

ENHANCING RELIGIOUS MODERATION: EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STRATEGIES AT STATE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL 7 WAJO

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ABSTRACT

The issue of strengthening religious moderation in the context of pluralism in Indonesian society has become increasingly crucial. Islamic Religious Education (PAI), as one of the key pillars in the formation of students' character, plays an essential role in instilling values of religious moderation. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies that incorporate elements of religious moderation at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo. The specific objective is to determine how effective these strategies are in fostering social harmony and maintaining a balanced, non-judgmental approach in students' social interactions. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The data were collected from both primary and secondary sources through observations, interviews, and documentation. The findings from the interviews reveal that PAI teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo have been highly effective in promoting religious moderation among students. They employ student-centered approaches that prioritize comfort and engagement, and they implement specific strategies such as the ISRA-based PAI learning model (Islam Rahmatan lil-'Alamin). This model emphasizes collaborative learning, material design, and partnerships with external stakeholders to instill the values of religious moderation. However, several challenges were identified. First, some students hold exclusive views, believing their religious understanding to be the only correct one, which poses a barrier to accepting moderation-related material. Second, digital challenges arise when students, eager to explore religious topics, lack access to qualified experts and instead turn to unreliable online sources. This raises concerns about misinformation and its impact on students' understanding of religion.

Keywords: Religious moderation; Islamic education

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia stands as the nation with the largest Muslim population in the world, a position that grants it significant influence in shaping contemporary discourses on Islamic moderation. As an archipelagic country of remarkable diversity, Indonesia's social fabric is woven from hundreds of ethnic groups, languages, and religious traditions. This heterogeneity necessitated the development of a unifying national philosophy, *Pancasila*, which was established by the nation's founding fathers as the bedrock of Indonesian identity. *Pancasila*'s five principles – belief in one God, just and civilized humanity, national unity, deliberative democracy, and social justice – provide a framework that accommodates Indonesia's pluralistic society while preventing any single religion or ideology from dominating others. Although Indonesia is not a theocratic state, religion remains deeply embedded in both the private and public spheres of its citizens' lives, requiring careful navigation to maintain social harmony.

The Indonesian approach to religious moderation represents a unique synthesis of Islamic teachings and *kearifan lokal* (local wisdom). This blending is evident in various cultural practices where Islamic values are expressed through indigenous traditions, creating a distinct form of Islam that is both authentic and adaptive. Community practices such as interfaith *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation) and communal *selamatan* (thanksgiving feasts) demonstrate how religious and cultural elements intertwine to reinforce social cohesion. However, this delicate balance faces ongoing challenges from extremist ideologies that promote rigid interpretations of Islam, often through confrontational means. The emergence of transnational radical movements and domestic sectarian tensions has made the promotion of religious moderation not just desirable but essential for national stability. In this context, moderation serves as a vital counter-narrative to extremist worldviews that threaten Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Religious moderation in Indonesia is fundamentally about adopting a contextual and inclusive approach to Islamic teachings rather than diluting religious principles. This perspective aligns with the Qur'anic concept of *ummatan wasatan* (the middle nation), which emphasizes balance, justice, and moderation in all aspects of life. The Indonesian interpretation of this principle recognizes the nation's multicultural reality and seeks to ensure that religious understanding contributes to national unity rather than division. Moderate Islam in Indonesia serves as an antidote to radicalism by promoting critical thinking, peaceful coexistence, and respect for democratic values. It consciously rejects the divisive rhetoric employed by extremist groups that label those with differing views as enemies or *kafir* (infidels), instead advocating for *hiwar* (dialogue) and *ta'aruf* (mutual understanding) among different faith communities.

The Indonesian government has made religious moderation a national priority through various policy initiatives and institutional reforms. The *Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional (RPJMN) 2020–2024* includes specific provisions for promoting moderation across different sectors of society. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has implemented programs to mainstream moderate values in educational curricula, *dakwah* (religious preaching), and community engagement. These efforts include revising Islamic education materials to emphasize tolerance, organizing interfaith dialogue forums, and training religious leaders in moderate interpretation of texts. The Directorate General of Islamic Education has extended these

initiatives beyond traditional Islamic institutions like *madrasas* and *pesantren* to include general schools and universities, ensuring that the message of moderation reaches a broad audience. These systemic approaches reflect the government's commitment to safeguarding Indonesia's pluralistic tradition while addressing contemporary challenges posed by radical ideologies.

Education plays a pivotal role in cultivating moderate religious understanding among Indonesia's younger generations. Schools serve as crucial spaces where students learn to navigate diversity and develop the skills needed for peaceful coexistence. Indonesia's *Undang-Undang No. 20 Tahun 2003 tentang Sistem Pendidikan Nasional* (National Education Law No. 20 of 2003) mandates that educational institutions develop students who are not only academically competent but also morally grounded and socially responsible. Within this framework, *Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)* teachers bear particular responsibility for instilling values of moderation through their teaching methodologies and classroom interactions. Modern *PAI* curricula increasingly incorporate discussions on interfaith harmony, human rights, and Indonesia's multicultural heritage, moving beyond traditional dogmatic approaches. The case of *UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo* exemplifies this progressive approach, where innovative practices such as including non-Muslim students in *PAI* activities have fostered interreligious understanding while respecting religious boundaries.

Despite these positive developments, significant challenges remain in implementing effective moderation-based education. Many teachers require additional training to develop inclusive pedagogies and address sensitive topics related to religious diversity. Conservative attitudes among some parents and community members sometimes create resistance to more progressive interpretations of Islamic teachings. Furthermore, the pervasive influence of social media has exposed students to extremist propaganda, complicating efforts to promote tolerance in educational settings. These challenges underscore the need for comprehensive strategies that address both institutional and societal factors influencing religious understanding.

This research focuses on examining the effectiveness of *Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI)* learning strategies in promoting religious moderation at *UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo*. By analyzing teaching methodologies, institutional support systems, and student outcomes, the study aims to contribute to broader discussions about countering extremism through education. The research seeks to answer several key questions: How effective are current *PAI* learning strategies in fostering religious moderation? What obstacles hinder the implementation of moderation-based approaches? What solutions could enhance the integration of moderate values in religious education? The findings of this study will provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and religious leaders working to develop effective models for promoting religious moderation in Indonesia's diverse educational landscape.

2. METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach, which is particularly suitable for investigating the research topic entitled "The Effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education Learning Strategies Containing Strengthening Religious Moderation at UPT SMA Negeri 7

Wajo." Qualitative methodology is often referred to as naturalistic research as it is conducted in natural settings (Sugiyono, 2018). This approach is also known as ethnographic, as it was originally developed for cultural anthropological field studies and is alternatively called qualitative method due to the nature of data collection and analysis which is fundamentally qualitative in character. The qualitative research paradigm incorporates various methods including interviews, observations, and documentation. For the present investigation, descriptive analysis methodology will be utilized. As articulated by Nazir (2014), descriptive research represents a systematic approach to examining the status of human groups, objects, conditions, systems of thought, or contemporary events with the objective of creating accurate, factual, and systematic descriptions of phenomena, their characteristics, and interrelationships. This methodological framework enables comprehensive understanding of the research subject through detailed portrayal of existing conditions.

Data sources constitute all potential providers of information relevant to the research inquiry. This study utilizes two categories of data sources, as follows: 1) Primary Data: This category comprises data obtained directly from original sources by the researcher. Primary data collection involves direct engagement with the research subjects at the study location, specifically UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo. The researcher gathers interview data from key respondents, including Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and school administrators, regarding the research topic (Sugiyono, 2018). This firsthand information serves as the foundation for primary analysis. 2) Secondary Data: Secondary data represents indirect sources of information that researchers access through existing documents or third-party accounts (Sugiyono, 2018). This category includes archival records, institutional documents, and previously published research findings that provide contextual background and supplementary information for the study. Secondary data offers the advantage of efficient accessibility while supporting and enriching primary data findings.

The combination of these data sources enables comprehensive investigation of the research problem through triangulation of multiple perspectives and evidentiary bases. The methodological approach ensures systematic collection and analysis of both qualitative and supporting quantitative data where applicable, maintaining academic rigor while remaining sensitive to the naturalistic context of the educational setting under examination.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Effectiveness Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Strategies that Contain Content Strengthening Moderation Religion at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo

The cultivation of religious moderation among students at UPT State Senior High School in Wajo Regency represents a comprehensive educational endeavor that requires thoughtful pedagogical approaches and sustained institutional commitment. Teachers at this institution share the common objective of developing students' religious understanding while promoting values of tolerance and moderation, though each educator employs distinct yet complementary strategies to achieve these aims. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in particular shoulder responsibilities that extend well beyond the conventional transmission of Islamic knowledge;

they serve as moral guides and facilitators of intercultural understanding within the school community. Their instructional methods and interpersonal approaches significantly influence students' development of moderate religious perspectives, making their role particularly crucial in Indonesia's diverse sociocultural context. The strategic implementation of moderation-focused pedagogies has demonstrated measurable impacts on students' ability to navigate religious differences while maintaining strong personal faith commitments.

The research reveals that PAI teachers at UPT SMA Negeri Kabupaten Wajo have developed a robust framework for integrating religious moderation principles into both formal curriculum and informal school activities. This framework operates simultaneously at explicit and implicit levels, with teachers consciously incorporating moderation values into lesson plans while also modeling these principles through their daily interactions and classroom management styles. The school's unique demographic composition, serving students from varied religious and cultural backgrounds, necessitates this multidimensional approach. Four primary indicators of religious moderation guide instructional practices: national commitment, tolerance, rejection of radicalism and violence, and accommodation of local cultural traditions. As an educational institution situated in Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape, UPT SMA Negeri Kabupaten Wajo has intentionally positioned itself as a laboratory for interreligious understanding, where students learn to reconcile Islamic teachings with the realities of pluralistic coexistence.

The imperative for focused religious moderation education becomes particularly evident when examining the student population's characteristics. Many learners arrive with limited formal religious education, while others bring deeply ingrained but sometimes insular faith perspectives. This diversity of religious understanding and practice among the student body creates both challenges and opportunities for moral education. PAI teachers address these circumstances through deliberate programming aimed at preventing sectarian tensions, bullying behaviors, and other manifestations of religious intolerance. Their efforts extend beyond mere conflict prevention to actively cultivating positive interfaith attitudes and nationalistic commitment among students. This holistic approach recognizes that authentic religious moderation must address both cognitive understanding and practical application in social contexts. The school's PAI teachers have developed specialized instructional strategies centered on the Islam Rahmatan Lil Alamin (ISRA) paradigm, which conceptualizes Islam as a blessing for all creation. This philosophical foundation informs a teaching methodology that emphasizes inclusivity and rejects discriminatory practices in the classroom. The model's implementation involves three interconnected components that work synergistically to promote religious moderation. The first component focuses on curriculum enhancement through careful analysis and strategic reinforcement of Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD) that align with moderation principles. Teachers engage in ongoing curriculum mapping exercises to identify optimal integration points for moderation content, ensuring these values permeate rather than supplement the standard curriculum.

The second component involves the development and implementation of collaborative learning models that transform traditional classroom dynamics. These innovative pedagogical approaches reconceptualize students as active participants in knowledge construction rather than passive recipients of information. Through carefully structured group activities and discussion formats, students develop crucial interpersonal skills including perspective-taking,

constructive dialogue, and cooperative problem-solving. The model's effectiveness stems from its ability to create authentic situations where students must navigate differences and find common ground – microcosms of the broader societal challenges they will face as adult citizens. Teachers employing this approach report observable growth in students' ability to articulate their beliefs respectfully while remaining open to alternative viewpoints.

The third component establishes strategic partnerships with external organizations specializing in interfaith dialogue and moderate Islamic education. These collaborations bring specialized expertise into the school environment while connecting students with broader networks of religious moderation advocates. The partnership with Wahid Foundation exemplifies this approach, providing access to trained facilitators who can address complex interreligious issues with both scholarly depth and practical relevance. These external engagements serve multiple purposes: they validate the school's moderation efforts through association with respected institutions, expose students to professional perspectives beyond their regular teachers, and provide ongoing professional development opportunities for faculty members. Together, these three components create an ecosystem of religious education that balances fidelity to Islamic tradition with the demands of contemporary pluralistic society, equipping students with the theological understanding and social skills needed for meaningful participation in Indonesia's diverse democracy.

2. Constraint Implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Strategies that Contain Content Strengthening Moderation Religion at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo

The implementation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning strategies that incorporate religious moderation at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo encounters two primary categories of obstacles that merit careful consideration. These challenges reveal important insights about the complex dynamics of religious education in contemporary educational settings. The first significant obstacle stems from certain students' fundamental understanding of religious identity, characterized by an exclusive mindset that considers their own interpretation as uniquely correct. This phenomenon manifests when students develop rigid religious self-conceptions that resist moderate perspectives. PAI teachers report encountering students who exhibit this exclusivist tendency, creating a pedagogical challenge in fostering open-mindedness and acceptance of diverse interpretations within Islamic tradition. Such attitudes often correlate with limited exposure to alternative theological viewpoints and sometimes reflect influences from particular religious socialization patterns outside the school environment. The second category of challenges involves problematic religious engagement patterns among a subset of students. While demonstrating strong religious interest, these students frequently consult questionable reference materials of unclear provenance. More concerning is their exposure to radical content through various online platforms, which risks distorting their understanding of Islamic teachings. This digital-age challenge presents particular difficulties as teachers must counteract misleading information that students encounter beyond school supervision. The radical narratives accessed through these channels often employ sophisticated persuasive techniques that appeal to youth seeking religious identity, making them particularly potent and difficult to neutralize through conventional classroom instruction.

However, it should be noted that these challenges do not represent the dominant pattern among students at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo. The majority of learners demonstrate balanced religious engagement, showing neither excessive fixation nor complete disinterest in religious matters. This moderate disposition among most students provides a favorable foundation for implementing religious moderation programs. The relative rarity of extreme attitudes actually facilitates the teachers' work in promoting balanced religious perspectives, as they are not confronted with widespread radicalization or religious apathy that might exist in other educational contexts. These findings suggest that while vigilance is required regarding the identified challenges, the overall student population at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo presents a receptive audience for religious moderation initiatives. The obstacles that do exist primarily involve helping students navigate the complex digital religious landscape and encouraging critical engagement with diverse Islamic interpretations, rather than combating deeply entrenched extremism. This situation allows PAI teachers to focus on constructive religious formation rather than corrective intervention, creating opportunities for positive development of students' religious understanding within a framework of moderation and tolerance.

3. Solutions for Implementing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Learning Strategies that Contain Content Strengthening Moderation Religion at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo

In response to the identified challenges, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo have developed and implemented a multifaceted set of solutions designed to proactively promote religious moderation among students. These strategic interventions address both the immediate obstacles and work to establish long-term cultural change within the school environment. The Friday sermon platform has been systematically utilized as a regular channel for disseminating messages of religious moderation. During these weekly gatherings, PAI teachers deliberately incorporate themes of tolerance, pluralism, and balanced religious understanding into their khutbah content. This approach capitalizes on the spiritual significance of Friday prayers to reinforce moderation values when students are particularly receptive to religious guidance. The sermons emphasize Islam's middle path (wasatiyyah) principles, using Qur'anic references and prophetic traditions that advocate for balanced, compassionate practice of faith. By consistently linking core Islamic teachings with contemporary needs for interreligious harmony, the teachers create powerful cognitive connections between students' faith and moderation values.

Recognizing the critical importance of reliable religious sources in the digital age, PAI teachers have implemented a robust reference guidance system. They actively direct students to vetted, authoritative online resources such as NU Online, which presents Islamic teachings within the framework of Indonesia's mainstream moderate tradition. This proactive approach counters the influence of questionable online materials by providing students with credible alternatives that align with the school's educational philosophy. Teachers supplement these digital references with curated reading lists and structured library resources, creating a comprehensive knowledge ecosystem that supports moderate religious understanding. Regular workshops on digital literacy and source verification further equip students to navigate online religious content responsibly. The school has developed a student ambassador program for religious moderation, selecting and training representatives to participate in various interfaith and moderation-focused activities. These student delegates attend workshops, conferences, and youth dialogue

programs, then serve as peer educators upon returning to school. This multiplier effect ensures that moderation messages are disseminated through student networks in relatable, age-appropriate ways. The program not only expands the reach of moderation education but also empowers students to take ownership of these values, fostering leadership skills and personal investment in the school's moderation mission.

Looking ahead, the school plans to implement a visual moderation campaign through strategically placed inspirational quotes and teachings throughout the campus. This forthcoming initiative will transform physical spaces into constant reminders of moderation values, creating an immersive environment where students encounter positive messages during their daily routines. The quotes will draw from diverse sources including Qur'anic verses, sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, Indonesian national philosophy, and wisdom from respected moderate scholars. This ambient educational approach complements formal instruction by reinforcing moderation principles in subtle yet persistent ways throughout the school's physical environment.

Together, these solutions form an integrated strategy that addresses religious moderation at multiple levels - spiritual, intellectual, social, and environmental. The PAI teachers' comprehensive approach demonstrates an understanding that fostering lasting change requires consistent messaging across various touchpoints of student experience. By combining regular spiritual guidance, reliable resource provision, peer-to-peer education, and environmental design, the school creates overlapping systems of support for developing students' moderate religious perspectives. This multilayered methodology not only counters existing challenges but also works preventatively to cultivate a school culture where religious moderation becomes the natural and expected orientation for all members of the learning community.

4. DISCUSSION

Religious moderation represents a critical philosophical and practical approach to fostering balanced religious understanding within pluralistic societies. At its core, this concept advocates for a middle path in interpreting and practicing religious teachings, avoiding both excessive rigidity and excessive permissiveness. Within the Islamic tradition, this approach finds its theological foundation in the principle of *wasathiyah*, which positions the Muslim community as a balanced and justly moderate nation (*ummatan wasatan*). The comprehensive framework of religious moderation, as articulated by Aceng Abdul Aziz (2019), encompasses four fundamental dimensions that are particularly relevant in educational settings: commitment to national unity, cultivation of interreligious tolerance, active resistance to radical and violent ideologies, and respectful accommodation of local cultural traditions. These interconnected dimensions provide a robust structure for developing educational programs that simultaneously honor religious authenticity while promoting social harmony. The imperative to instill these values from early educational stages stems from their proven efficacy in preventing the growth of extremist interpretations that threaten both religious integrity and social cohesion. Educational institutions serve as particularly effective venues for this formative work, as they provide structured environments where young people can engage with diverse perspectives while developing critical thinking skills to navigate complex religious and social landscapes.

The case of UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo offers a compelling example of institutional commitment to religious moderation that predates contemporary policy emphases on this concept. As documented by Pratiwi (2020), the school has maintained a longstanding practice of integrating moderation values into its educational philosophy and daily operations, despite serving a predominantly Muslim student population alongside religious minorities. This historical commitment demonstrates an organic institutional recognition of education's transformative potential in shaping religious understanding that is both deeply rooted and socially responsible. The school's approach reflects an understanding that authentic religious education in pluralistic contexts must extend beyond doctrinal transmission to include the cultivation of civic virtues and intercultural competence. This comprehensive perspective on religious education becomes increasingly vital in contemporary Indonesia, where globalization and digital media have dramatically expanded the range of religious interpretations accessible to young people, including those that may promote exclusivist or radical perspectives.

The contemporary educational landscape presents complex challenges to maintaining balanced religious understanding among students. Research by Muslim et al. (2018) identifies three primary vectors through which radical and intolerant ideologies may infiltrate educational settings: extracurricular activities that operate without adequate supervision, instructional approaches that inadvertently promote dogmatic thinking, and institutional policies that fail to establish clear safeguards against extremist influences. These findings underscore the necessity for comprehensive institutional strategies that address potential vulnerabilities across all aspects of school life. The responsibility for implementing such strategies falls particularly heavily on teachers, who serve as the primary adult influences in students' daily educational experiences. As emphasized by Hidayat et al. (2018), teachers occupy a unique position that requires them to simultaneously fulfill multiple roles: as subject matter experts transmitting academic knowledge, as mentors guiding holistic student development, and as guardians protecting young minds from ideological distortions.

This multifaceted responsibility aligns with Nasruddin's (2011) conceptualization of the teacher's role in nurturing students' physical, mental, and spiritual growth to prepare them for responsible engagement with all dimensions of life - personal, familial, social, national, and religious. The complexity of this educational mission becomes particularly apparent in the digital age, where students have unprecedented access to religious information and interpretations that may contradict or undermine the balanced perspectives promoted in formal educational settings. This reality necessitates that teachers develop not only deep content knowledge but also sophisticated pedagogical skills to help students navigate the overwhelming volume of religious information available through digital platforms. Effective religious education in this context must equip students with critical discernment skills to evaluate the credibility and appropriateness of various religious interpretations they encounter both within and beyond school walls.

The development and implementation of effective teaching strategies for promoting religious moderation requires careful consideration of both philosophical foundations and practical classroom realities. As Hanum (2021) notes, successful teaching in this sensitive domain begins with deliberate strategic planning that leverages available resources to maximize educational impact. At UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers

have adopted the ISRA (*Islam Rahmatan lil'alamin*) learning model as their primary framework for integrating moderation values into religious instruction. This comprehensive model incorporates three mutually reinforcing methodological components that address different dimensions of the learning process. The first component focuses on curriculum enhancement through targeted strengthening of Core Competencies (KI) and Basic Competencies (KD) that align most naturally with moderation principles. This approach ensures that moderation values are not treated as supplemental content but are instead woven into the fundamental structure of religious instruction.

The second component employs collaborative learning methodologies and strategic use of instructional media to create dynamic classroom environments that model the values being taught. This pedagogical approach recognizes that the process of learning is as important as the content being learned, and that students internalize values more effectively when they experience them in practice rather than simply hearing about them in theory. The third component brings external experts into the educational process, providing students with exposure to authoritative voices that can reinforce moderation principles from different perspectives. This multifaceted instructional strategy aligns with contemporary understandings of effective pedagogy, as articulated by M. Aditia Firdaus (2022), which emphasize the importance of varied teaching approaches to maintain student engagement and deepen learning outcomes. The ISRA model's particular strength lies in its ability to serve as a conceptual and practical bridge connecting academic knowledge with students' lived experiences and personal responses to religious teachings.

The practical implementation of religious moderation education at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo has surfaced two primary categories of challenges that require ongoing attention and adaptive responses. The first challenge involves addressing students' tendencies toward exclusivist religious self-perceptions, where individuals become convinced that their particular interpretation represents the only valid understanding of truth. While this represents a common developmental phase in religious identity formation, its persistence into later adolescence can create significant barriers to developing the open-mindedness and flexibility required for genuine interreligious understanding and cooperation. The second major challenge stems from the digital revolution, which has dramatically transformed how young people access and engage with religious information. As noted by Paelani Setia (2021), the same technological advances that have democratized access to religious knowledge have also created unprecedented opportunities for the spread of extremist ideologies through social media platforms and other digital channels. This digital landscape presents a particular dilemma for religiously curious students who may lack the discernment skills to distinguish between balanced and distorted interpretations of their faith.

In response to these challenges, the PAI teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo have developed a comprehensive set of strategies that operate at multiple levels of school life. These include the integration of moderation themes into regular Friday sermon content, providing students with carefully vetted religious references, creating opportunities for student participation in interfaith and moderation-focused activities, and plans for environmental enhancements that will surround students with visual reminders of moderation principles throughout the school grounds. These initiatives reflect a thoughtful application of the

Indonesian Ministry of Religion's broader strategic framework for promoting religious moderation, which emphasizes three key implementation pathways: widespread socialization of moderate ideas, institutionalization through formal policies and programs, and integration into national planning documents like the RPJMN 2020-2024 (Anshari et al., 2021). The school's approach demonstrates how national policy frameworks can be effectively adapted to local institutional contexts while maintaining fidelity to core principles and objectives. This multilayered strategy acknowledges that meaningful and lasting change in religious understanding requires consistent reinforcement across all aspects of the educational experience, from formal classroom instruction to informal school culture and physical environment.

4. CONCLUSION

The Islamic Religious Education teachers at UPT SMA Negeri 7 Wajo have developed a comprehensive approach to cultivating religious moderation among students through their implementation of the ISRA (Islam Rahmatan lil'alam) learning model. This pedagogical framework incorporates three key components that work synergistically to promote balanced religious understanding. First, the teachers enhance the standard curriculum by intentionally emphasizing moderation-aligned content within Core Competencies and Basic Competencies. Second, they employ innovative collaborative learning designs that actively engage students in experiential activities demonstrating moderation principles. Third, they establish strategic partnerships with external experts and organizations to reinforce moderation values through authoritative perspectives. Together, these elements create an educational environment where religious moderation is not merely taught as abstract concepts but is consistently modeled and practiced throughout the learning experience.

The research identified two primary obstacles that teachers face in promoting religious moderation. The first challenge stems from cognitive barriers where some students maintain exclusive religious self-perceptions, believing they possess singular religious truth. This mindset creates significant pedagogical difficulties as it predisposes students to resist alternative interpretations fundamental to moderate religious understanding. The second major challenge emerges from the digital information landscape, where religiously curious students lacking proper guidance may encounter and internalize extremist or distorted interpretations through unverified online sources. This digital vulnerability represents a growing concern as expanding internet access increases exposure to potentially harmful ideological content beyond institutional control.

In response to these challenges, the school has developed a multi-pronged approach aligned with national guidelines from the Ministry of Religion. Current interventions include systematically integrating moderation themes into weekly Friday sermons, establishing student ambassador programs for peer-to-peer moderation education, and providing vetted religious references. The school has also proposed environmental reinforcement through installing moderation-themed quotes throughout campus grounds, though this initiative remains pending implementation. These solutions collectively address both immediate pedagogical needs and longer-term cultural transformation within the school community.

While this study provides valuable insights into strategies for promoting religious moderation in Islamic education, several areas warrant deeper investigation to strengthen both academic understanding and practical implementation. Future research should examine the sustained effects of moderation-focused education by tracking students' religious attitudes and behaviors over extended periods to assess whether school-based interventions lead to lasting changes in religious outlook and practice during post-graduation life stages. Additional scholarship comparing different implementation models across varied educational contexts would help identify best practices adaptable to diverse institutional settings, including urban versus rural environments, public versus private schools, and Islamic versus general education systems.

Given the growing challenge of online radicalization, research should explore effective methods for incorporating digital religious literacy into formal curricula to equip students with critical evaluation skills for assessing online religious content. Further investigation into optimal professional development approaches could enhance Islamic Religious Education teachers' capacity to address emerging challenges, particularly regarding sensitive discussions about extremism and pluralism. The development of robust evaluation tools to measure religious moderation competencies would enable more precise assessment of program effectiveness and identification of areas needing improvement. Research exploring potential adaptations of these strategies in non-Indonesian contexts could contribute to global discussions on balancing religious authenticity with pluralistic social cohesion.

This study establishes an important foundation for understanding how educational institutions can nurture religious moderation, but continued scholarly attention remains essential as societal challenges evolve. Future research should particularly focus on measuring long-term outcomes and developing scalable models that maintain fidelity to core principles while adapting to local contexts. The cultivation of religious moderation through education stands as both an academic imperative and practical necessity in our increasingly interconnected yet ideologically fragmented world, requiring ongoing investigation and thoughtful implementation across diverse educational settings.

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