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## THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN SHAPING PLURALIST UNDERSTANDING IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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### ABSTRACTS

**Background:** Islamic education plays a significant role in shaping the identity and values of Muslims. However, the challenges of globalization and diversity require a more inclusive and moderate teaching approach to promote social harmony. **Research Objectives:** This study aims to analyze the importance of teaching religious moderation in Islamic education and identify effective strategies for integrating moderation values into the Islamic education curriculum. **Method:** The method used in this research is qualitative with a literature study approach. Data were obtained from various relevant literature, including books, journals, articles, and other academic sources discussing religious moderation and Islamic education. The data were thematically analyzed to identify key concepts and strategies for integrating moderation values in Islamic education. **Results:** The research results show that teaching religious moderation can strengthen students' understanding of diversity and the importance of tolerance. A moderate approach in Islamic education helps create an inclusive learning environment that respects differences and encourages constructive intercultural dialogue. Several concrete strategies for integrating moderation values include curriculum revision, teacher training, and organizing interfaith dialogue programs. **Conclusion:** The implementation of moderation values in Islamic education can help reduce interfaith conflicts and promote social harmony. Moderate education plays an important role in shaping a more tolerant and inclusive generation. Therefore, educational policies that support the teaching of religious moderation and training for teachers to facilitate inclusive learning are needed.

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## A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very significant role in shaping the character, morals, and spirituality of students. In the context of Indonesia, which is known for its diversity of religions, ethnicities, and cultures, the importance of learning PAI with a moderate perspective is increasingly felt. Moderate education in PAI not only aims to instill the true teachings of Islam but also to teach tolerance, respect for differences, and an inclusive understanding of diversity. This approach is very relevant in efforts to build a harmonious and respectful society *pluralism*.

Religious moderation in Islamic education is an approach that emphasizes the principles of balance and justice, as well as avoiding extremism and fanaticism that can damage harmony between religious communities. Religious moderation teaches a comprehensive and non-partial understanding of religion, and encourages a critical and open attitude towards various religious understandings and practices. (Hanan and Rahmat 2023) Therefore, learning PAI with a moderate perspective is very important in shaping the young generation who are not only religiously obedient but also able to coexist harmoniously with adherents of other religions.

The importance of learning PAI with a moderate perspective is also recognized by many parties. (Nur'aini 2021) Education that prioritizes religious moderation can form individuals with strong character, have a deep understanding of their religion, and are able to coexist harmoniously with adherents of other religions. A moderate approach in the PAI also helps in reducing the potential for religion-based conflicts and strengthening national unity.

In the context of Indonesia, religious moderation is the key to building a tolerant and inclusive society. Islamic education with a moderate perspective will equip students with critical thinking skills, an open attitude, and an appreciation for *pluralism*. (Fuad 2020) In his article, he stated that religious moderation is one of the keys to building a tolerant and inclusive society. Thus, the integration of moderate insights in PAI materials is not only a necessity but also a necessity in an effort to create a young generation who are not only religious but also have a broad and inclusive view. Religious moderation education in PAI is expected to be able to answer the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic era. In the midst of globalization and rapid technological advancement, the younger generation is faced with various information and influences that may be contrary to religious values. Therefore, moderately minded PAI learning aims to equip students with a strong religious foundation and the ability to critically and wisely filter information and external influences.

In addition, religious moderation in PAI also aims to build awareness of the importance of dialogue and cooperation between religious communities. In a pluralistic society, dialogue and cooperation between religious communities are very important to maintain harmony and peace. Education that prioritizes religious moderation teaches students to respect differences and make diversity a strength, not a source of conflict. This is in line with Islamic principles that teach peace, justice, and balance.

In Indonesia, efforts to integrate religious moderation in PAI learning have been carried out through various policies and programs. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, for example, has issued various guidelines and curricula

that emphasize the importance of religious moderation in Islamic education. Training programs for PAI teachers have also been carried out to improve understanding and skills in teaching PAI material with a moderate perspective. In addition, various Islamic educational institutions, both formal and non-formal, have also implemented a religious moderation approach in their learning process.

However, despite various efforts that have been made, there are still many challenges faced in integrating religious moderation in PAI learning. One of the main challenges is the lack of understanding and awareness of the importance of religious moderation among educators and students. In addition, there is still resistance to religious moderation approaches from various groups who want a more conservative and exclusive understanding of religion. Therefore, there needs to be a more intensive and systematic effort to socialize and implement religious moderation in Islamic education.

In facing these challenges, collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community is urgently needed. The government needs to continue to support and facilitate programs that encourage religious moderation in Islamic education. Educational institutions need to integrate religious moderation in their curriculum and learning process. Meanwhile, the community also needs to play an active role in supporting religious moderation education by creating an environment conducive to inclusive and tolerant learning.

Overall, learning moderate Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material has a very important role in forming a young generation with character, a comprehensive understanding of religion, and able to live in diversity with an inclusive and tolerant attitude. Religious moderation education is not only relevant in the national context, but also has far-reaching implications in creating peace and harmony at the global level. Therefore, the integration of religious moderation in PAI learning needs to continue to be encouraged and improved through various systematic and sustainable efforts and collaborations.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODS**

This study aims to examine the importance of religious moderation teaching in shaping understanding *pluralis* in Islamic education. Religious moderation, or *wasathiyah*, is an approach that prioritizes balance, tolerance, and inclusivity in religious practice. With the increasing social dynamics and cross-cultural interactions, Islamic education is expected to play a crucial role in shaping pluralist understanding among students.

This study uses a qualitative research method with a case study approach. This approach was chosen because it allows researchers to delve deeply into the phenomenon of religious moderation in the context of Islamic education and how it shapes understanding *pluralis* among students. This research draws on a variety of relevant literature and sources, including academic journals, books, and research reports that support the study of religious moderation and education *pluralism* in the context of Islam.

## C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Religious Moderation

#### a. Definition of Religious Moderation

Moderation is called "*al-wasatiya*" in Arabic. In this language *arwasatiya* derived from the word *Wasas*. *Al-Asfahani* Interpretation *Wasas* as *Sawawun*, the middle of the two boundaries, or fairness, the middle or the benchmark, or the ordinary. *Wasasan* also means uncompromising and careful not to deviate from the line of religious truth. On the other hand, the same meaning is also found in *Mujam al-Wasit* that is *Adran* and *Qiyaran* simple and selective. (Syauqi Dhoif, *al-Mu'jam al-Wasith*, 1972). Therefore, if the term moderation is combined with the word religion, then the term refers to actions that reduce violence or avoid extreme measures in religious practice. The combination of these two terms refers to an attitude and effort that makes religion the foundation and principle, always avoiding extreme attitudes (*Radicalism*), and always looking for a middle way to integrate all elements of society, the state, and the nation. As in Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 143:

*"And (likewise) We have made you (Muslims), a just and chosen people so that you may be witnesses of human beings and that the Messenger (Muhammad) may be witnesses of your (deeds). And We did not set the Qibla that is your Qibla (now) but so that We know (so that it is real) who followed the Messenger and who defected. And indeed, it feels very heavy, except for those who have been instructed by Allah. and God will not waste your faith. Indeed, Allah is Most Merciful and Most Merciful to humans. (Q.S. Al-Baqarah : 143).*

From the verse above, Muslims are called *ummatan wasathan* (moderate people) because they are the people who will be witnesses to the funds witnessed by all mankind so that they must be fair so that their testimony can be accepted. Or they must be good and in the middle because they will be witnessed by all mankind. Surah al-Qashas [28] verse 77 also shows the concept of moderates in Islam which translates as follows:

*"And look for what Allah has bestowed upon you (happiness) in the Hereafter, and do not forget your share of worldly pleasures and do good to others as Allah has done good to you, and do not do any harm to the earth. Indeed, Allah does not like those who do damage. (Q.S. AlQashas: 77).*

From the verse above, a moderate person is described as a person who represents the balance of interests of this world and the hereafter. The two must work together and run in sync. If you ignore any of them, your position will be at a disadvantage. If we only focus on the life of the world then we will be addicted to materialism, and vice versa if we focus on the hereafter then we will only be oppressed and crushed by time.

#### b. Principles of Religious Moderation

Moderation is a middle ground or diversity attitude that is used as an alternative term in religious discourse both at the global and local levels. Even today, in the midst of crisis and chaos due to religious conflicts, moderation is still considered the most ideal attitude towards diversity. Some of the principles of religious moderation associated with the concept of *Islamic wasatiya* are:

1) *Wasathiyah* (taking the middle way)

That is, a view that takes the middle way by not excessing in religion and not reducing religious teachings, this middle way can mean an understanding that combines the text of religious teachings and the context of community conditions.

So "*wasathiyah*" is a view or behavior that always tries to take a middle position from opposite behaviors and overruns so that one of the two behaviors is interpreted as not dominating in a person's mind and behavior. (Zuhairi M Misrawi, 2010). As Khaled Abou el Fadl thinks in *The Great Theft*, if "moderation" is an understanding that takes the middle path, is an understanding that is neither extreme right nor extreme left.

2) *Tawazun* (Seimbang)

*Tahawzun* is a view of balance that does not go out of the line that has been established. If you look up, the term *tawazun* is rooted in the word *mizan* which means scale. But in the context of understanding, *mizan moderation* is not interpreted as a tool or object used to weigh but justice in all aspects of life, whether related to the world or related to eternal life in the hereafter.

Islam is a balanced religion, balancing the role of divine revelation with the use of reason, and providing its own part for revelation and reason. Islam teaches to be balanced between the spirit and intellect, reason and heart, conscience and lust and so on. (Alif Kahya Setiadi, 2012).

3. *I'tidal* (straight and firm)

The term *I'tidal* comes from the Arabic word *adil* which means the same, in the great Indonesian dictionary *adil* means unbiased, not arbitrary. *I'tidal* is a view that puts things in their place, divides them according to their portions, exercises rights and fulfills obligations. (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2012).

As Muslims, we are commanded to be fair to anyone in any matter and are commanded to always be fair to anyone. Because this justice is the noble value of religious teachings, the nonsense of community welfare occurs without justice. (Nurul H. Maarif, 2017).

4) *Tasamuh* (Tolerance)

*Tasamuh* when viewed from Arabic comes from the word *samhun* which means to make it easier. Meanwhile, according to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, tolerance means: respecting, allowing, allowing, something different or contrary to one's own stance.

5) *Musawah* (equation)

*Musawah* means equality of degree, Islam never discriminates between human beings in terms of their personalities, all human beings have the same degree among other human beings, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, tradition, culture, rank because everything has been determined by the creator, human beings cannot have the right to change the decrees that have been set.

6) *Syuro* (Deliberation)

The term *Syuro* is rooted in the word *Syawara – Yusawairu* which means to give explanation, declare or take something. Another form of the word *syawara* is *tasyawara* which means negotiation, dialogue and exchange of ideas; while *syawir*

has the meaning of submitting opinions or exchanging ideas. (M. Hasbi Aminuddin, 2018).

7) *Ishlah* (Reformation)

*Islah* is rooted in an Arabic vocabulary that means to repair or reconcile. In the concept of moderation, *Islah* provides better conditions to respond to changes and progress of the times on the basis of the public interest by adhering to the principle of maintaining good old traditional values and applying new and better traditional values for the common good. This understanding will create a society that always spreads the message of peace and progress to receive renewal and unity in the life of the nation

8) *Awlawiyah* (Prioritizing Priority)

*Al-Awlawiyah* is the plural form of the word *Al-Aulaa*, which means importance or priority. *Awlawiyah* It can also be interpreted as prioritizing more important interests. By term *awlawiyah*, in terms of implementation (application), in some cases the most important is to prioritize cases that need to be prioritized over other less important cases depending on the time and duration of implementation, in the context of moderation in the life of the nation must be able to prioritize the public interest that brings benefits to the life of the nation. In another sense *awlawiyah* Bearti has a broad view of analyzing and identifying problems so that they are able to find a main problem that is happening in society and are able to contribute theoretical ideas as a solution to solving problems that occur in society /*problem solving*. (Yusuf al-Qardhawi, *Fi Fiqh al-Aulawiyat*, 1996).

9) *Tathawur Wa Ibtikar* (dynamic and innovative)

*Tathawur wa Ibtikar* is a dynamic and innovative nature that has the meaning of moving and reforming, always open to active participation to carry out reforms in accordance with the development of the times for the progress and benefit of the people.

10) *Tahadhdhur* (Civilized)

Upholding morality, personality, virtue, identity and integration in human life and civilization. Civilization has many concepts, one of which is science. Science is the forerunner of a civilization, the higher the knowledge that a person has, the wider the view, the breadth of view makes him see all directions so that he will become a wise person, wisdom / wisdom is reflected in behavior in the form of high and noble manners or morality.

## 2. Understanding Pluralism

Pluralism comes from the Latin language *plures* which means "some" with the implication of difference. In United Kingdom is *pluralism* derived from the word plural meaning "plurality and diversity" and *ism* It comes from Latin which means to understand. Terminologically, pluralism is defined as the understanding or discourse of religious diversity. (Afif Syaiful Mahmoudin, 2019).

The definition of pluralism education according to Frans Magnez Suseno is an education that assumes that we open our vision to a wider horizon, able to

cross the boundaries of ethnic groups or cultural and religious traditions so that we are able to see "humanity" as a family that has both differences and similarities in ideals. This is education on basic human values for peace, independence, and solidarity. (Syamsul Ma'arif, 2008).

In simple terms, pluralism education can be defined as education for/about religious and cultural diversity in responding to demographic and cultural changes in the environment of a particular society or even the world as a whole. Education here is required to be able to respond to the development of school population diversity, as well as the demand for equal rights for each group.

### **3. The Values of Pluralism in Islamic Education**

The basic values of pluralism are equality and togetherness, openness in accepting existing differences (mutual understanding), mutual respect, mutual help, the principle of freedom, justice, equality of rights and obligations, compassion, virtue, peace, openness to cooperation.

According to Ainul Yaqin, from several literatures studied, the values developed in pluralism-based education are very oriented to the basic essence of human beings by not setting aside the slightest bit of their existence. These values include:

- a. Upholding human values.
- b. Freedom of religion for society
- c. Democracy in all aspects of the social order
- d. Tolerance between friends
- e. Reconciliation/peace on earth
- f. Love, compassion, helping each other, protecting each other and providing salvation
- g. Justice/equality/egalitarianism
- h. Social benefits
- i. Preservation of community cultures. (M. Ainul Yaqin, 2006).

From these developed values, there is actually no need to doubt or worry about the initiative or idea to organize education oriented towards pluralism in the form of educational institutions, especially in the context of Indonesia.

## **D. CONCLUSION**

Moderate Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning is a strategic effort to instill the values of balance, tolerance, and inclusivity among students. This learning aims to create a balanced religious understanding and avoid extremism, as well as encourage respect for diversity and *pluralism*.

Cultivation of Moderation Values, PAI material with a moderate perspective is designed to instill the values of moderation or *wasathiyah* in Islamic teachings. This approach emphasizes the importance of balance in religion, avoiding extreme attitudes, both in the form of radicalism and excessive liberalism. Through this material, students are taught to appreciate and respect different religious views and practices.

Improving Attitudes of Tolerance and Inclusivity, a moderate approach in PAI learning also emphasizes the importance of tolerance and inclusivity. Students are taught to be open to differences, both internal differences within Muslims and

differences between religions. This attitude of tolerance is important to create a harmonious and peaceful environment, both in schools and in the wider community. Strengthening Understanding of Pluralism, PAI learning with a moderate perspective contributes to strengthening the understanding of pluralism. Students are introduced to the concept of religious pluralism, which teaches that diversity is a reality that must be accepted and appreciated. Through this approach, students are expected to develop an attitude of mutual respect and cooperation with individuals from different religious backgrounds.

Challenges in Implementation, the implementation of PAI learning with a moderate perspective faces various challenges. One of the main challenges is resistance from conservative groups who may see this approach as a threat to traditional teachings. In addition, the lack of training for teachers and the limited educational resources that support moderation values are also significant obstacles. Therefore, there needs to be continuous efforts to address these challenges, including through teacher training and the provision of adequate educational materials.

To strengthen the implementation of moderately minded PAI, several recommendations can be considered. First, there needs to be intensive training for teachers to improve their understanding of the values of moderation and how to teach them. Second, the PAI curriculum must explicitly include material on religious moderation and pluralism. Third, the development of educational resources that support moderate teaching, such as textbooks, learning modules, and other educational media, is very important. Finally, collaboration with various parties, including religious organizations and civil society, is needed to support education initiatives that prioritize moderation.



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