Islamic Education Teachers' Perspectives on Religious Moderation Practices in Indonesian High Schools

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan perspektif guru pendidikan agama islam dalam memahami konsep moderasi beragama, empat indikator moderasi beragama, praktik penerapan moderasi beragama, dan tantangan yang dihadapi selama penerapan ini berlangsung, serta memberikan pemahaman dan pandangan yang lebih luas bagi para guru pendidikan agama islam mengenai praktik moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini dilakukan menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan fenomenologi. Mengumpulkan informasi melalui wawancara mendalam kepada guru pendidikan agama islam. Analisis data dilakukan melalui tiga tahapan yaitu reduksi data, penyajian atau display data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan guru memahami moderasi beragama sebagai sikap seimbang, toleransi, menghargai setiap perbedaan, dan menolak segala bentuk ekstremisme. Temuan juga menunjukkan bahwa guru Pendidikan Agama Islam memiliki perspektif yang baik terhadap moderasi beragama serta telah mengimplementasikannya dalam proses pembelajaran. Penelitian ini berkontribusi memperkaya kajian pendidikan pendidikan Islam dengan memberikan gambaran empiris tentang perspektif guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dan praktik moderasi beragama di sekolah. Secara praktis, temuan penelitian ini memiliki implikasi bagi penguatan peran guru Pendidikan Agama Islam dalam mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama ke dalam proses pembelajaran guna mendukung pendidikan Islam yang toleran dan inklusif.

**Kata kunci**: Pendidikan Islam; Moderasi Beragama; Perspektif Guru; Guru PAI.

Abstract

This study aims to explain the perspectives of Islamic religious education teachers in understanding the concept of religious moderation, four indicators of religious moderation, the practice of implementing religious moderation, and the challenges faced during this implementation, as well as providing a broader understanding and perspective for Islamic religious education teachers regarding the practice of religious moderation. This study was conducted using a qualitative, phenomenological approach. Information was collected through in-depth interviews with Islamic religious education teachers. Data analysis was carried out in three stages: data reduction, data presentation or display, and drawing conclusions. The results show that teachers understand religious moderation as an attitude of balance, tolerance, respect for every difference, and rejection of all forms of extremism. The findings also indicate that Islamic religious education teachers have a positive perspective of religious moderation and have implemented it in the learning process. This study contributes to enriching the study of Islamic education by providing an empirical picture of Islamic religious education teachers' perspective and practices of religious moderation in schools. Practically, the findings of this study have implications for strengthening the role of Islamic religious education teachers in integrating the values of

religious moderation into the learning process to support tolerant and inclusive Islamic education.

Keywords: Islamic Education; Religious Moderation; Teacher Perspectives; Islamic Religious Education Teacher.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is a country with a great deal of diversity, including ethnicity, culture, language, and religion (Abror, 2019; Sutrisno, 2019). Diversity within a nation often presents its own challenges, particularly in creating and building perceptions (Syarnubi et al., 2023). Religious moderation has become a frequently heard and popular topic among the public. It is included in the 2019 government program regarding the importance of the religious moderation movement to prevent and correct religious understandings that are sometimes viewed as extreme or even deviant (Nurdin, 2021; Rahmatika, 2022). Similarly, in the world of education, religious moderation is a crucial need that students need to understand comprehensively, especially in facing various social challenges (Bustari et al., 2024). As professional educators, teachers have significant duties and responsibilities in the teaching and learning process for students at school (Illahi, 2020). A teacher, particularly a religious education teacher, must be able to understand and practice the concept of religious moderation and serve as a role model for students, demonstrating a moderate attitude (Hanafi et al., 2022). This is because a teacher plays a strategic role in shaping character, instilling Islamic values, and fostering a sense of moderation toward others (Aulya et al., 2017; Rahman, 2024; Kaca et al., 2023)

Ideally, students should not only be taught about religious moderation, but teachers should also provide them with a deeper understanding and guide them in how to practice these values. However, in reality, PAI teachers do not only provide religious lessons, but also have an important role in fostering and increasing students' awareness of religious moderation, which must be done using the right strategies (Judrah et al., 2024). Not many Islamic Education teachers in schools focus solely on teaching the subject matter, resulting in religious moderation being under-applied to students. Consequently, some students are still intolerant towards other students due to a lack of understanding of religious moderation.

Islamic Religious Education is an important part that covers aspects such as attitudes and values, both in terms of morals and religion (Harmi, 2022; Rohmah, 2018). Therefore, religious education is one of the responsibilities of a teacher in instilling the value of religious moderation. A teacher needs to master the knowledge, skills, and abilities to apply the values contained in the teaching material (Djollong, 2017), including the value of tolerance, which is part of religious moderation. This is done so that students avoid intolerant attitudes that can trigger conflict and are expected to create a safe and comfortable environment.

Several previous studies have discussed religious moderation, focusing only on analyzing the role of teachers in moderation. As Purbajati (2020) states, teachers play an important role in fostering religious moderation in schools. Schools are very effective and strategic places to achieve this. Teachers also have a fundamental obligation to educate and guide students and to shape their character. Then Abidin (2021)stated that in addition to religious moderation that must be implemented in the learning process, contextual learning must also be applied, and teachers must accustom students to be moderate in their attitudes.

This study will discuss in greater depth the perspectives of teachers, particularly Islamic Education teachers in senior high schools in Bandung, in understanding the concept of religious moderation. This is because teachers play a very important role in instilling and fostering an attitude of religious moderation in students (Aini, 2022) so that students avoid intolerance towards others. This study also aims to provide a broader understanding and perspective for Islamic Education teachers.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach, which is an approach through individual experiences by describing general experiences related to a concept or phenomenon that they have experienced (Nasir et al., 2023). As stated by Creswell, qualitative research is an approach to exploring a phenomenon by interviewing the research subjects through several questions to produce information in the form of words or text, which is then analyzed to produce information or descriptions (Handoko et al., 2024).

This research was conducted at three high schools in Bandung City: Senior High School A, Senior High School B, and Senior High School C. These locations were chosen because these schools were able to provide representative information regarding the experiences of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, thus the research findings can describe teachers' perspectives of religious moderation practices more broadly. Meanwhile, the participants were seven Islamic Religious Education teachers. These participants were selected using purposive sampling, with criteria including at least 3 years of teaching experience and involvement in various moderation practices in their respective schools. The teachers who participated in this study are as follows Tabel 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participant	School
T1	Islamic Education Teacher at High School A
T2	Islamic Education Teacher at High School A
T3	Islamic Education Teacher at High School A
T4	Islamic Education Teacher at High School B
T5	Islamic Education Teacher at High School B

Participant	School
T6	Islamic Education Teacher at High School C
T7	Islamic Education Teacher at High School C

The data collection technique used was in-depth interviews with Islamic Education teachers at senior high schools in Bandung City. The interview guidelines were designed to explore teachers' perspectives. During the interview process, the researcher also documented activities to maintain transparency and accountability. In-depth interviews were chosen because of their validity in uncovering teachers' hidden perceptions that are often undetected through other methods (Vebrianto et al., 2024). Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, namely narrative studies, the data analysis was conducted in the form of words, images, or behaviors. It was not explained numerically but rather by providing a description of the conditions or situations experienced (Samsudin et al., 2023). This allowed for a discussion that aligns with the focus of this study, Islamic Education teachers' perspectives of religious moderation practices in senior high schools.

The data analysis technique is commonly known as the interactive data analysis method. This method involves three stages: data reduction, data presentation or display, and data verification or drawing conclusions (Rahman, 2024; Rusuli, 2023). To maintain data credibility, the researcher used peer debriefing through discussions to verify findings and minimize researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on data collected through interviews with Islamic Education teachers at senior high schools in Bandung, several key points emerged as the focus of this study. First, Islamic Education teachers' perspectives of the concept of religious moderation in the context of education, which describe teachers' understanding of the meaning, principles, and relevance of religious moderation in shaping students' character. Second, Islamic Education teachers' perspectives on the four indicators of religious moderation, including national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. Third, Islamic Education teachers' perspectives on the practice of religious moderation in the learning process, which discusses the application of religious moderation values. Fourth, Islamic Education teachers' perspectives on the challenges in applying religious moderation in senior high schools.

Islamic Education Teachers' Perspectives of the Concept of Religious Moderation in the Context of Education

Based on the results of interviews conducted with seven PAI teachers at the high school level in Bandung regarding the concept of religious moderation, most teachers interpret religious moderation as a balanced attitude in religion that is sourced from the Qur'an and Hadith, rejecting all forms of extremism and

emphasizing the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and openness to differences. This can be seen in the following excerpts from the interview in Tabel 2.

Table 2. PAI Teachers' perspectives of the Concept of Religious Moderation

Interview Participants	Interview Excerpt
T1	"Moderation is a way of looking at religion. One of them is that religious people who are grounded in moderation first adjust to current conditions. Second, there is no extremism..."
T2	"Especially in this modern era, where children are also more modern, it means that moderation in introducing children to this modern era is very important. So we should not be bound by the rules, but we must still adhere to religion, which means continuing to refer to the Quran and Hadith..."
T3	"Mutual respect. More or less like that. What's clear is that when it comes to matters of faith, we should respect each other, and when it comes to morality, we are all the same..."
T4	"it is an understanding. An understanding of how we understand religion in a radical way. Radical does not mean harsh, radical means rooted to the core. Understanding religion in accordance with applicable provisions, in accordance with existing scriptures..."
T5	"When I teach Islamic Education, for example, if a child wants to participate, they are welcome to do so. Especially if the material is general, such as moral issues, then they are welcome to participate. If they want to stay outside, that's fine too..."
T6	"Religious moderation is a balanced understanding or a concept where someone respects differences. That is more or less how I understand religious moderation: rejecting extremism, respecting differences, and maintaining balance..."
T7	"Religious moderation is a balanced religious attitude, so it is neither excessive nor deficient. For example, how to respect differences without losing the principles of religious teachings themselves. In Islamic education lessons, the values of religious moderation are very important..."

Source: Personal Interview

Table 2 above shows that the majority of Islamic religious education teachers define religious moderation as a balanced attitude in religion, rejecting all forms of extremism, and emphasizing the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and openness to differences. The teachers also believe that religious moderation plays a crucial role in shaping students' character, fostering good morals in

accordance with Islamic values. However, some teachers initially had difficulty comprehending the concept of religious moderation, indicating a variety of conceptual understandings. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of Islamic religious education teachers understand the concept of religious moderation. This understanding serves as the initial foundation for educators in fostering moderate character in students at school.

The results of this study indicate that Islamic religious education teachers do not view religious moderation solely as a normative theological concept, but rather as a pedagogical value that can guide the practice of Islamic education. Religious moderation is presented as an ethical framework in Islamic religious education, aimed at developing students' character. Therefore, teachers' understanding of religious moderation directly impacts the direction and goals of Islamic Religious Education pedagogy in schools.

This view aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), which states that religious moderation can be understood as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that always takes a middle position, always acts fairly, and is not extreme in religion (Saifuddin, 2019). This view is also in line with the Indonesian cleric, Quraish Shihab, who also said that Muslims are made to be a people who are in the middle position, moderate, and exemplary. He made this statement when interpreting Q.S. Al-Baqarah verse 143 which is one of the references. Hasbi As-Shiddieqy also defines religious moderation as a balanced attitude, not living excessively in religion but not reducing religious obligations (An-Nadhrah et al., 2023).

This finding aligns with Harismawan et al. (2023) research states that religious moderation is a balanced attitude that integrates religious teachings with social conditions to prevent intolerance and extrinsic attitudes. This also cites Suryadi (2022) research, which also states that religious moderation can be realized through religious knowledge, attitudes, and skills. These include tolerance, acceptance of all religious teachings, and respect for differences ("The Latent Domains of Religious Moderation Attitudes and Intercultural Competencies Within the Contexts of Multireligious and Multicultural Societies," 2025). This study also highlights that Islamic Religious Education teachers' religious understanding influences students' understanding and experiences. This means that teachers play a strategic role in shaping moderate attitudes.

The findings indicate that teachers have a fairly comprehensive understanding of the concept of religious moderation, both conceptually and in its implications. Teachers also recognize the importance of their role in shaping students' moderate thinking and character (Hadisi et al., 2024). Understanding not only the basic concepts but also their connection to Islamic values is crucial. A teacher's strong understanding certainly demonstrates greater potential for more effective implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic Religious

Education classroom learning. However, teacher reinforcement through ongoing training or mentoring on religious moderation is also necessary to broaden their understanding and improve their implementation.

Islamic Education Teachers' Perspectives of the Four Indicators of Religious Moderation

Based on the interview results, PAI teachers in several high schools in Bandung understand religious moderation not only as a balanced and mutually respectful attitude but also as reflected in the four indicators of religious moderation as formulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019), which include: Commitment to nationality, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodating local culture.

First, Commitment to Nationalism

Regarding the first indicator, most teachers view national commitment as a form of love for the country. As one teacher expressed,

> "We as Muslims must love our country. In fact, if you have heard the term hubul wathan minal iman, loving religion, loving the country, and so on, is part of faith" (T4, interview, September 11, 2025).

In line with this statement, another teacher also emphasized that the indicator of national commitment is a form of loyalty to the country. He said,

> "We must maintain our loyalty to Pancasila, the 1945 Constitution, or Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity) towards the Republic of Indonesia while still upholding religious teachings" (T7, interview, September 26, 2025).

This certainly shows that teachers understand the meaning of national commitment as a form of love for the country and a link between religious values and national principles. As stated by teacher six,

> "As I understand it, national commitment is like a bridge between religious values and national principles" (T6, interview, September 24, 2025).

Teacher 1 also linked this in teaching practice:

> "This value is applied in schools through group work without discriminating against students' backgrounds" (T1, interview, September 11, 2025).

These findings indicate that national values are also understood as efforts to maintain unity in everyday life. In this regard, national commitment is expected to enable individuals to implement religious teachings while still fulfilling their duties as good citizens (Rizkiyah & Istiani, 2021). National commitment is also understood as a form of religious citizenship, meaning that religious education fosters a society

that values humanitarian values (Marwan, 2023). Theoretically, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs also explains that national commitment is an important indicator of the extent to which a person's religious views, attitudes, and practices affect their loyalty to the nation, maintain national unity, and prevent radicalism (Dahlan et al., 2025; Jamaluddin, 2022).

Second, Tolerance

From the results of interviews with Islamic Education teachers at senior high schools in Bandung, teachers understand tolerance as an attitude of mutual respect and respect for differences   views among fellow human beings. As stated by teacher four:

> "Tolerance means that we respect each other and respect differences. We respect differences, especially in terms of religion" (T4, interview, September 11, 2025).

In line with this, teacher five stated that tolerance is manifested by giving freedom of religion without coercion:

> "Perhaps by giving each other freedom because matters of desire are God's business and cannot be forced. The reason is that it is not for us to regulate what religion someone chooses" (T5, interview, September 15, 2025).

The results of the interviews above show that teachers interpret tolerance not only as a religious theory but also as a real social attitude. This means that in terms of tolerance, teachers also emphasize the importance of mutual respect and freedom in religious activities. Budi (2020) states that tolerance is defined as an attitude of accepting and respecting the views of other parties, even if those views or attitudes contradict our own. In the context of culture and religion, tolerance is also defined as an attitude and action that prohibits intolerance or discrimination within a particular group or class (Hadi & Husna, 2025). Tolerance is also an attitude that needs to exist in every individual student or group, because in a religion there are bound to be differences of opinion or understanding. So, without tolerance, there is a concern that it could lead to hostility between one group and another (Sarina & Rahman, 2022; Suryani, 2023). In a global context, this indicator is in line with the concept of intercultural competence which emphasizes the ability of students to appreciate, understand each other, and accept differences in multicultural educational relationships (Afiva & Albina, 2024).

Third, Anti-Violence

In the anti-violence indicator, teachers view anti-violence as the attitude of rejecting all forms of violence is manifested by rejecting all forms of violence, both verbal and nonverbal. One teacher said,

"Anti-violence in religious moderation can mean rejecting all forms of violent acts, both verbal and physical, in responding to differences" (T7, interview, September 26, 2025).

Another teacher said,

"Islam never teaches anyone about violence. Even when preaching, we must do so in a hasanah manner" (T4, interview, September 11, 2025)

Teachers also embody this attitude by rejecting all forms of extremism and instilling the resolution of problems through deliberation. Teachers understand that anti-violence means rejecting all forms of violence in the school environment. Teachers also understand that violence is contrary to the mission of character education. This aims to guide all students to become intelligent individuals with good behavior (Cahyo et al., 2020). Khafadi & Albina (2025) in their article entitled "Strategies for Developing Anti-Violence Values in Islamic Education" also state that violence is bad behavior that can cause harm or threats, whether verbal, physical, or psychological, to individuals or groups. This means that an anti-violence attitude is a conscious effort to instill anti-violence values in others. This aims to help students reject all forms of violence as part of their attitudes and perspectives throughout every phase of life.

Fourth, Accommodating Local Culture

The teachers' perspectives show that an accommodating attitude towards local culture is understood as an important part of religious moderation. The teachers also emphasized that local traditions can be accepted as long as they do not conflict with Islamic principles. As one teacher said,

"Local traditions can be accepted as long as they do not conflict with religious teachings" (T7, interview, September 26, 2025).

In line with this, another teacher said,

"Because Indonesia has many customs and traditions, and if these customs and traditions do not violate Islamic law, then we accept them. So, as long as they do not violate the law, we accept these customs. Because there is Fiqh law" (T2, interview, September 12, 2025).

Local traditions are also seen as having an important social role, such as maintaining harmony among community members and strengthening social bonds (Akbar & Ansori, 2024). Teachers also see that students appreciate local culture and are enthusiastic about local cultural activities that are still ongoing. This shows that local traditions still play a role in community life. These findings indicate that teachers have a moderate understanding of culture. This accommodating attitude

toward local culture also aligns with a culturally responsive approach, defined as an open and respectful attitude that emphasizes the sociocultural context in the educational process. This indicator is also expected to shape an individual's attitude and paradigm of religious moderation toward greater tolerance and openness to diversity (Islamy, 2022; Khoiruddin, 2023).

Based on all the data obtained, it can be concluded that PAI teachers understand the four indicators of religious moderation and strive to implement them in the learning process. This understanding is certainly an important foundation and pedagogical competence for teachers in shaping students' character so that they become moderate individuals and avoid social conflict, radicalism, and extremism in Islamic teachings. (Ulfa et al., 2024).

Islamic Education Teachers' Perspectives of Challenges in Implementing Religious Moderation in Senior High Schools

Based on the interview results obtained, the implementation of religious moderation in schools faces a number of challenges that can be categorized into four main dimensions: cognitive, related to students' lack of understanding and knowledge; structural, arising from limited Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning hours; cultural/social, related to environmental influences, digital media, and student character; and the role of teachers as role models. The existing data shows that teachers have diverse views on these challenges. One teacher stated that the main challenge lies in the cognitive category, namely the lack of understanding and insight into religion itself, emphasizing that

> "When there is a lack of religious understanding, there is no moderation. This means that when there is a lack of understanding of religious knowledge. Well, that is one reason for the lack of moderation. But if, for example, one's knowledge increases, one's worldly experience increases, one's worldly knowledge increases, then moderation is possible" (T1, interview, September 11, 2025).

The teacher also believes that deepening religious knowledge greatly determines students' understanding and ability to express their opinions. In line with the conditions that arise, teachers also explain the high level of students' curiosity and their demand for logical, rational explanations. Students are also often influenced by outside information, such as the internet or their social environment. The influence of smartphone use, which is often used by students, is also seen as inconsistent with the value of moderation. As one teacher said:

> "For example, students are already influenced by outside information, or they even have difficulty practicing the values of correlation in their daily lives" (T7, interview on September 26, 2025).

Therefore, teachers need to set an example and provide real examples in

teaching students good communication and behavior. The teacher's exemplary role in character education includes following religious commands and avoiding prohibitions, caring for others, being diligent, and being able to resist temptations (Napratilora et al., 2021). This challenge shows that in teaching religious moderation, teachers cannot rely solely on the classroom as a medium, but need to provide more guidance. This is because good habits can be built through example and guidance (Reksamunandar & Hadirman, 2022).

Based on the data obtained, it can be said that the challenges of religious moderation do not only stem from a lack of religious understanding, but also from students' character development and the influence of digital technology. The teachers' perspectives also reveal similar findings: religious moderation will not be effective if there is a lack of religious understanding and if teachers do not serve as role models for their students. Of course, schools, which are the venues for this process, have an important role to play, such as the need for school policies that support a moderate learning environment for students. Strengthening students' digital literacy is also important to avoid extreme information that can undermine students' moderate attitudes.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the research and discussion results, it can be concluded that Islamic religious education teachers have a fairly good understanding of religious moderation. Teachers understand religious moderation as a balanced attitude toward religion, emphasizing tolerance, respect for differences, and rejection of all forms of extremism. Teachers also understand the four indicators of religious moderation as important values to be integrated into the learning process. This supports the creation of a safe environment and prevents students from developing intolerant attitudes. Of course, in implementing these values, teachers face various challenges, categorized into four main dimensions: limited understanding of religious moderation, limited hours of Islamic religious education, the influence of digital information, and the role of teachers. Teachers also hope that schools will continue to provide support through various inclusive policies to create moderate students and a tolerant environment.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that Islamic religious education teachers continue to deepen their understanding of religious moderation and apply these values to their students. This is done so that teachers are increasingly able to integrate the values of religious moderation contextually and consistently into the learning process. School policy support is also needed to strengthen efforts to instill the values of religious moderation in the learning process of Islamic religious education through collaboration between Islamic religious education teachers to create a tolerant environment for students. The researcher also suggests that future research explore this further by involving the

perspectives of students or other school stakeholders. This is done to obtain a more comprehensive picture. Future research can also expand this study by developing a more focused conceptual agenda by developing a systematic pedagogical model of religious moderation, including learning strategies, evaluation methods, and classroom-based interventions, so that it serves as an empirical guide and theoretical basis for teachers.

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