

**STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM:  
IN HIGH SCHOOL SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study analyzes strategies for strengthening religious moderation in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Senior High Schools through a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with a qualitative thematic approach, identifying three main implementation strategies: integration of wasathiyah values in PAI curriculum development based on Minister of Religious Affairs Decree Number 183 of 2019 with emphasis on strengthening students' social attitude competencies, optimization of PAI teachers' roles as models through implementation of student-centered learning methods and utilization of educational technology, and strengthening students' religious literacy and critical thinking skills as strategies for addressing digital extremism, where the research concludes that such implementation plays a crucial role in shaping students who are religious, tolerant, character-driven, and able to adapt to global challenges through holistic synergy between curriculum policies, teacher capacity, and educational environment support.*

*Keywords: religious moderation; PAI curriculum; wasathiyah; digital extremism; character education*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a crucial role in shaping the character and personality of students so that they become individuals of faith, good ethics, and able to adapt harmoniously in a diverse society. In the framework of the diversity of the Indonesian nation, Islamic education plays a role not only as a medium for the delivery of religious knowledge, but also as a means of moral development, human values, and spirituality that are in line with Islamic teachings. The success of Islamic education is determined by collaboration between elements of faith, ethics, culture, and social daily life (Siti Nurdina Awalita, 2023).

Technological advances and the influence of globalization have created new challenges for Islamic education. Information that spreads very quickly in the digital world often carries extreme ideologies that can affect students' perspectives on religion. In this context, strengthening the values of moderation in religion is necessary so that students have a balanced understanding and are not trapped in narrow fanaticism. Islamic education is expected to instill the value of balance between faith, knowledge, and morals (Suprpto, 2020).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs through KMA Number 183 of 2019 has emphasized the importance of implementing the values of religious moderation in the Islamic Religious Education and Arabic curriculum. The policy aims to create students who have good morals, moderation, and tolerance in social interaction. With the existence of curriculum guidelines based on moderation, it is hoped that schools can produce a generation that is not only religious, but also has a national spirit (Hidayat, 2021).

High school plays an important role in shaping students' mindset and character, because at this level they are in the process of finding their identity. Thus, the introduction of moderation values in religion must be carried out systematically in learning activities. Strengthening moderation in schools can be a preventive measure to reduce the likelihood of the emergence of intolerant and radical ideologies among students (Rohman et al., 2025).

Religious moderation in the Islamic view is known as *wasathiyah*, which means a balanced and fair attitude in practicing religion. This principle directs Muslims not to be caught up in extremism, both in faith and in the practice of worship. Moderation highlights four main aspects, namely commitment to nationality, tolerance, rejection of violence, and respect for local culture. These values must be instilled consistently in the learning of Islamic Religious Education so that students have an open and contextual religious perspective (Ramadhani & Setyoningrum, 2023).

Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as the main intermediaries in internalizing the principles of moderation to students. Teachers play the role not only as teachers, but also as examples in behaving, speaking, and acting. Teachers who are competent and have integrity are able to develop a culture of discussion, mutual respect, and a sense of togetherness in the school area. Therefore, the effectiveness of strengthening religious moderation is highly dependent on the active participation of teachers in the learning process. The application of religious moderation in schools can be done by designing a curriculum that emphasizes the balance of spiritual, social, and national values. Teachers can create learning tools that stimulate students to think critically and intelligently in understanding religious teachings. The creation of an inclusive, tolerant, and supportive learning environment is the key to achieving moderate Islamic education (Harmi, 2022).

In the digital age, students are easily influenced by false religious teachings through social media. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen religious literacy so that students are able to analyze information critically. Islamic education needs to prepare students with logical and thoughtful thinking skills in dealing with religious issues that arise in the digital world (Wardati et al., 2023).

Overall, strengthening religious moderation in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum is aimed at creating a generation of Muslims who think balanced, be fair, and have the spirit of nationalism. Balanced Islamic education supports students to apply religious teachings in a relevant way, so that it can play a role in maintaining social harmony in a diverse society (Supriono et al., 2021).

The phenomenon of increasing acts of intolerance among students shows that strengthening religious moderation remains a significant challenge in the world of education. The Setara Institute (2022) reported that there were 32 incidents of destruction of places of worship that occurred throughout 2022, a number that is still high when compared to previous years. The results of a quick study by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KemenPPPA, 2021) show that 0.7% of students agree that the Pancasila ideology is replaced by another ideology, while the other 2.5% reject the meaning of the ideology. This fact shows that there is still a potential for

misunderstanding of religion among students who need educational intervention through a curriculum that systematically instills the values of moderation.

In this case, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) functions strategically as the main tool in forming students who have a balanced religious perspective, are full of tolerance, and are committed to national values. The PAI curriculum must integrate moderation values such as national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and respect for local culture (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). With student-focused learning methods, such as discovery learning, project-based learning, and cooperative learning, educators can embed these values in a relevant and meaningful way (Suryana & Abdurahman, 2020).

Therefore, the affirmation of religious moderation in the Islamic Religious Education curriculum in Senior High Schools is an urgent need so that education does not only focus on religious knowledge, but also on the formation of an inclusive, humanist attitude, and love for the homeland as the basis for a peaceful and harmonious national life.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study applied the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method supported by the Qualitative Thematic Analysis technique. The main objective of this approach is to systematically find, assess, and summarize all empirical and conceptual evidence from the relevant literature on strengthening religious moderation in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in high schools. This study is a secondary study that relies on the literature by applying the SLR method, chosen to ensure that the review process is carried out transparently, measurably, and reduces the possibility of selection bias, resulting in a strong and objective synthesis of findings. Data synthesis will apply a qualitative approach to create in-depth Qualitative Insights, not just a summary of data.

### **Research Questions (RQ)**

This review protocol is guided by three pre-defined research questions (RQs), which serve as a framework for data search, extraction, and synthesis:

1. How does the PAI curriculum integrate the values of moderation (wasathiyah) to create students with good and moderate morals, in accordance with government policy?
2. What is the most effective PAI learning strategy in supporting the role of teachers as the main intermediaries to develop an inclusive and tolerant culture in high school?
3. How can PAI strengthen religious literacy and critical thinking skills to overcome the influence of extreme ideologies spread through the digital world?

### **Systematic Literature Review (SLR) Procedure**

The SLR procedure in this study follows a customized standard framework, covering four main stages: Planning, Search, Selection, and Analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **The New Direction of the PAI Curriculum: Emphasis on Moderate Attitude**

The new direction of the Islamic Religious Education Curriculum (PAI) in accordance with KMA 183 of 2019 emphasizes the formation of inclusive, moderate, cultured, and religious attitudes in students. This change can be seen from the shift in curriculum goals that not only pay attention to the formation of faithful and productive individuals, but also strengthen moderate behavior in religion. Its implementation is carried out through the improvement of basic competencies, especially in the aspect of social attitudes (KI-2), which is designed to be more measurable and contextual such as changing learning outcomes from just "reading the Quran" to "showing discipline and confidence as a believer". Teaching approaches are also changing from teacher-focused to student-focused by using active learning and multimedia to create a more engaging and relevant learning process.

This emphasis on a moderate attitude arises from the urgent need to overcome extreme religious beliefs that can threaten the unity of the nation. KMA 183 2019 emerged as a response to the development of extreme-textualist and secular-liberal religious understandings that are considered contrary to the religious character of Indonesian wasathiyah (moderate). In addition, this policy supports the goals of the 2020-2024 RPJMN as well as the vision of the Ministry of Religion to create a religious and harmonious society. In an international context, the curriculum is designed to prepare students to become global individuals capable of collaborating in diversity, responding to the

challenges of the era of disruption, and fostering the spirit of global citizenship as UNESCO's focus is.

The application of strengthening moderate attitudes in the PAI Curriculum is carried out systematically with a comprehensive philosophical, sociological, psychopedagogical, and theoretical basis. Curriculum development pays attention to social dynamics, student psychological progress, and focuses on a competency-based approach. The management aspect of madrasas is strengthened through five elements: religiosity, nationalism, independence, ukhuwah, and modernism. In addition, basic competencies are designed by paying attention to the child's growth stage, such as adjusting the cognitive level from "knowing" to "understanding" and the placement of materials that must be memorized according to the student's developmental age. With this systematic approach, KMA 183 2019 is expected to not only update the curriculum, but also become a pioneer in realizing Islamic religious education that contributes to forming a moderate, harmonious, and moral Indonesian society. (Hidayat, 2021).

### **The Role of PAI Teachers and Effective Learning Methods**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role as direct role models who show the values of religious moderation through daily attitudes and behaviors. The duties of PAI teachers include the ability to understand differences in ethnicity, language, and skin color so that they can be used as role models in daily life, as well as provide positive examples in terms of mutual respect and tolerance. The efficient learning methods applied include various approaches such as discussions and presentations, presenting religious moderation video content, group work, field activities, assignments, and direct application in daily life at school, by utilizing TPACK that combines knowledge of teaching materials, pedagogy, and technology.

The role of teachers and teaching methods is very crucial because religious education is related to the moral and behavioral development of students, and serves as a shield against the abuse of religious issues that can endanger the unity of the nation. Teachers need to ensure that students understand the concept of religious moderation well, considering that religious issues are often used as a propaganda tool by some parties to undermine the unity of the nation and state. The significance of this role is also based on the need to integrate learning as well as the influence of humanism from the beginning, where multiculturalism and pluralism support students to understand, accept, and appreciate individuals of diverse races, cultures, beliefs, and beliefs, thus enabling them to coexist harmoniously.

The implementation of the role of teachers and effective learning methods is realized through a consistent emphasis on the importance of religious moderation and the implementation of various learning strategies that are appropriate to the context. PAI and madrasah teachers carry out their roles by consistently reminding students that diversity can be a trigger for conflict, so that students understand the importance of the skill of resolving differences, as well as show the application of subject matter in daily life to become effective role models. Meanwhile, the learning strategy is implemented through strengthening religious moderation to build religious education with Indonesian Islamic characteristics, the creation of learning techniques according to competency standards, and the transformation of education towards critical, creative, innovative, communicative, and collaborative thinking in the digital era, including the use of materials that explicitly encourage students to have an attitude of concern for harmony between religious communities, (Harmi, 2022).

### **PAI in Addressing Digital Extremism**

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has an important role in dealing with digital extremism as seen from the large amount of content on the internet that is filled with non-neutral religious narratives and contains fanatical aspirations against other groups, including the spread of one-sided religious discourse, hate speech, and terrorism in cyberspace. The role of PAI is manifested through religious moderation education that encourages students to internalize harmonious values and respect for others, with an understanding of moderate Islam that rejects all forms of violence, fanaticism, extremism, intimidation, terrorism, and hate speech. The essence of this approach is the formation of an attitude that always tries to be in the middle position between two opposing and excessive attitudes, so that there is no dominance of extreme thoughts and attitudes in students.

The role of PAI is crucial in dealing with digital extremism, considering that religious issues are often used as a propaganda tool by certain parties to undermine the unity of the nation and state, where educators must ensure that students understand the concept of religious moderation well. The

significance of this role is increasingly urgent as there is increasing talk about countering radicalization and terrorism with religious nuances in the digital era, as well as the need to be aware of the negative effects of technology that requires strengthening moderate religious values both in educational institutions and in the family environment. This phenomenon of digital extremism not only threatens harmony between religious communities but also has the potential to cause physical conflicts in interreligious interactions, thus requiring structured intervention through religious education

The implementation of handling digital extremism through PAI is realized with a comprehensive strategy that includes instilling the value of tolerance, respect for adherents of other religions, and rejection of hate speech (hoaxes) inside and outside the school environment. This approach is implemented practically through the development of religious moderation in schools that emphasizes interreligious dialogue, fosters an open attitude towards outsiders, and builds harmony among various groups. The development of moderate attitudes in religion is not only a school task, but also requires close cooperation with parents and the community to supervise the implementation of religious moderation education and create a more religious environment in facing the challenges of the digital world, (Suprpto, 2020).

## CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Religious Moderation in the PAI curriculum in high school is carried out by adjusting teaching policies and strategies to overcome extreme religious patterns. KMA 183 of 2019 clearly instructs the formation of moderate, inclusive, and cultured students, which is realized through strengthening the social attitude aspect (KI-2) in Basic Competencies. The success of this implementation is highly determined by the role of PAI teachers. Teachers need to change the way they teach from a dogmatic one to a more humanist and student-focused approach. Successful strategies that emphasize the cultivation of the values of multiculturalism and pluralism, which support students in learning to live in harmony and respect differences, make the PAI learning process a tool to change behavior. PAI's biggest challenge today is to confront the extremism and disinformation circulating in the digital world. In this regard, the PAI curriculum aims to create a religious moderation education model that clearly teaches students to reject hate speech (hoaxes) both in the school environment and outside of school. This step is a tangible manifestation of PAI in building ideological resilience. The curriculum needs to instill the values of tolerance, social peace, and openness so that students have sufficient critical thinking skills to analyze religious issues in the digital space. Overall, PAI is a strategic tool to produce a generation of Muslims who are balanced, inclusive, and committed to the spirit of nationalism. In addition, the active involvement of parents and the community is a key element in supporting religious moderation education so that the values of tolerance and inclusivity do not only stop in the school environment, but are also maintained and developed in social life in general. Thus, PAI has a strategic role as an educational and character development tool to create a Muslim generation that is balanced, inclusive, knowledgeable, and committed to the spirit of nationality and social peace, and is able to face the challenges of the global and digital era wisely

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