

The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Establishing Religious Moderation in Generation Z

Ikrom Ikwanul Maula ^{a,1,*}, Uswatun Khasanah ^{b,2}, Ida Zahara Adibah ^{c,3}.

^{*abc} Universitas Darul Ulum Islamic Center Sudirman GUPPI Ungaran, Indonesia.

^{*1} ikromikwama@gmail.com ; ² uswatunkhasanah6815@gmail.com ; ³ idazaharaadibah@gmail.com

*Correspondent Author

Received: 06-09-2026

Revised: 13-10-2026

Accepted: 04-11-2026

KEYWORDS

The Role of the Teacher;
Religious Moderation;
Generation Z;
Islamic Religious Education

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in establishing religious moderation in Generation Z in SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus of Semarang Regency. The background of the study is challenges faced by Generation Z as a digital generation that has wide access to information but is vulnerable to the influence of extreme ideologies, hoaxes, and opinion polarization on social media. This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The data were collected through observation and interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers as main informants, and documentation as supporting data. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data presentation, and drawing a conclusion systematically. The results of the study showed that Islamic Religious Education teachers have a central role as role models, facilitators, and motivators in internalizing religious moderation values. The strategies used include open discussion, self-reflection, contextual case study, and providing motivation that is relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z. The main challenges are the influence of social media, peer environment, low digital literacy, and lack of dialogue within the family. Moreover, the supporting factors come from curriculum policies, support between teachers, and government policies related to strengthening religious moderation. This study concludes that the success of establishing religious moderation in Generation Z requires adaptive, collaborative, and role-based learning approaches, as well as synergy between school, family, and stakeholders to create generations that are tolerant, inclusive, and committed to national values.

This is an open-access article under the [CC-BY-SA](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/) license.



Introduction

Indonesia is a country rich in ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity. This diversity is one of the national strengths. However, it also presents great challenges in maintaining the harmonization between religious communities and between social groups. As stated by Thahir (2023), Indonesia's wealth in the form of cultural diversity can be an attractive aspect, but it can also potentially cause conflicts. One of the strategic efforts in the education field is the implementation of religious moderation as a basic value to shape the characteristics of the young generation that are tolerant, inclusive, and capable of respecting diversity. Islamic Religious Education has a critical role in shaping the character values of religious moderation (Rahmat, 2022).

Religious moderation is a concept that proposes a religious perspective and attitude, avoiding both extreme ideologies and overly dismissive attitudes in religious matters. As stated by Wahyudi and Kurniasih (2021), religious moderation is a moderate understanding and practice of religious worship, avoiding both exaggeration and extremism. Diverse social conditions in Indonesia result in the polarization of perspectives towards religious issues. These diversities require an attitude of recognition and respect towards each diversity (Adibah, 2014).

Generation Z (born around 1997-2012) is an age group that is now entering Vocational High School (SMK) level. Generation Z is a group with the greatest population in Indonesia, which is 27.94% of the population, or approximately 74.93 million (Sunaryanto & Idrus, 2025). They live in the digital era with very fast access to information and have been used to social media and cross-cultural and cross-religious interactions. This condition establishes unique characteristics, including the tendency towards critical thinking, but they are also vulnerable to the influence of extremism or exclusive attitudes if not equipped with adequate values of diversity and moderation. Generation Z in the context of religious moderation in Indonesia has significant potential in strengthening open attitudes towards religious diversity (Afrian & Saumantri, 2024).

Vocational High School, such as SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus of Semarang Regency, is a school with diverse student conditions. This positions this school face its challenges in fostering students' religious characters. Students in SMK are not only required to study vocational lessons and technical skill training, but also to form healthy and moderate diversity attitudes. Therefore, the existence of Islamic Religious Education teachers in SMK has a strategic role, not only delivering religious materials normatively but also guiding students to be able to internalize the understanding of establishing moderation, respecting differences, and rejecting violence or extremism under the name of religion. As stated by Taufiq and Hasyim (2025), Islamic Religious Education teachers play a strategic role in guiding students to internalize moderation through non-normative strategies, such as discussion, role models, and contextual activities, establishing a tolerant attitude, respecting differences, and rejecting extremism under the name of religion within the SMK environment.

In this context, it is important to highlight how Islamic Religious Education teachers carry out their roles in class X of SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus, including teaching strategies, selecting learning methods, and constraints faced in daily practice. This indicates that the implementation of the value approach in Islamic Religious Education lessons is effective through open discussion, self-reflection, and case study, where students are more open in accepting differences and able to avoid exclusive attitudes (Suhaili et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the competency aspects of Islamic Religious Education teachers, including personality, pedagogy, social, and professional, are also determining factors for the successful internalization of religious moderation values. A study found that the important role of social competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers as communicators, role models, and facilitators in religious moderation guidance is to include discussion and PAI activities to internalize effective values in students. A teacher with this competency is able to deliver understanding, provide examples of attitudes, and manage moderation learning optimally (Wasilah et al., 2023). In its practice, a teacher is not only an educator but also a guide, facilitator, and role model of tolerant and inclusive attitudes.

The context of Generation Z also requires a different learning approach compared to the previous generation. As a generation that is used to technology and multimedia, they require creative and innovative teachers in designing PAI learning to be relevant and interesting. A study conducted by Puspita et al (2025) concludes that Generation Z requires creativity from Islamic

Religious Education teachers in managing the learning process to create a fun learning environment that supports their character development.

A study of religious moderation generally discusses the comparison of concepts between sources, such as the comparison of concepts between books, and several similar comparisons. The implementation of religious moderation in the school environment, and specifically in a certain generation, is an issue that requires study because every generation has different characteristics. The different characteristics have their challenges in internalizing a concept, especially the religious moderation concept. Internalizing the religious moderation concept depends on the educators who deliver it, namely, teachers. The role of a teacher in establishing religious moderation understanding is highly required to study more deeply. This in-depth analysis is expected to provide inspiration and applicable methods for educators in diverse educational settings in developing the concept of religious moderation education.

According to the explanation above, several issues that become the starting point of this study could be identified, including a lack of understanding of Generation Z students regarding religious moderation values, how PAI teachers apply learning strategies to establish religious moderation in vocational classes, and constraints faced by PAI teachers in carrying out their duties in the SMK environment. Thus, the researcher conducts a study entitled "The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Establishing Religious Moderation in Generation Z". A study in SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus is expected to provide a concrete overview of situations in the field and relevant recommendations to improve the quality of the PAI subject and religious moderation in Generation Z.

Method

This study used a descriptive qualitative method. The descriptive qualitative method is an approach to a behavior, phenomenon, event, issue, or certain condition that becomes the object of the study, and the findings are in the form of meaningful sentence descriptions explaining certain understandings (Sugiyono, 2013). Through the descriptive qualitative method, the researcher was able to analyze the phenomena occurring in the field comprehensively.

This study was conducted in SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus of Semarang Regency. This location was chosen because the majority of the studies on religious moderation focused on students or public schools (SMA/MA). Moreover, the context of SMK students whose characteristics are more practical, critical, and open to the digital era is still rarely studied.

Data in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly without an intermediary. Primary data is obtained by directly observing, so that the researcher obtains an overview of the real conditions of the area and state of objects being studied (Sundari et al., 2024). In this study, the researcher obtained primary data using the observation technique on the research site and interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers in SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus. Moreover, the secondary data is the opposite of primary data, which is data obtained indirectly to strengthen the understanding obtained from primary data. Secondary data of this study were records, transcripts, books, newspapers, magazines, written information, and so on in SMK N 1 Pringapus of Semarang Regency.

The data obtained were then analyzed. Data analysis is a process of systematically finding and compiling data from interviews, field notes, and other materials so that it is easy to understand and the results can be shared with others. Data analysis involves the processing of interview results and field notes gradually until the data are saturated with data reduction, presentation, and drawing a conclusion for effective communication to readers (Rahmawati et al., 2024). Data analysis

was carried out by organizing data, dividing them into units, synthesizing data, arranging them into patterns, choosing what is important and what will be studied, and drawing a conclusion that could be shared with others.

The researcher took several steps in presenting data to be understood by readers. First, the researcher reduced the data. Data reduction is an effort to conclude data, then sort data into a certain conceptual unit, a certain category, and a certain theme (Rijali, 2018). The data being reduced were interview results with Islamic Religious Education teachers. The results of reduced data were then presented, an activity in which a set of information is compiled that enables further action and the drawing of a conclusion. Data presentation is defined as an effort of arranging organized information in the form of narratives, tables, graphs, or diagrams to enhance clarity, enable effective interpretation, support appropriate decision-making, and facilitate the drawing of accurate conclusions from the research findings (Nurhaswinda et al., 2025). The last stage was drawing a conclusion and verification. Drawing a conclusion was carried out after presenting data to find various understandings related to the research findings. Drawing a conclusion is carried out to generate an in-depth understanding related to the research findings supported by accurate evidence (Utami & Nugraha, 2024). A series of data analyses above must be followed by a verification process to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the findings. The methods to conduct verification included analytical reflection during the writing process, review of field documentation, review and peer debriefing to develop intersubjective agreement, and broader efforts to place a copy of a finding in another set of data.

Result and Discussion

After conducting interviews with PAI teachers in SMK Negeri 1 Pringapus, the researcher found data that are interesting to discuss regarding strategies used by PAI teachers in internalizing the understanding of religious moderation to students, challenges and constraints experienced, and roles that teachers could play when they would like to establish religious moderation attitudes among Generation Z. The explanation from PAI teachers about the understanding of religious moderation that it is a concept of balanced religious, avoiding exaggeration and extremism, and respecting differences. This is certainly in line with Muchith (2023), who states that the essence of religious moderation is to realize religious teachings that guarantee protection of human dignity with the principles of fairness, balance, and compliance with the constitution.

The importance of religious moderation for Generation Z, according to PAI teachers, is highly open and unrestricted access to information. Generation Z finds it easy to obtain information from various sources on various platforms. However, the openness of information sometimes does not align with the ability to filter the correct news. This increases their vulnerability to hoaxes and makes them easily provoked. Thus, a lesson on internalizing religious moderation values is highly required to apply. Masrur et al. (2025) also stated that the interaction of Generation Z in digital space contributes to the polarization of opinions and may lead to conflicts, thereby reflective literacy is required to prevent bias and to foster moderate tolerance.

A. Roles and Strategies of PAI Teachers in Establishing Religious Moderation

PAI teachers have a central role in establishing religious moderation among Generation Z. Based on the results of interviews, the researcher obtained several roles of a teacher in establishing the understanding of religious moderation, including:

1. A teacher is a role model in daily life
2. A teacher is a facilitator of religious moderation learning
3. A teacher is a motivator in establishing an understanding of religious moderation

As a role model, a teacher must be able to provide concrete examples in daily life on how to behave in accordance with religious moderation values. A teacher, as a role model, is more easily understood and implemented by students if a teacher also practices what he/she delivers. The alignment between what is said and what is practiced is one of the implementations of the basic competencies that a teacher must possess, namely, personal competency. Personal competency is a primary basic competency for a teacher, which includes a stable attitude, maturity, good morals, and being a role model for students (Syah et al., 2024).

During the learning process, the teacher should facilitate the learning process by discussion, self-reflection, and case study. This learning method is able to improve critical thinking skills and moderate attitudes among students. Discussion teaches students to respect opinions, reflection teaches students not easily judge others, and case study teaches students to develop their critical thinking skills and prevent them from easily accepting information textually. Motivation is also an essential aspect for a teacher to deliver in the learning process. Motivation serves as a reminder and encouragement regarding positive teaching that is able to improve self-efficacy. This is in line with Nugraha et al. (2024) that PAI teachers play a role as dialogue facilitators, value conservators, method innovators, and motivators that change students' understanding from a narrow to an inclusive understanding.

B. Challenges, Supporting Factors, and Inhibiting Factors in Establishing Religious Moderation

Establishing religious moderation as an important part of students' behavior is not easy for a PAI teacher. The diversity of students' characteristics due to different backgrounds creates a unique challenge for the PAI teacher. The results of interviews demonstrated that the real challenges in establishing the understanding of religious moderation are the influence of social media and the peer environment. These two aspects must be discussed in depth to understand how they actually affect.

The first challenge is the influence of social media on the understanding of religious moderation. The rapid advancement of technology has caused the inability to control the reliability and quality of news. This causes the adoption of information and a wrong understanding. Survey on 95.1% respondents stated that social media plays a significant role in promoting religious moderation, but 68% of them claim that they have difficulty in filtering radical/hoax content due to the platform's algorithm, leading to the wrong adoption of understanding regarding tolerance (Febriani et al., 2025). Thus, this challenge must be given serious consideration in an effort to internalize religious moderation.

The second challenge is the peer environment. Those around us highly influence the decisions we make. Misunderstandings adopted by people will potentially turn a mistake into a truth. Of 151 Guidance and Counseling students at IAIN Madura, 60% (90 respondents) had high moderation influenced by multicultural peer interactions, while 35% (53 respondents) had moderate moderation, 5% (8 respondents) had low moderation due to a homogeneous peer group that adopts narrow perspectives (Sa'idah et al., 2024).

The implementation of the understanding of religious moderation also has several aspects that could support the process of establishing understanding for students. According to the results of interviews, the supporting factors include support from parties that facilitate the internalization of religious moderation values. This can occur more easily with the support of curriculum, parents, and colleagues among teachers. Central/local government, according to the roadmap of the Ministry of Religion 2020-2024, increases 75% community participation in 34 provinces; cross-ministerial achieves 82% effectiveness in tolerance socialization, enabling the internalization of moderation values at school/society (Munif et al., 2023).

Supporting factors are always accompanied by inhibiting factors. The results of interviews demonstrated that the inhibiting factors to the implementation of religious moderation understanding are the lack of digital literacy and minimal dialogue at home. Digital literacy is highly required in the era of social media. Social media is a place where information is widely disseminated, causing the users to be exposed to various information, and some of which may contain provocative narratives, thus socialization regarding the importance of having digital literacy is highly required. A study conducted by Siahaan et al. (2025) explained that the socialization about the importance of digital literacy significantly improves the understanding of identifying hoaxes, validation of information, and etiquette in social media. These attitudes are the fundamental starting points to prevent susceptibility to provocation, so that they align with the concept of religious moderation.

Open dialogue within the family environment is also required to preserve in an effort to establish religious moderation attitudes. Appreciation and openness in expressing opinions among family members strengthen mutual respect, tolerance, and openness even more deeply. A lack of open dialogue not only inhibits the emergence of moderate attitudes but also potentially causes many losses among family members and may be reflected in community life. Family plays a crucial role in shaping moderate attitudes through an open communication pattern as the main factor in internalizing tolerance values. The lack of family dialogue inhibits the effectiveness of formal education, creating an echo chamber of exclusive narratives reflected in society's interactions (Kadri & Lubis, 2025).

Conclusion

According to the explanation above, it can be concluded that PAI teachers have a crucial role in establishing religious moderation attitudes in Generation Z, who, in their daily life, face information from various sources. The roles required are role model, facilitator, and motivator in classroom learning. The process of establishing religious moderation attitudes of a PAI teacher certainly has challenges and constraints that must be faced, including the influence of social media, peer environment, lack of digital literacy, and dialogue within the family environment. Moreover, the supporting factors of a PAI teacher in implementing the concept of religious moderation are support in the form of policies and facilities from stakeholders, such as curriculum and support between teachers.

This study demonstrated that the success of developing the religious moderation concept not only occurs during the learning process in the class but also can be carried out through an affective approach and role modelling by the PAI teacher. Generation Z, experiencing information inflation, requires adaptive, dialogical, and contextual guidance to develop critical thinking skills while upholding peaceful Islamic values. Thus, a comprehensive analysis of pedagogical competence and personality of PAI teachers must be carried out through the integration of digital literacy in the teaching process. Moreover, collaboration between school, family, and government is a strategic step in establishing an educational environment supporting attitudes of tolerance, inclusivity, and anti-extremism. Thus, the concept of religious moderation is not only theoretical but also implemented practically and reflected in the attitudes and behaviors of Generation Z in the school environment and society.

References

- Adibah, I. Z. (2014). Multicultural Education as a vehicle for character building. *Madaniyah*, 4(2), 175–190.
- Afriani, S. A. S., & Saumantri, T. (2024). Generasi Z dalam khazanah moderasi beragama di Indonesia. *SETYAKI: Jurnal Studi Keagamaan Islam*, 2(2), 1–8.
- Febriani, E., Hafizha, N. Z., Anjani, N., Salsabila, N. A., Sari, N., & Gustina, N. F. (2025). Peran media sosial dalam mempromosikan moderasi beragama di kalangan generasi muda. *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai*, 9(1), 916–922.
- Kadri, W. N., & Lubis, Y. M. (2025). Strategi moderasi dakwah Islam dalam keluarga, pendidikan, dan civil society. *Al-Tsiqoh: Jurnal Ekonomi Dan Dakwah Islam*, 10(1), 39–63.
- Masrur, M., Zulfa, I. N., Afna, I. M., Putri, N. K., & Hasanah, N. L. (2025). Toleransi Digital dan Moderasi Beragama Generasi Z di Indonesia: Analisis Negosiasi Nilai di Ruang Publik Media Sosial. *Moderasi: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 5(2), 765–780.
- Muchith, H. S. (2023). *Pengembangan kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) berbasis moderasi beragama*. Nas Media Pustaka. [https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=uaOnEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Muchith,+S.+\(2023\).+Pengembangan+Kurikulum+Pendidikan+Agama+Islam+\(PAI\)+Berbasis+Moderasi+Beragama.+PT.+Nas+Media+Pustaka.&ots=0jPS1oxnZo&sig=8OvfEWLwYypeMBVJxpbLv5vh-jY](https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=uaOnEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Muchith,+S.+(2023).+Pengembangan+Kurikulum+Pendidikan+Agama+Islam+(PAI)+Berbasis+Moderasi+Beragama.+PT.+Nas+Media+Pustaka.&ots=0jPS1oxnZo&sig=8OvfEWLwYypeMBVJxpbLv5vh-jY)
- Munif, M., Qomar, M., & AZIZ, A. (2023). Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia. *Dirasah: Jurnal Studi Ilmu dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 6(2), 417–430.
- Nugraha, E. G., Masripah, I., & Munawaroh, N. (2024). Peran Guru Pendidikan Agama Dalam Menanamkan Nilai Moderasi Beragama Siswa. *AEJ (Advances in Education Jurnal)*, 1, 101–109.
- Nurhaswinda, N., Maulina, S. R. M., Azzahra, A., Jannah, F., Jannah, N., Fadila, N. A., Harza, Z. J., & Hariza Putra, N. (2025). Penyajian Data. *LANCAH: Jurnal Inovasi dan Tren*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.35870/ljit.v3i1.3709>
- Puspita, N., Mustamin, M., Raehana, S., Wahab, A., & Syahrul, M. (2025). Strategi Guru Pai Dalam Membina Karakter Generasi Z Pada Smpn 4 Malili. *Pendas: Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Dasar*, 10(03), 295–307.
- Rahmat, A. (2022). Internalisasi moderasi beragama dalam pendidikan agama Islam. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 1(2), 55–66.
- Rahmawati, A., Halimah, N., Karmawan, K., & Setiawan, A. A. (2024). Optimalisasi teknik wawancara dalam penelitian field research melalui pelatihan berbasis participatory action research pada mahasiswa Lapas Pemuda Kelas IIA Tangerang. *Jurnal Abdimas Prakasa Dakara*, 4(2), 135–142.
- Rijali, A. (2018). Analisis data kualitatif. *Alhadharah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah*, 17(33), 81–95.
- Sa'idah, I., Aryani, A., Umam, A., & Toifur, T. (2024). Level of Religious Moderation of Students: Survey Analysis of Attitudes and Behavior/Tingkat Moderasi Beragama Mahasiswa: Analisis Survei Terhadap Sikap dan Perilaku. *Al-Hiwar Jurnal Ilmu dan Teknik Dakwah*, 12(2), 67–78.
- Siahaan, F. S., Rismanto, C., Azis, N., Samuel, S., Birawan, I. G. K., Suhartono, S., Hidayat, R., Purnawan, L., & Sutomo, S. (2025). Literasi Media Sosial Untuk Siswa Sebagai Solusi Hoaks Dan Kenakalan Remaja. *Jurnal Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat Nusantara*, 6(3), 3175–3181.
- Sugiyono, D. (2013). *Metode penelitian pendidikan pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D*. https://digilib.unigres.ac.id/index.php?p=show_detail&id=43
- Suhaili, H., Sepriyanti, N., & Kustati, M. (2025). PENERAPAN PENDEKATAN NILAI DALAM PEMBELAJARAN PAI UNTUK MEMBENTUK MODERASI BERAGAMA PADA GENERASI Z. *JURNAL EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT*, 13(1), 339–344.
- Sunaryanto, K., & Idrus, O. (2025). Karakteristik generasi Z dan dampak produktivitas kerja pada dunia kerja di Indonesia. *Jurnal Sains dan Teknologi*, 7(3), 37–43.

- Sundari, U. Y., Panudju, A. A. T., Nugraha, A. W., Purba, F., Erlina, Y., Nurbaiti, N., Kalalinggi, S. Y., Afifah, A., Suheria, S., & Elsandika, G. (2024). *Metodologi Penelitian*. CV. Gita Lentera. <https://books.google.com/books?hl=id&lr=&id=e4nxEAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=Metodologi+Penelitian.+Padang:+CV.+Gita+Lentera.+&ots=v-hmLdCxpL&sig=GB9pFlpOf1UT0rwfbnLnAPTzEwo>
- Syah, S. H., Cahyaningtyas, O. S., & Astuti, D. (2024). *ANALISIS KOMPETENSI KEPERIBADIAN GURU*.
- Taufiq, M. Y. H., & Hasyim, H. (2025). Strategi Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam Dalam Menanamkan Pembelajaran Moderasi Beragama Di Smk Dwija Bhakti 1 Jombang. *Jurnal Intelek Dan Cendikiawan Nusantara*, 2(6), 12723–12746.
- Thahir, M. (2023). Tantangan dan strategi dalam mengatasi perbedaan budaya dan agama di Indonesia. *Dakwatun: Jurnal Manajemen Dakwah*, 2(1), 132–143.
- Utami, S. F., & Nugraha, H. (2024). Analisis Pengelolaan Sumber Daya Manusia dalam Upaya Meningkatkan Kualitas Pelayanan Pasien IGD pada RSUD Oto Iskandar Di Nata. *Jurnal Simki Economic*, 7(2), 347–356. <https://doi.org/10.29407/jse.v7i2.602>
- Wahyudi, D., & Kurniasih, N. (2021). Literasi Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Reaktualisasi “Jihad Milenial” ERA 4.0. *Moderatio: Jurnal Moderasi Beragama*, 1(1), 1–20.
- Wasilah, F. N., Mukti, A., & Hamzah, N. (2023). Internalisasi nilai-nilai moderasi beragama pada anak melalui kompetensi sosial guru PAI di MIS NU 2 Pontianak. *Edudeena: Journal of Islamic Religious Education*, 7(2), 173–184.