

The implementation of moderate religious education for students at state senior high school 13 oku, south sumatra

Azwar Aripin^{a,1,*}, Rahma Dewi Masithoh^{b,2}, Reza Fahlepi^{c,3}.

^{a,b,c} Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI) Baturaja, Indonesia.

^{*1} azwararipin1@gmail.com; ² rahmadewibta409@gmail.com; ³ rezalefi341@gmail.com.

*Correspondent Author

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the implementation of religious moderation education in the environment of SMA Negeri 13 OKU. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. The results of the study indicate that the values of religious moderation have been integrated into the learning process and extracurricular activities. The principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers show a strong commitment to fostering an attitude of tolerance and mutual respect among students. However, this study also found several obstacles, including differences in the background of students' religious understanding, teachers' limited understanding of the principles of moderation, and the influence of social media which sometimes facilitates exposure to radical narratives. These findings emphasize the importance of a holistic and collaborative approach in the implementation of religious moderation education. Schools, families, and communities need to work together to create an educational ecosystem that supports the internalization of moderation values in the younger generation. Religious moderation education is a strategic effort in building the character of students who are inclusive, tolerant, and ready to face the challenges of the times. This study is expected to provide practical and theoretical contributions in strengthening religious moderation programs in high schools.

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Introduction

Islamic education plays a strategic role in shaping the character and morals of the younger generation amid the dynamics of contemporary society. As an institution that not only transfers Islamic knowledge, Islamic education is also responsible for instilling values of tolerance, moderation, and diversity in students. This is increasingly important given the rise of intolerance and radicalism that threaten social cohesion in various parts of the world, including Indonesia.

Education is an important instrument in shaping the character of a civilized and dignified nation. In a multicultural society, education plays a strategic role in instilling national values, tolerance, and the spirit of unity (Tilaar, 2004; Zuhairini & others, 2008). One of the important issues raised in the context of education today is religious moderation, which is a religious attitude that emphasizes balance, tolerance, and openness to differences (Akhmadi, 2019; Hasyim, 2020). According to Azra (2006), Islamic education must be able to respond to the challenges of the times

by prioritizing an inclusive and democratic approach. The new paradigm in national education emphasizes the importance of reconstruction and democratization in the education system, including Islamic religious education, to create a just and harmonious society. In this context, religious moderation education becomes a relevant approach to be applied in the school environment.

Religious moderation is an urgent need in the world of education because schools are social spaces that bring together students from various backgrounds, including religious, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. If not properly guided, this diversity can become a source of conflict. Conversely, if managed through proper education, diversity can become a source of national strength (Azra, 2006; Abdullah, 2021).

The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia has emphasized the importance of religious moderation as a national priority program in addressing the rise of radicalism and intolerance among the younger generation (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019). Schools, as formal educational institutions, are expected to internalize the values of religious moderation through learning, extracurricular activities, and school culture (Naim, 2015; Mujiburrahman, 2020).

However, the reality on the ground shows that the implementation of religious moderation in educational settings still faces various challenges. The phenomenon of student violence, the spread of radical ideas through social media, and the emergence of intolerant attitudes among teenagers indicate that the values of moderation have not been fully internalized by students. This is reinforced by findings (Hanif et al., 2020) showing that tolerance education among young people still needs to be improved to prevent the development of extremist attitudes.

Previous studies have also shown that the implementation of religious moderation education in schools can enhance tolerant attitudes and reduce the potential for conflicts among students. Hidayat (2020) found that students who received education based on religious moderation demonstrated increased awareness of the importance of respecting differences. Similar research by Syamsuddin (2021) also confirmed that the implementation of moderation values in schools fosters a culture of peace and reduces discriminatory behavior.

On the other hand, the challenges of religious moderation education are not insignificant. Teachers often face limitations in conceptual understanding and appropriate teaching methods (Mukhibat, 2019; Asrori, 2020). Additionally, the influence of social media has the potential to reinforce intolerant attitudes if students are not equipped with adequate religious literacy (Saputra & Sururin, 2021; Yusof et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to examine how religious moderation education is implemented in practice in high schools, especially in areas with social and cultural diversity such as OKU Regency.

In the Indonesian context, the development of radical Islam is also a serious concern. (Mubarak, 2008) in his book "The Genealogy of Radical Islam in Indonesia" reveals that the growth of radical Islamic elements since the reform era has influenced social and political dynamics in the country. These groups often exploit gaps in the education system to spread their ideology, making it important for educational institutions to strengthen values of moderation and tolerance among students.

One approach that can be taken is to integrate religious moderation education into the curriculum and extracurricular activities at schools. This aims to shape students' characters to be tolerant, inclusive, and respectful of differences. Religious moderation education not only teaches the importance of tolerance but also equips students with skills for dialogue, critical thinking, and peaceful conflict resolution.

This study aims to examine the implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU. The main focus of this study is to understand how the concept of religious moderation is applied in the learning process, extracurricular activities, and social interactions at school. Additionally, this study will identify the supporting and hindering factors in the implementation of religious moderation education, as well as evaluate its impact on students' attitudes and behavior.

By understanding the dynamics of the implementation of religious moderation education in schools, it is hoped that effective strategies can be found to strengthen the values of tolerance and diversity among teenagers. This is important for creating a conducive and inclusive educational environment that can shape a young generation with moderate and responsible character.

Method

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach because it is suitable for exploring in depth the phenomenon of the application of religious moderation education in students. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand the meaning, value, and processes that occur in a natural context (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Meanwhile, the descriptive nature was chosen to systematically describe empirical facts in accordance with field findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Sugiyono, 2019).

The research location was SMA Negeri 13 OKU, South Sumatra. Research informants included Islamic Education teachers, the school principal, and several students selected through purposive sampling, which is the selection of informants based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015; Etikan et al., 2016).

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to directly observe learning activities and school culture related to religious moderation (Angrosino, 2007). In-depth interviews were conducted with teachers, students, and school principals to explore their perceptions and experiences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Flick, 2018). Documentation was used to supplement the data through an analysis of the Lesson Plan (RPP), school activity records, and archives related to the religious moderation program (Bowen, 2009).

To ensure data validity, this study employed source and method triangulation techniques. Triangulation was conducted by comparing data from interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure the accuracy of information (Denzin, 2012; Carter et al., 2014). This is important to enhance the validity and reliability of research data.

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, which includes the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). The analysis was conducted interactively from the beginning to the end of the research to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the implementation of religious moderation education in schools (Yin, 2018; Saldaña, 2016).

Result

This study reveals that the implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU has become an integral part of both learning activities and extracurricular activities. Field findings indicate that the school principal and Islamic Education teachers have a strong commitment to instilling moderate values in students. This commitment is reflected in school policies that support religious moderation practices, such as integrating tolerance values into lesson materials, fostering a culture of dialogue, and organizing inclusive activities.

The research findings indicate that the implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU is carried out through several strategies, namely: integrating moderation values into Islamic Religious Education subjects, extracurricular activities, and fostering a tolerant attitude in daily school life. PAI teachers consistently link the material to values of moderation such as fairness, respect for differences, and rejection of extremism (Akhmadi, 2019; Hasyim, 2020).

Extracurricular activities, such as joint religious study sessions, interfaith discussions, and social activities, also serve as a means for students to practice tolerance and togetherness. Additionally, the school instills an inclusive religious culture, for example, through regulations that emphasize mutual respect among students (Naim, 2015; Mujiburrahman, 2020).

In the context of learning, Islamic Education teachers consistently link teaching materials to the principles of religious moderation. This is realized through open discussions in class, which provide space for students to share their views and discuss religious issues that are developing in society. This process helps students understand that diversity is a social reality that must be respected, not avoided. As emphasized by (Azra, 2006), strengthening the values of religious moderation in schools is an important effort in overcoming potential conflicts arising from differences in religious understanding.

In addition to formal learning, the implementation of religious moderation is also manifested in various extracurricular activities. Religious activities, such as Islamic holidays, religious studies, and interfaith discussions, provide a means for students to practice the values of tolerance and mutual respect. These activities involve the entire school community regardless of religious background, thereby strengthening social cohesion within the school environment. This finding aligns with the research findings of Hanif et al., (2020), which emphasize the importance of tolerance education among the younger generation as a preventive measure against radical ideologies and intolerance.

However, this study also identified challenges in the implementation of religious moderation education. One of the main obstacles is the differences in the religious understanding of students, which sometimes triggers intolerant attitudes among them. Some students still show exclusive tendencies in understanding religious teachings, which in turn can hinder efforts to build a culture of moderation. Another obstacle is the limited understanding of some teachers regarding the concept of religious moderation as a whole. Although teachers have a high level of commitment, not all teachers have a deep theoretical understanding of the principles of moderation, such as *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *musawah* (Az-Zuhaili, 1989).

Interestingly, this study also found that digital technology is one of the factors that significantly contributes to the process of internalizing religious moderation among students. On the one hand, digital technology, especially social media, serves as a means to disseminate inclusive and moderate religious content. This is utilized by some teachers by integrating religious moderation material into digital platforms that are familiar to students. However, on the other hand, the uncontrolled flow of information also poses a serious challenge, as some students are exposed to exclusive and radical religious narratives. This is in line with the findings of the Center (2021), which show that intolerance and radicalism among young people are often reinforced by unrestricted access to digital content.

In a broader discourse, the findings of this study indicate that the success of implementing religious moderation education does not only depend on school policies or the quality of learning alone, but also on the internal factors of students and the support of their social environment. As stated by Mubarak (2008), social, cultural, and ideological factors are key elements that influence the younger generation's perspective on diversity. Therefore, collaboration between schools, families, and communities is important in building an educational ecosystem conducive to strengthening religious moderation.

Theoretically, the results of this study support the concept put forward by Miles et al. (2014) that the implementation of educational policies cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context in which the policies are implemented. The implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU, although already running fairly well, still requires ongoing adjustments and evaluations to address the increasingly complex challenges of the times. As stated by Lincoln & Guba, (1985), the validity of qualitative findings is determined by how researchers can interpret data within a complete and authentic context.

Furthermore, this research provides practical contributions to strengthening religious moderation programs in secondary schools. These findings serve as a starting point for other schools wishing to implement similar programs, as well as a foundation for policymakers to formulate more comprehensive strategies. This is important considering that religious moderation education is not only an urgent need to maintain internal harmony within the nation, but also part of global efforts to prevent radicalism and extremism, which are increasingly concerning.

Thus, the results of this study show that religious moderation education plays a central role in shaping the character of young people to be tolerant, inclusive, and adaptive to change. Going forward, it is necessary to strengthen religious moderation literacy in a more comprehensive manner through teacher training, the development of responsive curricula, and broader support from stakeholders. All of these efforts are highly relevant in facing increasingly complex challenges, while ensuring that noble religious values can become a solid foundation for the realization of a peaceful and harmonious society.

Discussion

These findings are in line with character education theory, which emphasizes the importance of integrating moral and social values into the learning process (Lickona, 2019). Moderate religious education has been shown to strengthen students' attitudes of tolerance and shape a balanced personality between religious beliefs and openness to differences (Abdullah, 2021; Zuhdi, 2020).

Furthermore, the results of this study reinforce the view that schools play an important role in preventing radicalism among the younger generation. A study by Saputra & Sururin (2021) shows that moderate religious literacy in schools can serve as a bulwark against the influence of intolerant ideologies that are widely circulated on social media. This is in line with the findings of Yusof et al. (2019) that religious moderation-based education contributes to strengthening social cohesion in multicultural societies.

Teachers play a key role in the process of internalizing moderate religious values. Teachers not only act as conveyors of material, but also as role models in being fair, inclusive, and open (Asrori, 2020). Teachers' daily attitudes and behaviors have a significant influence on shaping students' characters (Uno, 2016; Hidayat, 2020). Thus, the success of implementing religious moderation education is greatly influenced by teachers' pedagogical, social, and personality competencies.

Additionally, the findings of this study emphasize that the implementation of religious moderation in schools requires a supportive environment. The role of the school principal in developing an inclusive and religious school culture is a crucial factor in the program's success (Azra, 2006; Tilaar, 2004). Parental support is also essential to reinforce the values of moderation instilled at school within family life (Wibowo & Widodo, 2022).

Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU does not only focus on cognitive aspects but also on fostering tolerant, inclusive, and peace-loving attitudes in daily life. This demonstrates that religious moderation education plays a strategic role in shaping young people who are morally upright, have a national perspective, and are ready to live together in diversity (Mujiburrahman, 2020; Hidayat, 2020).

Conclusion

This research shows that the implementation of religious moderation education at SMA Negeri 13 OKU has been successful through the integration of moderation values into Islamic Religious Education lessons and extracurricular activities. The principal and Islamic Religious Education teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to instilling tolerance and mutual respect among students. This is evident in school policies, a dialogical learning approach, and the implementation of open and inclusive religious activities. However, several obstacles remain that hinder the optimization of religious moderation education at this school. The main challenges include differences in students' religious backgrounds, which can lead to intolerant attitudes, and the limited understanding of the concept of moderation among some teachers. Furthermore, easy access to radical narratives through social media is an external factor that needs to be addressed. The results of this study confirm that religious moderation education requires a holistic and

collaborative effort, involving various parties, from schools, families, and the community. Strengthening teacher capacity, developing a contextual curriculum, and close collaboration between schools and parents are strategic steps to strengthen the internalization of religious moderation values. Religious moderation education is strategically important in addressing the challenges of radicalism and intolerance. Therefore, all stakeholders need to work together to instill and nurture these values of moderation to create a tolerant young generation with an inclusive character and a positive contribution to a peaceful and harmonious society.

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