also faces substantial challenges. One major issue is the absence of a clear curriculum, along with technical guidelines (juknis) and operational guidelines (juklak) that can serve as references for schools and educational institutions in applying the values of religious moderation (Munasir et al., 2024). Without a structured curriculum framework, efforts to instill moderate and inclusive religious understanding become uncoordinated and sporadic. This situation is worsened by the limited dissemination of information and lack of training for educators, resulting in many teachers and religious instructors lacking sufficient understanding of the concept of religious moderation and how to integrate it into the learning process. In fact, some Islamic education teachers still reject moderate religious approaches (Adhan, 2021).

The implementation of religious moderation in higher education remains largely limited to religious universities under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, such as UIN, IAIN, and STAIN (Burhanuddin & Ilmi, 2022; Sholehudin, 2023). Although several Islamic higher education institutions have begun integrating religious moderation into their curricula and academic activities, public universities still lack a clear roadmap for implementing these values (Ramadhan, 2022). Yet, public universities hold a strategic role in shaping the worldview of younger generations who are expected to be pluralistic and tolerant. The absence of clear guidelines and strong institutional commitment from university administrators has resulted in religious moderation efforts on public campuses being partial, inconsistent, and unable to permeate all aspects of campus life.

The challenges of implementing religious moderation in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) are even more complex. As traditional educational institutions, pesantren possess unique characteristics in which religious instruction is often delivered through textual approaches and strong doctrinal rigidity. The discourse surrounding the compatibility of religious moderation with Islamic teachings remains a difficult and persistent debate for many pesantren. Some view religious

moderation as a threat to the purity of Islamic teachings (Anzaikhan et al., 2023), while others consider it a necessary approach to respond to contemporary challenges (Bosra & Umiarso, 2021; Wasehudin & Syafei, 2021). These differing perspectives are often influenced by the religious backgrounds and ideological orientations of the pesantren leaders, resulting in significant variation in how moderation values are interpreted and applied across institutions.

Strengthening Religious Moderation through Islamic Religious Education

The implementation of religious moderation within Islamic Religious Education continues to face numerous challenges. Nevertheless, this effort remains crucial (Yanto et al., 2023), as religious education not only shapes students' understanding of faith but also provides the moral foundation needed to navigate the complexities of a multicultural society. Without instilling values such as tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and respect for differences, Islamic Religious Education risks falling into an exclusive approach that can fuel social polarization. Amid the rise of radical narratives and intolerance, a moderate model of Islamic education serves as a protective barrier for younger generations against extremist ideologies (Riyawi & Febriansyah, 2023). Therefore, despite the significant obstacles, the commitment to integrating religious moderation must remain a priority given its long-term impact on national cohesion.

One key strategy in achieving this objective is integrating the values of religious moderation into Islamic Religious Education through contextualized learning (Huda, 2024). Teachers should not be confined to rigid textual readings; instead, they must relate religious teachings to Indonesia's socio-cultural realities. For example, discussions on Qur'anic verses that emphasize justice and universal brotherhood (*ukhuwah basyariyah*), as well as narratives of the Prophet Muhammad fostering harmonious relations with adherents of other faiths, can serve as foundations for building inclusive awareness. Such an approach enables students to understand religion not as a closed doctrine but as a living guide relevant to the context of pluralism. Consequently, religious education shifts from mere memorization to becoming a space for reflection and internalization of humanistic values.

Moreover, the implementation of religious moderation will not be effective if it relies solely on a single type of educational institution. Synergy among public schools, madrasahs, universities, and pesantren is essential to create a supportive educational ecosystem. Public universities, for

instance, can collaborate with UIN/IAIN to develop research and curricula grounded in religious moderation, while pesantren can partner with schools to organize student-exchange programs or interreligious dialogue activities. Such synergy not only broadens the dissemination of moderation values but also helps dispel stereotypes that pesantren or religious institutions are closed and insular. By building inter-institutional networks, religious moderation can be internalized across multiple layers of society, fostering a more inclusive religious culture.

To ensure that the implementation of religious moderation runs effectively, strengthening teacher capacity is a fundamental aspect that cannot be overlooked (Aflahah et al., 2023; Islamy, 2021). The limited understanding many teachers have regarding religious moderation necessitates systematic solutions through holistic training programs that focus not only on conceptual understanding but also on equipping educators with participatory learning methodologies. Learning models such as case-based discussions, conflict simulations, or interfaith collaborative projects should be introduced to help teachers create inclusive and dialogical learning environments. Teacher training institutions (LPTK) need to design specific curricula that incorporate religious moderation as part of pedagogical competence. Furthermore, collaboration with civil society organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah, can enrich teachers' perspectives in teaching tolerance values without neglecting Islamic scholarly traditions.

In addition to inter-institutional synergy, another major challenge that must be addressed is the absence of a structured curriculum. Developing an integrated curriculum grounded in local wisdom is a strategic step to ensure that religious moderation can be effectively implemented (Bakar et al., 2024). Every region possesses distinctive traditions and values that can serve as entry points for teaching tolerance. In Bali, for example, the concept of *Tri Hita Karana*—harmony with God, fellow humans, and nature—can be aligned with Islamic teachings on maintaining harmonious relationships (*ḥablun min Allāh* and *ḥablun min al-nās*). This approach not only makes learning more contextual but also reinforces the idea that religious moderation is not an imported concept; rather, it resonates deeply with the nation's cultural heritage. Through a comprehensive approach—ranging from conceptual strengthening, teacher capacity building, inter-institutional synergy, the development of local-wisdom-based curricula, to policy advocacy in education—concrete solutions can be achieved (Al Syaifullah et al., 2024; Wijayati & Fuad, 2024). When implemented consistently, moderate Islamic Religious Education will not only function as a

bulwark against extremism but also serve as a strong foundation for nurturing a generation capable of thriving in diversity.

However, all these efforts will not be sustainable without strong political commitment from the government as the primary policymaker. Clear regulations serve not only as legal frameworks but also ensure consistency in policy implementation across different levels of government (Ratu Mawar Kartika, 2022). Special budget allocations are also required to support teacher training, the development of teaching materials, and outreach programs in conflict-prone areas so that the principles of religious moderation can be effectively communicated. Without adequate financial support, various programs that have been designed may face significant obstacles, especially in reaching communities most vulnerable to radicalization. Therefore, synergy between firm regulations and sustainable funding must be prioritized to ensure that religious moderation can be implemented systematically and produce far-reaching impact.

Political commitment to mainstream gender, **and** religious—moderation cannot rely solely on normative policies or symbolic campaigns. Binding legal instruments are necessary to ensure that the principles of moderation are adhered to by all parties, particularly educational institutions. Unfortunately, administrative sanctions such as revoking operational permits or restricting funding are still rarely applied to institutions that disregard tolerance values. Without firm law enforcement, political commitment risks becoming mere rhetoric without tangible grassroots implementation.

Beyond responsive law enforcement, regulatory frameworks must also adopt a preventive orientation (Gunningham, 2015). To date, legal approaches tend to be reactive, intervening only after severe violations such as acts of terrorism occur. In contrast, radicalism prevention should begin upstream by regulating educational content and religious activities. Educational institutions that propagate exclusive or intolerant ideologies should be subject to administrative sanctions before such ideas evolve into violent actions. Such progressive regulations would not only strengthen religious moderation as an early warning system but also prevent the spread of ideologies that contradict the values of pluralism.

Pada akhirnya, sinergi anta Ultimately, synergy between political and legal frameworks constitutes the main pillar for mainstreaming religious moderation. Political commitment without legal support is akin to a dull sword: visionary but weak in execution (Islamiyati & Hendrawati,

2019). Conversely, regulations without political legitimacy will invite resistance. A harmonious balance between the two is therefore essential—such as through revising the National Education Law or the Government Regulation on Pesantren to explicitly include the principles of religious moderation. With clear sanctions and incentives, the values of tolerance will no longer depend solely on individual awareness but will be institutionalized within the system itself.

Conclusion

This study affirms that religious moderation plays a strategic role in fostering inclusive and equitable diversity, particularly within the educational context. As an approach aimed at creating balance in the understanding and practice of religion, religious moderation has proven to be an essential instrument for maintaining social, political, and legal stability in Indonesia. The implementation of religious moderation within the education sector has undergone various developments, reflected in both policy support and practical challenges. Although the government has introduced several programs to mainstream religious moderation, exclusivist and intolerant practices continue to hinder the success of these initiatives. Therefore, more systematic and comprehensive efforts are needed to ensure that religious moderation becomes a true foundation for building a harmonious society.

The primary challenges in implementing religious moderation in educational settings include the absence of binding regulations, resistance from certain groups, and the suboptimal integration of moderation values into the curriculum. Observations in several pesantren reveal that, despite existing efforts to internalize religious moderation, its application remains dependent on institutional policy and lacks uniform standards. In addition, political and legal challenges also influence the effectiveness of religious moderation initiatives. The prevailing reactive legal approach must be improved through more progressive policies, such as curriculum monitoring, teacher training, and sanctions for educational institutions that fail to uphold the principles of religious moderation.

To address these challenges, synergy between political policies and legal frameworks is essential for strengthening the effective implementation of religious moderation. The government must reinforce its commitment by establishing stricter regulations and allocating dedicated funding to support religious moderation programs. Moreover, the integration of moderation values into the

education system must be carried out systematically through curriculum revision, teacher training, and supervision of educational practices across various institutions. With these measures, religious moderation will not only remain a normative discourse but will also be translated into concrete implementation within social and educational life.

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