

The Role Of Islamic Religious Education In Fostering Religious Moderation Among Adolescents

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering attitudes of religious moderation among adolescents, particularly in secondary school environments. Religious moderation refers to a balanced approach to religion that upholds tolerance, justice, and non-violence. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, classroom observations, and document analysis. The findings indicate that instructional content, dialogical teaching methods, and the exemplary behavior of Islamic Religious Education teachers significantly contribute to shaping students' moderate attitudes. Islamic Religious Education serves as a medium for the transformation of values, teaching not only ritual aspects but also inclusive social ethics.

Keywords: Islamic Religious Education; Religious Moderation; Adolescents.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peran Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam menumbuhkan sikap moderat beragama di kalangan remaja, khususnya di lingkungan sekolah menengah. Moderasi beragama mengacu pada pendekatan agama yang seimbang yang menjunjung tinggi toleransi, keadilan, dan anti kekerasan. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara dengan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konten pembelajaran, metode pengajaran dialogis, dan perilaku teladan guru Pendidikan Agama Islam berkontribusi secara signifikan dalam membentuk sikap moderat siswa. Pendidikan Agama Islam berfungsi sebagai media transformasi nilai, mengajarkan tidak hanya aspek ritual tetapi juga etika sosial yang inklusif.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Agama Islam; Moderasi Beragama; Remaja.

INTRODUCTION

The word *moderation* originates from the Latin term *moderatio*. Moderation, which we often refer to in the adjective form *moderate*, is derived from *moderation*, meaning balance, avoiding excess or deficiency. It implies being equitable, measured, and avoiding extremism or violence. (Bahasa, 1998). In English, *moderation* is associated with words like *average*, *core*, *standard*, or *non-aligned*. In Arabic, the term is known as *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, which aligns with the meanings of *tawassut* (middle ground), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tawazun* (balance). Moderation can be understood as prioritizing balance in matters of belief, morals, and character, particularly in treating others whether individuals, groups, or institutions justly. (RI, 2019).

Moderation is often paired with religion in the phrase *religious moderation*. Religious moderation refers to an attitude of reducing violence and avoiding extremism in perspectives, behaviors, and practices of one's religion. A moderate stance implies firmness without harshness, always aligned with justice, but without infringing on the rights of others. (Fahri, 2022). The core principles of religious moderation include fairness and balance in addressing and practicing dual concepts such as reason and revelation, body and soul, rights and responsibilities, individual and communal interests, obligation and voluntariness, religious texts and scholarly interpretation, idealism and reality, and past and future. (RI, 2019).

Religious moderation is urgently needed amid the growing phenomenon of intolerance and radicalism, especially among the younger generation. As formal institutions, schools carry a significant responsibility in shaping students' character to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) not only serves to transfer religious knowledge but also functions as a medium for character development, including the cultivation of religious moderation. This study aims to identify the concrete contributions of Islamic Religious Education in guiding adolescents to avoid falling into extreme religious views.

Adolescence is the pre-puberty phase—a transitional period from childhood to puberty where a maturing child desires to act like an adult, yet is not fully prepared to be one. Adolescence is marked as a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. During this period, adolescents often exhibit negative traits such as uncertainty, resistance, confusion, anxiety, fear, restlessness, emotional instability, and low self-esteem, leading to a feeling of inadequacy in handling tasks. (Hamali, 2016). This phase is often described as a time of emotional fluctuation and vulnerability, especially in the development of religious attitudes. Therefore, appropriate education plays a crucial role in guiding and shaping adolescents' character and morality.

Adolescents undergo several dimensions of religious development, including:

a. Cognitive and Mental Growth

Ideas and religious beliefs received in childhood may no longer seem interesting. A critical attitude toward religious teachings begins to emerge. In addition to religious issues, adolescents also begin to explore cultural, social, economic matters, and moral values. (Rijal, 2016)

b. Emotional Development

Various emotional developments occur during adolescence, such as the growth of social, ethical, and aesthetic feelings. Adolescents exposed to a religious environment are more likely to gravitate towards a spiritual life. In contrast, those lacking religious education are more prone to negative influences. (Rijal, 2016)

c. Social Consideration

Adolescents' religious patterns are also influenced by social considerations. They often face conflicts between moral and material choices, feeling confused in decision-making. Their materialistic tendencies may prioritize financial gain, personal happiness, reputation, and pleasure over spiritual values. (Rijal, 2016)

d. Moral Development

Moral development in adolescents can be categorized into:

1. Self-directive – obedience to religious or moral values based on personal reasoning.
2. Adaptive – conforming to the surrounding environment without critique.
3. Submissive – doubting religious and moral teachings.
4. Unadjusted – not yet convinced of the truth of religious and moral principles.
5. Deviant – rejecting religious and societal moral foundations. (Ramayulis, 2000)

e. Attitudes and Interests

Adolescents' attitudes and interests in religious matters are generally minimal and depend on childhood habits and religious environments. (Rijal, 2016)

The descriptions above regarding adolescents' general attitudes and psychological tendencies toward religion and their social environment serve as crucial insights for Islamic Religious Education teachers. These insights help in instilling and shaping students' moderate religious character. IRE teachers need to engage with students, especially adolescents, through various approaches to foster comfort and mutual recognition in both classroom and extracurricular interactions.

Adolescents play a vital role as the next generation in shaping future society and governance. They will eventually become citizens, leaders, and decision-makers. Early guidance is essential, particularly during adolescence, to strengthen their religious character and personality. To nurture moderate attitudes in their behavior and mindset, Islamic Religious Education is believed to play a central role in developing moderate individuals.

Based on the explanation above, this study aims to offer a solution to explore the roles and strategies of IRE teachers in guiding adolescents toward religious moderation. It seeks to examine how teachers implement Islamic Religious Education to instill values and character, both inside and outside the classroom. Grounded in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, Islamic Religious Education is expected to shape students' moderate character. Both Qur'an and Hadith command Muslims to embody

wasathiyah (moderation), making it essential to investigate whether IRE truly plays a role in cultivating such a character in adolescents.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach through a literature review. The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering attitudes of religious moderation among adolescents. The research combines primary data from literature sources such as e-books, journals or articles, and scholarly works on parenting patterns and the development of religious psychology in early childhood from an Islamic perspective, as well as secondary data used as supporting references. The term "library research" refers to research activities conducted by gathering all relevant information and data using various materials available in libraries such as reference books, previous related research, articles, notes, and journals pertaining to the issue being studied. These activities are carried out systematically to collect, process, and conclude data using specific methods or techniques in order to find solutions to the problems being addressed. (Melya Sari, 2020)

Because the data used is not numerical but derived from literature, the researcher applies a qualitative data analysis approach to examine the information. The purpose of the descriptive method used in the data analysis is to provide a comprehensive and detailed overview of the findings. The literature topics were first determined for this research, followed by data collection, concept study, conceptualization, analysis, and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. Before entering the field to gather primary data, the researcher selected the research topic and formulated the problem statement, which laid the foundation for conducting this literature review. Articles and scientific publications related to the role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering religious moderation among adolescents were used as sources of information.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Moderation refers to the reduction of violence and the avoidance of extremism. In other words, moderation means taking a middle path or maintaining a balanced, non-excessive stance. This concept aligns with the Word of Allah in the Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 143, which states:

"And thus We have made you a just and balanced nation so that you may be witnesses over mankind, and the Messenger may be a witness over you..."

This verse explains that a Muslim must be just and not biased. This is in line with the concept of religious moderation promoted by the government as a means of unifying the nation and ensuring the integrity, welfare, and harmony among religious communities in the country. To realize this goal, the role of Islamic Religious Education is seen as essential and is considered a foundational pillar in educating and shaping mindsets, while also instilling values and character in society at large, especially among adolescents.

The role of Islamic Religious Education in fostering religious moderation among students or adolescents includes the following aspects:

1. Integration of Religious Moderation Content

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) teachers incorporate values such as tolerance, justice, and anti-extremism into their lessons, especially in the subjects of ethics (*akhlaq*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and Islamic history. They play a central role in internalizing these values among students. The inclusion of tolerance, justice, and anti-extremism themes in these subjects is carried out systematically and contextually to foster an inclusive, diversity-embracing character in students. (Zamroni, 2018)

IRE teachers make a significant contribution to nurturing the nation's generation. Because the scope of Islamic Religious Education is broad and grounded in the concept of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (mercy to all creation), it serves

as a powerful means to shape students into moderate and balanced individuals. The *fiqh* content illustrates that differences are natural and a blessing. Ethics education is highly suitable for fostering moderation in adolescents, aligning with the Prophet Muhammad's mission as *uswah hasanah* (the best example). The Prophet is the most perfect example of noble character and the ultimate model of religious moderation throughout history.

a. In the Ethics (*Akhlaq*) Subject

The ethics curriculum in IRE is highly effective in instilling moderation values because it directly teaches personal and social character. IRE teachers emphasize:

1. The importance of respecting differences in belief and opinion.
2. Avoiding fanaticism and hatred towards other groups.
3. Noble traits such as patience, humility, and compassion as core Islamic values. (Zamroni, 2018)

Ethics education provides the foundation for Muslim behavior. It is the core mission of the Prophet Muhammad to guide humanity. As Muslims, we are obliged to act according to his teachings. Such education leads adolescents to become compassionate, patient, humble individuals who see differences as blessings and reject fanaticism and extremism. Thus, ethics education plays a pivotal role in shaping a moderate youth character.

b. In the Jurisprudence (*Fiqh*) Subject

In teaching *fiqh*, IRE teachers explain:

1. Differences in Islamic legal opinions are natural and should be respected.
2. *Fiqh* should not be used as a narrow tool to judge others.
3. The principles of public interest (*maslahah*) and ease (*taysir*) should be prioritized to avoid rigidity and textual extremism. (RI, 2019)

Fiqh instruction provides a concrete example to show that differences of opinion are inherent in Islam. The various schools of thought within *fiqh* serve as a rich intellectual heritage for Muslims. Consequently, Muslims should view social differences as part of the country's cultural wealth to be preserved, rather than a source of conflict.

c. In the Islamic History Subject

IRE teachers use Islamic history to illustrate:

1. The Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and his companions coexisted peacefully with various faith communities.
2. Islam has never endorsed coercion in religion, as emphasized in Qur'an, Surah Al-Baqarah: 256.
3. The Madinah period provides a tangible example of pluralistic harmony. (Hidayatullah, 2020)

These values are essential to counter historical narratives manipulated by extremist groups to justify violence in the name of religion. The long path of Islamic history serves as a positive reference for teachers to demonstrate to students that Islam promotes peace, safety, and prosperity. The concept of *rahmatan lil-'alamin* offers a firm foundation for teachers in guiding students toward simplicity, moderation, and the rejection of discrimination and extremism in daily life.

2. Dialogic Learning Methods

Active learning models such as class discussions, case studies, and guided debates encourage students to think critically and be open to differences. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) not only transfers religious knowledge but also plays a vital role in shaping students' thinking patterns and character. One effective approach in cultivating moderate attitudes and open-mindedness is through active learning models, such as:

a. Class Discussions

Through discussions, students are encouraged to:

1. Freely and responsibly express their opinions,
2. Listen to and respect their peers' viewpoints,
3. Build mutual understanding from different perspectives. (Hosnan, 2014)

Discussions strengthen students' dialogical skills and foster tolerance toward differing religious understandings. Accepting others' opinions and not reacting emotionally when one's views are rejected teaches emotional maturity. These healthy classroom discussions make a substantial contribution to the personality development of students and adolescents, reducing egocentrism and enhancing tolerance and solidarity.

b. Case Studies

Case studies teach students to:

1. Analyze real-life issues critically,
2. Apply Islamic values in a contextual manner,
3. Resolve issues with fair and wise approaches, avoiding emotional or extreme reactions. (Suyadi & Ulfatin, 2016)

This method protects students from binary or black-and-white thinking often promoted by radical groups. Students are directly involved in addressing societal issues. The IRE teacher guides students on how to analyze these problems and identify appropriate solutions. This active involvement leaves a positive impression and experience for students, stimulating their reasoning and conscience to adopt thoughtful, responsible actions in daily life.

c. Guided Debates

In debates, students learn to:

1. Present logical and respectful arguments,
2. Listen to counterarguments calmly,

3. Develop intellectual tolerance toward different perspectives. (Kemendikbud, 2020)

The teacher acts as a facilitator to ensure a healthy environment that does not provoke fanaticism. Guided debates have a remarkable impact on helping adolescents adopt a moderate stance. Active learning encourages critical thinking, nurtures openness to diversity, and helps students avoid blind adherence (*taqlid*) without reflection. This forms a vital foundation for fostering religious moderation among adolescents. (Zamroni, 2018)

Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in shaping adolescents' character and attitudes in society. A moderate attitude, especially in social settings such as government institutions and schools—where students develop their knowledge and skills—is essential for building balanced, moderate characters. Another critical role is held by teachers, who serve as figures and role models observed and imitated by students. In addition, parents play a central role in demonstrating moderate behavior in everyday life. Thus, all elements play their respective parts in cultivating and instilling a moderate attitude. A moderate attitude contributes to a secure, prosperous, and peaceful social life, helping realize the nation's ideal as stated in the fifth principle of Pancasila: “Social justice for all the people of Indonesia.”

3. Teacher Role Modeling

Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as key figures in setting real-life examples of moderate behavior, both in speech and action. The teacher's inclusive attitude toward classroom diversity has a significant influence on students. (Azra, 2017)

An IRE teacher is not merely a deliverer of content but a central figure in shaping students' character. One of their most important contributions is exemplifying

moderate behavior through their daily words, actions, and interactions. They act as *uswatun hasanah* (noble examples) for families, communities, students, and the nation. The role of the IRE teacher goes beyond cognitive knowledge transfer, encompassing affective and psychomotor domains. In other words, IRE teachers are expected to guide students toward happiness not only in this world but also in the hereafter.

a. Exemplifying Words and Actions

Islamic Religious Education teachers who consistently deliver religious messages with calm, polite, and loving language—without discriminating against students' backgrounds, races, or economic status—will:

1. Shape the image of Islam as **rahmatan lil'alam** (a mercy to all creation),
2. Increase students' trust in moderate Islamic values,
3. Become concrete role models in facing issues of diversity. (Muin, 2021)

The teacher's real actions in responding to differences of opinion, resolving conflicts peacefully, and acting fairly toward all students are tangible forms of character education based on moderation. As role models and good examples, teachers leave a deep impression on students or adolescents. The teacher's good personality and daily behavior easily win students' hearts, making it easier for them to accept and understand the teacher's presence in delivering knowledge during the learning process in class.

b. Inclusive Attitude toward Diversity

Islamic Religious Education classes often become spaces where students from diverse social, economic, and even religious backgrounds interact. Islamic Religious Education teachers with an inclusive attitude:

1. Are able to embrace all students without discrimination,
2. Encourage open dialogue among students to understand one another,
3. Make the classroom a social laboratory for practicing moderation. (Bahasa, 1998)

The teacher's sensitivity in appreciating diversity will be ingrained in the students' thinking and behavior later in life. Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as role models for everyone, especially their students, within the school environment. Equally important is their role in implementing the learning process in class. Teachers' attitudes, behaviors, and characters in front of the class have a significant impact on students' memories, making it easy for students to emulate them.

4. Impact on Students

Students show improvement in their ability to respect differing opinions, reject intolerant invitations, and understand Islam more broadly and peacefully. These findings support the idea that Islamic Religious Education has a transformative dimension—not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor—in instilling healthy and balanced religious attitudes. (Abdullah, 2019)

Research results show that students experience significant improvement in religious attitudes, especially in the context of:

a. Respecting different opinions.

Students become accustomed to dialogue and listening to other viewpoints without prejudice, both in class discussions and social interactions outside school. They are better able to accept differences as a richness rather than a threat.

b. Rejecting intolerant invitations.

Islamic Religious Education that emphasizes moderation values has proven effective in sensitizing students against teachings that deviate from the value of *rahmatan lil'alam*. Students show courage in rejecting extremist or intolerant invitations, both verbally and in real actions.

c. Understanding Islam more broadly and peacefully.

Students' understanding of Islam is no longer confined solely to the formal legal aspects (fiqh) but extends to substantive values such as compassion, justice, and

brotherhood. Islam is understood as a peaceful teaching that honors humanity and respects human dignity. (Latif, 2021)

Islamic Religious Education as *rahmatan lil'alam* helps students form positive personalities and character. The attitudes demonstrated by students include acting with simplicity and justice without discriminating or harming the environment and others. They are able to position themselves and accept the presence of others from different backgrounds, economic statuses, and races. Students' broader and more comprehensive understanding of Islam is concrete evidence of this. Students avoid involvement in violence, favor peace, and courageously reject discrimination and extremism.

5. Transformational Dimensions of Islamic Religious Education

These findings reinforce the idea that Islamic Religious Education has transformative dimensions covering three main domains:

- Cognitive: Understanding the true, comprehensive, and non-textualist teachings of Islam,
- Affective: Instilling spiritual and moral values that shape religious awareness and attitudes,
- Psychomotor: Real behaviors reflecting noble character, tolerance, and moderate attitudes in social life. (Zamroni, 2018)

Thus, Islamic Religious Education not only fills students' knowledge but also shapes a balanced and inclusive religious personality and character. Islamic Religious Education embodies *rahmatan lil'alam*, meaning it is beneficial both in this world and in the hereafter.

The concept of Islamic religious education is very much aligned with the three aspects of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. This aligns with the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the national education system, which aims to develop the potential of learners to

become humans who believe and are devoted to God Almighty, have noble character, are healthy, knowledgeable, capable, creative, independent, and become democratic and responsible citizens. In general, the goal is to educate the life of the nation. (Ministry of Culture, 2003)

The national education goals mentioned above can be achieved through three educational concepts (cognitive, affective, psychomotor). This is very much in line with the transformational dimensions of Islamic religious education. Islamic religious education can accommodate and serve as a tool to produce the next generation, especially adolescents, into perfect humans according to the demands of national education. These national education goals correspond with the goals of Islamic religious education, which is to create perfect humans (*insan kamil*).

CONCLUSION

Islamic Religious Education plays a significant role in fostering attitudes of religious moderation among adolescents through the integration of moderation values in teaching materials, inclusive learning methods, and teacher role modeling. To strengthen this role, it is necessary to provide training for Islamic religious education teachers on religious moderation, revise the curriculum to be more contextual, and provide institutional support to create a school culture open to diversity. Islamic religious education has transformative dimensions—not only cognitive but also affective and psychomotor in instilling healthy and balanced religious attitudes. With a positive and appropriate approach through Islamic religious education as *rahmatan lil'alam*, involving students in guided discussions and debates can help adolescents understand moral and ethical values.

The scope of Islamic religious education materials is very appropriate and correct as a means to create and shape fair and moderate adolescent character. A concrete example and figure we can emulate is the Prophet Muhammad. The actor and implementer of religious moderation in every aspect of life family, social community,

and state was exemplified by the Prophet throughout his life. This historical fact becomes a role model for us, the final generation, to serve as *uswatun hasanah* (good example) in daily life.

Students show improvement in their ability to respect differing opinions, reject intolerant invitations, and understand Islam in a broader and peaceful way. Students are accustomed to dialogue and discussion, accepting differing opinions without generating negative prejudices, both in the classroom or school environment and in the wider social community. They are not influenced by negative calls that lead to discrimination and extremism. They exhibit compassion for others, enhance a sense of brotherhood, enjoy helping others, and have the courage to uphold justice.

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