

Strengthening Religious Moderation through Islamic Education: A Study of Values, Curriculum, and Pedagogical Practice

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the strengthening of religious moderation through Islamic education by analyzing the integration of values, curriculum, and pedagogical practice within Islamic educational institutions. The research aims to explore how moderation-oriented Islamic values are implemented in educational processes, curriculum structures, and classroom interactions to promote tolerance, inclusivity, and social harmony. This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design because the research sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of educational experiences, institutional culture, and pedagogical dynamics related to religious moderation. The research was conducted at An-Nur Islamic University and Darussalam Islamic Boarding School in Indonesia due to their active commitment to moderation-based educational programs. The study involved fifteen informants consisting of institutional leaders, educators, and students selected through purposive sampling because they possessed direct experience and strategic involvement in moderation-oriented educational activities. The findings indicate that religious moderation was effectively strengthened through inclusive curriculum development, dialogical pedagogy, multicultural learning environments, and participatory student engagement. However, challenges related to ideological polarization and digital media influence remain significant concerns. The study recommends strengthening curriculum innovation, transformative pedagogy, and digital literacy programs to sustain moderation-oriented Islamic education in pluralistic societies.



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INTRODUCTION

The contemporary discourse on religious moderation has become increasingly significant within the global academic landscape, particularly in societies characterized by cultural plurality, religious diversity, and rapid social transformation (Zulaikhah et al., 2025). In many Muslim-majority countries, including Indonesia, the challenge of maintaining social harmony amid ideological polarization, radical narratives, and exclusive religious interpretations has intensified alongside the expansion of digital communication and transnational religious movements (Thaha et al., 2025). Within this context, Islamic education occupies a strategic position as a transformative instrument capable of shaping inclusive religious understanding, ethical citizenship, and peaceful coexistence (Baeha & Harfiani, 2024). Islamic educational institutions are not merely responsible for transmitting theological knowledge, but also for cultivating moral awareness, social responsibility, and respect for diversity. Consequently, the strengthening of religious moderation through Islamic education has emerged as a crucial scholarly and practical concern in contemporary Islamic studies.

The concept of religious moderation refers to a balanced religious attitude that rejects extremism, violence, intolerance, and exclusivism while promoting justice, compassion, dialogue, and social harmony (Rachmaningtyas et al., 2025). In Islamic intellectual tradition, moderation is closely associated with the principle of *wasatiyyah*, which emphasizes equilibrium, proportionality, and fairness in understanding and practicing religion (Efendy et al., 2025). Although the normative foundations of moderation are deeply embedded within Islamic teachings, the implementation of

moderate religious values in educational settings remains inconsistent. In several cases, educational institutions continue to reproduce rigid pedagogical patterns, textual approaches, and doctrinal orientations that inadequately address pluralistic realities (Hasanah & Abbas, 2023). Such conditions demonstrate that the challenge of religious moderation is not solely theological, but also pedagogical, curricular, and institutional.

The urgency of this research is reinforced by the growing concerns regarding the spread of radicalism and intolerance among young people (Amalia, 2025). Various studies indicate that educational environments may unintentionally become spaces where exclusivist interpretations are reproduced through uncritical teaching methods, limited intercultural engagement, and insufficient emphasis on democratic values (Ichsan et al., 2024). At the same time, globalization and digital media have accelerated the circulation of religious information that is often fragmented, ideological, and detached from contextual understanding (Indrawari et al., 2024). Students are increasingly exposed to polarizing narratives that may influence their religious attitudes and social interactions. Therefore, Islamic education must respond proactively by integrating values of moderation into curriculum structures, pedagogical practices, and institutional cultures. This integration is essential not only for preventing radical tendencies but also for fostering socially responsible and intellectually open-minded Muslim generations.

Previous scholarly works have examined religious moderation from theological, sociological, and political perspectives. Several studies have focused on the role of pesantren, Islamic universities, and religious organizations in promoting tolerant values and multicultural awareness (Permatasari et al., 2024). Other researchers have explored the relationship between Islamic education and civic engagement, emphasizing the importance of character education, interreligious dialogue, and peacebuilding initiatives (Katerina et al., 2025). However, many existing studies remain fragmented and tend to analyze religious moderation only from a normative or conceptual standpoint. Limited research has comprehensively examined how values of moderation are systematically embedded within curriculum design and pedagogical practice in Islamic educational institutions. Furthermore, previous studies often emphasize policy discourse without sufficiently investigating the practical dynamics of classroom interaction, teaching strategies, and value internalization processes.

This condition reveals a significant research gap. Existing literature has not adequately integrated three interconnected dimensions, namely religious values, curriculum development, and pedagogical implementation, within a unified analytical framework. Most studies treat these aspects separately, resulting in limited understanding regarding how Islamic education operationalizes moderation in concrete educational practices. In addition, there is insufficient attention to the interaction between institutional ideology, teacher agency, and student experience in shaping moderate religious attitudes (Prilani & Hakim, 2025). The absence of holistic analysis creates theoretical and practical limitations in understanding the effectiveness of Islamic education as an instrument of moderation. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by investigating how religious moderation is strengthened through the integration of values, curriculum, and pedagogical practice within Islamic educational contexts.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach that combines normative Islamic values, curriculum construction, and pedagogical strategies into a comprehensive framework for strengthening religious moderation. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on discourse or policy analysis, this research emphasizes the practical mechanisms through which moderation is internalized in educational processes. The study also contributes a contextual understanding of how educators negotiate religious teachings with pluralistic social realities in classroom settings (Jamin & Mudra, 2023). By positioning pedagogy as an active medium for value transformation rather than merely a technical teaching process, this research offers a broader perspective on the role of Islamic education in cultivating inclusive religious consciousness. In addition, the study introduces a multidimensional analytical model that connects curriculum content, teaching methods, institutional culture, and student interaction as interconnected components in the construction of moderation.

Based on the background above, this research formulates several central research questions. First, how are the values of religious moderation conceptualized and integrated within Islamic

educational institutions? Second, how does the curriculum structure support the internalization of moderate Islamic values among students? Third, what pedagogical practices are employed by educators to strengthen attitudes of tolerance, inclusivity, and social harmony? Fourth, what challenges and limitations are encountered in implementing religious moderation within Islamic educational environments? These questions are intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Islamic education and the development of moderate religious attitudes in contemporary society.

The primary objective of this research is to analyze the role of Islamic education in strengthening religious moderation through the integration of values, curriculum, and pedagogical practice. Specifically, the study aims to identify the foundational values of moderation promoted within Islamic educational institutions, examine the extent to which moderation principles are reflected in curriculum design, and explore pedagogical strategies that facilitate the cultivation of tolerant and inclusive attitudes among students. The research also seeks to evaluate institutional challenges in implementing moderation-oriented education and to formulate conceptual recommendations for strengthening Islamic educational practices in pluralistic societies.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of Islamic education discourse by expanding the conceptual understanding of religious moderation beyond theological narratives into educational praxis. The research enriches interdisciplinary discussions concerning Islamic pedagogy, curriculum studies, and social transformation by demonstrating how moderation can be operationalized within learning processes. Academically, the findings are expected to provide relevant references for scholars, researchers, and educational practitioners interested in Islamic education, multiculturalism, peace education, and religious studies. The study may also serve as a foundation for future comparative research involving different educational institutions and socio-cultural contexts. Practically, this research offers strategic insights for policymakers, curriculum developers, school administrators, and educators in designing educational systems that promote tolerance, inclusivity, and social cohesion (Jailani & Suyadi, 2023). The findings may assist Islamic educational institutions in strengthening their role as agents of peaceful religious understanding and democratic citizenship.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges several limitations. The research primarily focuses on selected Islamic educational contexts and may not fully represent the diversity of Islamic educational institutions across different regions and cultural settings. Furthermore, the study emphasizes qualitative interpretation of values, curriculum, and pedagogical practices, which may limit the generalizability of findings. Variations in institutional orientation, teacher competence, and local socio-religious dynamics may also influence the implementation of moderation differently in other contexts. In addition, the rapidly evolving influence of digital media and transnational religious discourse presents challenges that may extend beyond the scope of this research.

Therefore, future studies are encouraged to conduct comparative and interdisciplinary investigations involving broader institutional settings, quantitative approaches, and longitudinal perspectives. Further research may also explore the role of digital learning environments, social media literacy, and youth religious identity in shaping moderation within contemporary Islamic education (Amin et al., 2025). Additionally, studies examining the relationship between state policy, educational governance, and grassroots religious movements would provide deeper insights into the sustainability of moderation initiatives. Through continuous scholarly engagement, Islamic education can further strengthen its transformative role in promoting peace, tolerance, and harmonious coexistence in increasingly plural and interconnected societies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The discourse on religious moderation within Islamic education has developed into an important field of inquiry in contemporary Islamic studies, particularly in response to increasing social polarization, religious extremism, and ideological contestation in multicultural societies (Masiga, 2023). The relationship between Islamic education and moderation has attracted scholarly attention because educational institutions are considered strategic spaces for shaping inclusive religious understanding, civic ethics, and social tolerance (Azhar, 2024). In the context of this research, entitled *Strengthening Religious Moderation through Islamic Education: A Study of Values, Curriculum, and*

Pedagogical Practice, the literature review focuses on the theoretical foundations that explain how religious moderation can be conceptualized, institutionalized, and implemented through educational processes. This study employs three major theoretical perspectives, namely the Theory of Religious Moderation, Transformative Education Theory, and Multicultural Education Theory. These theories are integrated to construct a comprehensive analytical framework capable of explaining the relationship between Islamic values, curriculum structures, and pedagogical practices in strengthening moderate religious attitudes.

The first theory employed in this research is the Theory of Religious Moderation, which is closely associated with the concept of *wasatiyyah* in Islamic thought (Nurhartanto et al., 2025). One of the prominent scholars who popularized this theoretical framework is Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a contemporary Muslim scholar affiliated with Al-Azhar University, Egypt, particularly through his influential works published in the early 2000s concerning moderation, balance, and Islamic renewal. Al-Qaradawi conceptualized religious moderation as a balanced understanding of religion that rejects extremism, rigidity, and violence while emphasizing justice, tolerance, compassion, and contextual interpretation (Rullu et al., 2025). According to his perspective, moderation represents the essential characteristic of Islam as a religion that promotes equilibrium between spiritual and worldly dimensions, individual and collective interests, and tradition and modernity. This theoretical framework is highly relevant to the present research because the primary problem investigated concerns the persistence of exclusive and intolerant religious attitudes within educational settings.

Another important scholar connected to the theory of religious moderation is Abdullah Saeed from the University of Melbourne, Australia. Since the 2010s, Saeed has emphasized contextual Islamic interpretation and progressive Islamic thought as foundations for religious inclusivity in modern societies (Karim, 2025). Saeed argues that religious moderation requires interpretative flexibility capable of addressing contemporary realities without abandoning core Islamic principles. His theoretical contribution strengthens the argument that Islamic education should not merely reproduce textual understanding but should cultivate critical reasoning and contextual awareness among students. The relevance of Saeed's perspective to this research lies in the identified research gap concerning the limited integration of contextual moderation values within curriculum and classroom practice.

A third scholar contributing to this theoretical discourse is Azyumardi Azra from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University Jakarta, Indonesia. Through his studies on Indonesian Islam and educational reform, particularly during the 2000s and 2010s, Azra highlighted the role of Islamic educational institutions in preserving moderate Islamic traditions characterized by inclusivity, pluralism, and democratic engagement (Naqiba & Taqiyyuddin, 2025). According to Azra, Islamic education in Indonesia historically functioned as a cultural mediator capable of harmonizing religious commitment with social diversity. His framework is particularly important for this research because it contextualizes moderation within the Indonesian socio-religious landscape and demonstrates the institutional role of education in preventing radicalism.

The second theory used in this research is Transformative Education Theory, initially popularized by Jack Mezirow from Columbia University, United States, in 1978. Mezirow's theory emerged from adult learning studies and emphasizes transformative learning as a process through which individuals critically reflect upon assumptions, beliefs, and worldviews to construct more inclusive and rational perspectives (Tamu et al., 2024). According to Mezirow, education should encourage critical consciousness, dialogue, and reflective thinking capable of transforming narrow perspectives into broader social understanding. This theory is relevant to Islamic education because strengthening religious moderation requires not only knowledge transmission but also transformation of attitudes and perspectives regarding religious diversity and coexistence.

The development of transformative education theory has been enriched by Paulo Freire from the Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil, especially through his influential pedagogical works during the 1970s. Freire criticized authoritarian education models that position students as passive recipients of information. Instead, he proposed dialogical pedagogy that empowers learners to critically engage with social realities (Sahibe et al., 2025). Freire's theory contributes significantly to this research because many Islamic educational practices continue to employ rigid pedagogical methods that limit

critical engagement and contextual interpretation. Through transformative pedagogy, Islamic education can become a participatory and reflective process that nurtures tolerance and ethical responsibility.

Another scholar relevant to transformative education is bell hooks from Berea College, United States, whose works during the 1990s emphasized engaged pedagogy and inclusive educational practice (Gandara, 2024). Hooks argued that education should function as a liberating practice capable of empowering marginalized voices and promoting mutual respect within learning environments. Her perspective strengthens this study by emphasizing the emotional, ethical, and dialogical dimensions of pedagogy in shaping moderate and inclusive attitudes among students. Contemporary developments of transformative education theory increasingly highlight digital literacy, intercultural dialogue, and collaborative learning as important components in responding to contemporary ideological challenges.

The third theory employed in this research is Multicultural Education Theory, which was prominently developed by James A. Banks from the University of Washington, United States, beginning in the 1980s. Banks conceptualized multicultural education as an educational reform movement designed to create equal educational opportunities for diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious groups (Yumeldi, 2024). According to Banks, curriculum and pedagogy should reflect diversity, promote social justice, and encourage democratic participation. This theory is highly relevant to the current study because religious moderation cannot be separated from the capacity of educational institutions to recognize and appreciate pluralism within society.

Another important scholar in multicultural education is Geneva Gay from the University of Washington, United States, particularly through her work on culturally responsive teaching during the 2000s. Gay emphasized that effective education must incorporate students' cultural backgrounds into learning processes to create inclusive and meaningful educational experiences (Zubaidi, 2024). Her theoretical framework supports this research by explaining how pedagogical practices in Islamic education can strengthen moderation through empathy, cultural recognition, and dialogical interaction.

A third scholar contributing to multicultural education theory is Bhikhu Parekh from the University of Hull, United Kingdom, whose political and philosophical works on multiculturalism gained prominence during the 1990s and 2000s. Parekh argued that pluralistic societies require intercultural dialogue and mutual recognition among communities to maintain social harmony (Syukur & Arief, 2023). His perspective complements the present research by highlighting the importance of educational institutions in fostering social cohesion within religiously diverse societies.

The development of multicultural education theory in contemporary contexts increasingly emphasizes global citizenship, digital inclusivity, intercultural competence, and peace education. (Rosanti et al., 2025) These developments are highly relevant to Islamic educational institutions facing challenges related to online radicalization, identity politics, and ideological polarization among youth. By integrating multicultural perspectives into curriculum and pedagogy, Islamic education can function as a medium for strengthening democratic values and peaceful coexistence.

The integration of the three theories above provides a comprehensive conceptual framework for this research. The Theory of Religious Moderation explains the normative and theological foundations of moderation within Islamic teachings. Transformative Education Theory explains the pedagogical processes through which moderate values can be internalized and critically understood by students. Meanwhile, Multicultural Education Theory explains the sociocultural dimensions of diversity, inclusivity, and democratic engagement within educational environments. Together, these theories address the main research problem concerning the limited effectiveness of Islamic education in systematically strengthening religious moderation.

The theoretical framework also directly addresses the identified research gap. Previous studies often examined moderation only from theological or policy perspectives without integrating curriculum and pedagogical dimensions comprehensively (Mahdiyah et al., 2024). By combining the three theories, this study offers a multidimensional perspective capable of analyzing how values, curriculum structures, and pedagogical practices interact within Islamic educational institutions. This integrative framework constitutes the novelty of the research because it positions moderation not merely as a doctrinal

discourse but as an educational practice shaped through institutional culture, teaching methods, and student engagement.

Furthermore, the theories are closely connected to the formulation of the research questions, which investigate how moderation values are conceptualized, integrated into curriculum structures, and implemented through pedagogical practice. The theories also support the objectives of the research by providing analytical tools for understanding the relationship between Islamic educational processes and the cultivation of tolerant attitudes. Theoretically, the research contributes to the development of interdisciplinary discourse linking Islamic studies, educational theory, and multiculturalism. Academically, the study enriches scholarly discussions on Islamic pedagogy and moderation studies. Practically, the findings may guide educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers in constructing inclusive educational models capable of addressing contemporary religious challenges.

In conclusion, the literature review demonstrates that the Theory of Religious Moderation, Transformative Education Theory, and Multicultural Education Theory collectively provide a strong conceptual foundation for analyzing the role of Islamic education in strengthening moderation. The perspectives of Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Abdullah Saeed, and Azyumardi Azra explain moderation from theological and sociocultural dimensions. The ideas of Jack Mezirow, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks emphasize transformative and dialogical pedagogy as mechanisms for value internalization. Meanwhile, the theories of James A. Banks, Geneva Gay, and Bhikhu Parekh highlight inclusivity, diversity, and intercultural engagement within educational settings. The integration of these theoretical perspectives addresses the main research problem, responds to existing research gaps, supports the novelty of the study, and provides a comprehensive framework for achieving the objectives and benefits of the research in theoretical, academic, and practical dimensions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the strengthening of religious moderation through Islamic education, particularly focusing on the dimensions of values, curriculum, and pedagogical practice (Nikolaeva, 2023). The qualitative method was selected because the research seeks to understand social meaning, educational experience, institutional culture, and interpretative processes that cannot be adequately measured through statistical procedures alone (Hermanto, 2023). Religious moderation within Islamic educational institutions is closely related to values, beliefs, interactions, and pedagogical dynamics that require in-depth exploration and contextual interpretation. Therefore, qualitative inquiry is considered the most appropriate approach for examining how moderation is conceptualized, internalized, and practiced within educational environments. The qualitative paradigm enables researchers to explore subjective experiences, institutional realities, and sociocultural contexts in a comprehensive and interpretative manner.

The research specifically adopts a qualitative case study design (Mustofa et al., 2025). The case study design was chosen because the study aims to investigate the implementation of religious moderation within a bounded educational context involving specific institutional settings, actors, and educational practices. A case study approach allows the researcher to examine complex social phenomena holistically and contextually while maintaining close engagement with participants and institutional realities (Hasra et al., 2025). This design is particularly relevant because the research focuses not only on abstract theoretical concepts but also on concrete educational processes occurring within Islamic educational institutions. Through the case study approach, the researcher can analyze interactions between curriculum structures, pedagogical strategies, institutional values, and students' experiences in shaping moderate religious understanding.

The use of a qualitative case study design is also justified by the multidimensional nature of the research problem. Religious moderation is not a singular phenomenon that can be explained through isolated variables. Instead, it involves interconnected dimensions including theological interpretation, educational policy, classroom interaction, institutional culture, and social relations. Quantitative methods may identify patterns or frequencies, but they are less capable of capturing the depth of meaning and interpretative complexity surrounding religious moderation practices (Romdhoni et al., 2023). Consequently, qualitative inquiry offers flexibility and analytical richness necessary for

understanding how moderation values are negotiated and implemented within Islamic educational settings.

The research was conducted at an Islamic higher educational institution and an Islamic boarding school environment in Indonesia, selected because both institutions actively promote moderation-oriented educational programs. The selected locations are referred to using pseudonyms to maintain institutional confidentiality and ethical integrity (Mufti et al., 2025). The Islamic university in this study is identified as “An-Nur Islamic University,” while the Islamic boarding school is referred to as “Darussalam Islamic Boarding School.” These institutions were chosen because they represent educational environments that integrate Islamic teachings with multicultural engagement and moderate religious discourse. In addition, both institutions are recognized for implementing curriculum reforms, intercultural activities, and pedagogical innovations associated with religious moderation.

The selection of Indonesia as the broader research setting is highly relevant because Indonesia is internationally recognized as one of the largest Muslim-majority democracies characterized by religious diversity and multicultural coexistence (Khoiri & Akib, 2025). Indonesian Islamic educational institutions historically played important roles in promoting inclusive Islamic traditions rooted in moderation, tolerance, and social harmony (Muslim, 2024). However, contemporary challenges related to radicalism, identity politics, and ideological polarization have created increasing pressure on educational institutions to strengthen moderation values more systematically. Therefore, the selected research locations provide a strategic context for examining how Islamic education responds to contemporary socio-religious challenges through curriculum and pedagogy.

The selection of An-Nur Islamic University was based on several considerations. First, the institution formally incorporates religious moderation within its institutional vision and curriculum framework. Second, the university organizes academic activities related to multicultural dialogue, civic engagement, and peace education. Third, the institution represents an urban Islamic educational environment where students are exposed to diverse social, cultural, and ideological influences. These characteristics make the university an appropriate setting for analyzing the implementation of moderation values within higher Islamic education.

Meanwhile, Darussalam Islamic Boarding School was selected because it represents a traditional Islamic educational institution that simultaneously engages with modern educational transformation. The pesantren integrates classical Islamic learning with contemporary educational approaches emphasizing social inclusivity and ethical citizenship (Herawati et al., 2025). The boarding school also actively organizes intercommunity engagement programs, social service initiatives, and collaborative educational activities that reflect moderation-oriented values. The inclusion of both institutions allows the study to compare and understand how religious moderation is implemented across different Islamic educational environments.

The participants in this research consisted of educational leaders, curriculum developers, Islamic education lecturers, teachers, and students who were directly involved in educational processes related to moderation practices. Since this research uses qualitative methodology, participant selection employed purposive sampling techniques (Nimulola & Akbar, 2024). Purposive sampling was chosen because the study requires participants possessing specific knowledge, experience, and involvement related to religious moderation within Islamic education. Participants were selected based on their relevance to the research objectives and their capacity to provide rich and meaningful information.

The total number of primary informants in this study consisted of fifteen participants. These participants included four institutional leaders, five educators, and six students. Institutional leaders were selected because they possessed strategic knowledge regarding institutional policy, curriculum development, and moderation programs. The educators were selected because they directly implemented pedagogical practices related to moderation values in classroom settings. Meanwhile, students were chosen because they represented recipients of educational processes and could provide insights regarding their learning experiences and perceptions of moderation.

To maintain ethical confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to all participants (Ali, 2025). The institutional leaders included “Dr. Hasan,” serving as Rector of An-Nur Islamic University; “Ustadz Rahman,” serving as Director of Darussalam Islamic Boarding School; “Prof. Salim,” serving as Dean of the Faculty of Islamic Studies; and “Dr. Faridah,” serving as Head of Curriculum Development. These participants were selected because of their direct involvement in designing institutional policies related to moderation-oriented education. Their positions enabled them to explain institutional visions, curriculum frameworks, and educational strategies employed to strengthen moderate Islamic values.

The educator participants included “Mr. Yusuf,” an Islamic theology lecturer; “Mrs. Aisyah,” a lecturer in Islamic education methodology; “Ustadz Ahmad,” a pesantren teacher specializing in classical Islamic texts; “Mrs. Nabila,” a civic education instructor; and “Mr. Rizki,” a lecturer in multicultural education. These educators were selected because they actively integrated moderation values into their teaching practices and had significant interaction with students in classroom settings. Their experiences provided valuable insights into pedagogical approaches, instructional challenges, and methods of value internalization.

The student participants consisted of six individuals identified as “Ali,” “Fatimah,” “Nadia,” “Irfan,” “Siti,” and “Rahmat.” These students came from different academic backgrounds and educational levels within the selected institutions. They were selected because they actively participated in academic and extracurricular activities related to religious dialogue, student organizations, and moderation campaigns. The inclusion of students allowed the researcher to understand how moderation values were perceived, experienced, and internalized from the learner perspective.

Data collection in this research employed three primary techniques, namely in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis (Rizza et al., 2024). In-depth interviews were used to explore participants’ perspectives, experiences, and interpretations regarding religious moderation within Islamic education. Semi-structured interview formats were employed to ensure flexibility while maintaining alignment with research objectives (Sari, 2025). Interviews focused on themes such as curriculum implementation, teaching strategies, institutional culture, interreligious interaction, and challenges in promoting moderation.

Participant observation was conducted to examine educational interactions, classroom dynamics, and institutional activities related to moderation practices (Hosaini et al., 2024). Through observation, the researcher analyzed how educators communicated religious values, facilitated dialogue, and managed diversity within learning environments. Observation also enabled the researcher to examine nonverbal interactions, institutional rituals, and informal educational processes that might not emerge during interviews. This method strengthened data credibility through direct engagement with educational realities.

Document analysis was used to examine institutional documents such as curriculum guidelines, teaching modules, vision and mission statements, educational policies, and student activity reports (S et al., 2024). These documents were analyzed to identify how moderation values were formally integrated into institutional frameworks and educational materials. Document analysis complemented interview and observational data by providing structural and textual evidence regarding moderation-oriented educational practices.

To ensure data validity and trustworthiness, the study employed triangulation techniques involving multiple data sources, methods, and participant categories (Alawiyah et al., 2023). Data obtained from interviews were cross-checked with observational findings and institutional documents to ensure consistency and credibility. Member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with selected participants to confirm the accuracy of researcher interpretations. In addition, prolonged engagement within the research setting allowed the researcher to build trust with participants and obtain deeper contextual understanding.

Data analysis in this study followed the interactive model developed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Mulya et al., 2025).

Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, and organizing relevant information from interview transcripts, field notes, and documents. During this stage, the researcher identified themes related to moderation values, curriculum implementation, pedagogical practice, institutional culture, and educational challenges.

The second stage involved data display, where categorized information was systematically organized into thematic matrices and narrative descriptions. This process enabled the researcher to identify relationships among themes, compare participant perspectives, and examine patterns emerging across institutional contexts. Data display facilitated analytical interpretation by providing structured visualization of complex qualitative information.

The final stage involved conclusion drawing and verification. Conclusions were developed through continuous interpretation of data patterns, thematic relationships, and contextual meanings emerging throughout the research process. The researcher employed inductive reasoning to construct interpretations grounded in participant experiences and institutional realities (Wiyono et al., 2023). Verification was conducted continuously throughout analysis to ensure consistency, credibility, and analytical rigor. The conclusion-drawing process emphasized interpretative depth rather than statistical generalization, aligning with the qualitative nature of the study.

Ethical considerations were carefully maintained throughout the research process (Marsudi & Noor, 2025). All participants voluntarily agreed to participate after receiving explanations regarding the objectives and procedures of the study. Confidentiality and anonymity were protected through the use of pseudonyms for institutions and participants. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any stage without negative consequences. Ethical sensitivity was particularly important because the research addressed issues related to religion, ideology, and educational identity that may involve personal and institutional sensitivities.

Overall, the qualitative case study method employed in this research provides a comprehensive and contextually grounded framework for understanding how Islamic education strengthens religious moderation through values, curriculum, and pedagogical practice. By integrating interviews, observation, and document analysis within selected Islamic educational institutions, the study generates nuanced insights into the practical implementation of moderation-oriented education. The methodological approach supports the research objective of exploring educational transformation processes capable of fostering inclusive, tolerant, and socially responsible religious understanding within contemporary Muslim societies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this research demonstrate that Islamic education plays a significant role in strengthening religious moderation through the integration of values, curriculum development, and pedagogical practice (Barkatillah, 2023). The study reveals that the selected Islamic educational institutions, namely An-Nur Islamic University and Darussalam Islamic Boarding School, have systematically attempted to construct educational environments that encourage tolerance, inclusivity, peaceful coexistence, and contextual religious understanding. These findings directly address the primary research problem concerning the persistence of exclusivist attitudes and the limited implementation of moderation-oriented educational practices within Islamic educational settings. The findings further indicate that moderation is not merely conceptualized as a theological discourse but is operationalized through institutional culture, learning interactions, curriculum integration, and participatory pedagogical approaches.

The research identified that values of religious moderation were embedded within institutional visions, classroom interactions, extracurricular activities, and social engagement programs. Participants consistently emphasized that moderation was understood as an Islamic principle rooted in justice, balance, respect for diversity, and social harmony (Tohawi et al., 2024). Institutional leaders explained that moderation-oriented education was intentionally designed to prevent ideological extremism and to cultivate socially responsible Muslim citizens. These findings strongly support Yusuf al-Qaradawi's Theory of Religious Moderation, which conceptualizes moderation as a balanced approach to religion that rejects extremism and rigidity (Das et al., 2024). The institutions examined in this study reflected

the practical application of wasatiyyah values through educational policies emphasizing coexistence and ethical engagement.

The findings also support Abdullah Saeed's perspective concerning contextual Islamic interpretation (Halim et al., 2023). Educators in both institutions encouraged students to critically engage with religious texts while considering contemporary social realities. Religious learning was not restricted to literal textual interpretation but was connected with issues such as pluralism, citizenship, democracy, and human dignity. This pedagogical orientation demonstrated that moderation was promoted through reflective interpretation rather than dogmatic instruction. Such findings address the identified research gap in previous studies, which often focused only on doctrinal discussions without examining how contextual moderation values are implemented pedagogically.

Furthermore, the study confirmed Azyumardi Azra's argument regarding the historical role of Indonesian Islamic education in promoting inclusive and moderate Islamic traditions (Trianita et al., 2024). Both institutions integrated local cultural values, intercommunity engagement, and civic ethics into educational activities. Students participated in collaborative social programs involving diverse religious and social groups, indicating that moderation was institutionalized not only within classroom discourse but also within social interaction. This finding strengthens the theoretical argument that Islamic educational institutions function as mediating spaces between religious identity and multicultural coexistence.

The implementation of moderation values within curriculum structures emerged as another important finding of the study. The curriculum in both institutions incorporated subjects related to Islamic ethics, multiculturalism, civic education, interreligious dialogue, and peace studies. Moderation values were integrated both explicitly and implicitly across different academic disciplines. Curriculum developers explained that educational materials were intentionally revised to reduce exclusivist narratives and to encourage inclusive religious understanding. These findings directly answer the second research question concerning how curriculum structures support the internalization of moderate religious values.

The curriculum findings strongly relate to James A. Banks' Multicultural Education Theory, which emphasizes the importance of educational reform capable of promoting equality, diversity recognition, and democratic participation (Larasati & Fernando, 2025). The institutions examined in this study attempted to create curriculum structures reflecting multicultural realities within Indonesian society. Educational materials emphasized tolerance, social responsibility, and intercultural dialogue, thereby encouraging students to appreciate diversity as part of Islamic ethical responsibility.

The findings also correspond with Geneva Gay's concept of culturally responsive teaching (Syaadah & Slam, 2023). Educators adapted instructional strategies to students' sociocultural backgrounds and encouraged open discussion regarding differences in religious interpretation. Classroom interaction was characterized by dialogical learning rather than authoritarian instruction. Such practices enabled students to develop empathy and mutual respect while maintaining religious commitment. This pedagogical flexibility demonstrated the practical relevance of multicultural education theory within Islamic educational environments.

Another important finding concerns the pedagogical practices employed by educators in strengthening religious moderation. Observation data revealed that educators actively used participatory teaching methods such as group discussion, reflective dialogue, collaborative projects, and contextual case analysis. Rather than positioning students as passive recipients of religious information, educators encouraged critical inquiry and active engagement with social realities. This finding strongly supports Jack Mezirow's Transformative Education Theory, which emphasizes critical reflection as a process for transforming perspectives and developing inclusive understanding (Faruq et al., 2024).

The pedagogical findings also align with Paulo Freire's dialogical pedagogy (Muliana, 2024). Educators rejected rigid instructional approaches and instead promoted reciprocal interaction between teachers and students. Religious learning became a process of dialogue, interpretation, and ethical reflection rather than memorization alone. Students explained that such pedagogical approaches helped

them understand religious diversity more constructively and reduced prejudicial attitudes toward others. This demonstrates that transformative pedagogy can function as an effective mechanism for internalizing moderation values.

Similarly, the findings reflect bell hooks' theory of engaged pedagogy, particularly regarding the emotional and ethical dimensions of learning (Mubarok et al., 2025). Teachers attempted to create inclusive classroom environments where students felt respected and encouraged to express differing perspectives. Such educational practices contributed to the development of empathy, emotional awareness, and ethical responsibility among learners. These findings suggest that strengthening moderation requires not only curriculum reform but also emotionally inclusive pedagogical relationships.

The following table summarizes the major findings of the study in relation to the three theoretical frameworks employed in this research.

Table

Table 1 Integration of Research Findings with Theoretical Frameworks

Research Findings	Related Theory	Main Scholars	Implementation in Islamic Education
Integration of moderation values within institutional culture	Theory of Religious Moderation	Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Abdullah Saeed, Azyumardi Azra	Promotion of tolerance, inclusivity, and balanced religious understanding
Curriculum emphasizing multiculturalism and civic ethics	Multicultural Education Theory	James A. Banks, Geneva Gay, Bhikhu Parekh	Curriculum reform, diversity-oriented learning materials, intercultural dialogue
Participatory and reflective pedagogy	Transformative Education Theory	Jack Mezirow, Paulo Freire, bell hooks	Dialogical learning, critical reflection, collaborative discussion
Student involvement in social engagement programs	Theory of Religious Moderation and Multicultural Education	Azra, Parekh, Banks	Community service, intergroup collaboration, civic participation
Contextual interpretation of Islamic teachings	Religious Moderation and Transformative Education	Saeed, Freire, Mezirow	Contextual learning, reflective interpretation, ethical reasoning

The findings also reveal several implementation challenges related to strengthening religious moderation. Some educators acknowledged difficulties in balancing classical Islamic scholarship with contemporary multicultural discourse. In several instances, conservative perspectives among certain stakeholders created resistance toward curriculum reform and dialogical pedagogy. Students also reported that social media exposure sometimes influenced intolerant attitudes and ideological polarization (Else, 2023). These challenges demonstrate that moderation-oriented education operates within broader sociopolitical and digital dynamics that may limit institutional effectiveness.

These findings are closely related to the identified research gap. Previous studies frequently discussed moderation at the conceptual or policy level without examining institutional obstacles and pedagogical tensions in practice (Barhia et al., 2025). The present study contributes new insights by showing that moderation implementation involves negotiation between institutional values, religious interpretation, pedagogical strategy, and sociocultural context. This multidimensional analysis constitutes the novelty of the research because it demonstrates that moderation cannot be understood solely through theological discourse but must be examined through educational processes and institutional interaction.

The findings also directly answer the research questions formulated earlier. The first research question concerning the conceptualization of moderation was answered through evidence showing that moderation was understood as inclusivity, justice, tolerance, and contextual interpretation rooted in Islamic ethics. The second research question regarding curriculum implementation was addressed through findings indicating the integration of moderation values into learning materials, civic education, and multicultural discourse. The third research question concerning pedagogical practice was answered through observations of dialogical, participatory, and transformative teaching methods. Finally, the fourth research question regarding challenges was addressed through findings related to ideological resistance, curriculum limitations, and digital polarization.

The research objectives were substantially achieved through the findings presented above. The first objective, namely identifying moderation values within Islamic educational institutions, was fulfilled through evidence showing institutional commitment to tolerance, coexistence, and balanced religious understanding. The second objective concerning curriculum integration was achieved through analysis of moderation-oriented educational materials and multicultural learning frameworks. The third objective related to pedagogical strategies was fulfilled through findings concerning reflective dialogue, collaborative learning, and participatory pedagogy. The final objective concerning institutional challenges was addressed through examination of ideological tensions, pedagogical limitations, and external sociocultural pressures.

Theoretically, the findings contribute significantly to the development of interdisciplinary discourse connecting Islamic studies, educational theory, and multiculturalism. The integration of the three theoretical perspectives demonstrates that religious moderation can be analyzed comprehensively through theological, pedagogical, and sociocultural dimensions simultaneously. The findings expand the conceptual understanding of moderation from abstract doctrinal discourse into practical educational implementation. This contribution is important because previous studies often separated religious interpretation from educational practice.

Academically, this study contributes empirical evidence concerning the relationship between Islamic education and moderation within contemporary Muslim societies. The findings enrich scholarly discussions on Islamic pedagogy, peace education, and multicultural learning by demonstrating how curriculum and pedagogy influence religious attitudes among students. The research also offers a multidimensional analytical framework that may guide future comparative studies involving different educational institutions and cultural settings.

Practically, the findings provide important implications for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators. Educational institutions should integrate moderation systematically across curriculum structures, pedagogical strategies, and institutional culture. Teachers should be trained to employ dialogical and reflective teaching methods capable of encouraging critical thinking and inclusivity. In addition, educational policymakers should strengthen support for multicultural education, digital literacy, and intercommunity engagement programs to counter ideological polarization among youth (Syahrin et al., 2023).

The discussion of findings also demonstrates consistency with previous research while simultaneously extending existing scholarship. Previous studies by Azyumardi Azra emphasized the historical role of Indonesian Islamic education in preserving moderate Islamic traditions. The current findings support this argument by showing that contemporary Islamic educational institutions continue to function as mediating spaces for pluralistic coexistence (Atika & Yanuarti, 2023). Similarly, earlier studies on transformative pedagogy emphasized the importance of dialogue and critical reflection in promoting social awareness. The present findings confirm that participatory pedagogy contributes significantly to the development of tolerant religious understanding among students (Mahmood, 2023).

However, the current study also expands previous research by integrating curriculum analysis, institutional culture, and pedagogical implementation within a unified framework. Earlier studies often examined these dimensions separately, creating limited understanding regarding the interaction

between educational structures and moderation practices. The present study addresses this gap by demonstrating that moderation is shaped through interconnected institutional processes involving policy, pedagogy, and social engagement.

The findings further reveal that moderation-oriented Islamic education is not solely concerned with preventing extremism but also with cultivating ethical citizenship and democratic participation. Students who experienced dialogical and multicultural learning environments demonstrated greater openness toward diversity and stronger commitment to peaceful coexistence. These findings support Bhikhu Parekh's argument that multicultural societies require educational systems capable of fostering intercultural dialogue and mutual recognition (Mujtahid et al., 2024).

Another important contribution of this study concerns the relationship between digital challenges and moderation education. Participants acknowledged that online religious discourse significantly influences students' perspectives and may reinforce ideological polarization. Consequently, educational institutions increasingly recognize the importance of digital literacy and critical media engagement as components of moderation-oriented education (Rafi et al., 2025). This finding extends contemporary discussions concerning the role of technology and digital communication within Islamic educational contexts.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that strengthening religious moderation through Islamic education requires comprehensive institutional commitment involving values, curriculum structures, pedagogical transformation, and social engagement. The integration of Religious Moderation Theory, Transformative Education Theory, and Multicultural Education Theory provides a robust analytical framework for understanding how moderation can be internalized within educational environments. The findings confirm that moderation-oriented Islamic education contributes not only to religious understanding but also to the cultivation of ethical responsibility, democratic citizenship, and peaceful coexistence within pluralistic societies.

In conclusion, the results and discussion of this study affirm that Islamic education possesses substantial potential to strengthen religious moderation when supported by inclusive values, multicultural curriculum structures, and transformative pedagogical practices. The study addresses the primary research problem, responds to existing research gaps, answers the research questions, and achieves the stated objectives through empirical evidence and theoretical integration. The findings contribute theoretical, academic, and practical benefits while also offering new insights into the role of Islamic education in responding to contemporary ideological and social challenges.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that Islamic education plays a decisive and multidimensional role in strengthening religious moderation through the integration of institutional values, curriculum design, and pedagogical practice. Based on the findings and discussion, it is evident that moderation is not merely a theoretical or doctrinal concept, but a lived educational practice that is systematically constructed within Islamic educational institutions. The research demonstrates that both An-Nur Islamic University and Darussalam Islamic Boarding School have developed structured efforts to embed values of tolerance, balance, inclusivity, and social harmony into their educational systems. These values are not only articulated at the institutional level but are also operationalized through classroom interactions, curriculum frameworks, and student engagement activities. This confirms that religious moderation can be effectively strengthened when it is institutionalized within the core components of Islamic education.

The study concludes that the implementation of religious moderation is strongly grounded in the Theory of Religious Moderation as articulated by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Abdullah Saeed, and Azyumardi Azra. Their conceptualizations of *wasatiyyah*, contextual interpretation, and inclusive Islamic tradition are reflected in the educational practices observed in both institutions. The findings show that moderation is understood as a balanced religious orientation that rejects extremism and promotes ethical coexistence. This theoretical foundation is not only preserved in abstract discourse but is actively translated into educational policies and learning environments. The alignment between theory and practice indicates that Islamic education can serve as a powerful medium for cultivating

moderate religious understanding when supported by institutional commitment and pedagogical consistency.

The research also concludes that curriculum integration is a central mechanism in strengthening religious moderation. The findings reveal that moderation values are embedded across various subjects, including Islamic studies, civic education, multicultural studies, and ethics-based learning. This curriculum integration reflects the principles of Multicultural Education Theory developed by James A. Banks, Geneva Gay, and Bhikhu Parekh, which emphasize diversity awareness, cultural responsiveness, and social justice in education. The study confirms that curriculum reform plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes toward diversity and interreligious relations. When curriculum content is designed to reflect pluralistic realities and encourage intercultural understanding, students are more likely to develop inclusive and tolerant perspectives. Therefore, curriculum becomes a strategic instrument in operationalizing religious moderation within Islamic education systems.

Furthermore, this study concludes that pedagogical practice is a critical factor in the internalization of moderation values. The findings demonstrate that educators in both institutions employ participatory, dialogical, and reflective teaching approaches that align with Transformative Education Theory as proposed by Jack Mezirow, Paulo Freire, and bell hooks. These pedagogical practices encourage students to engage critically with religious knowledge, reflect on diverse perspectives, and develop ethical awareness in relation to social realities. The use of discussion-based learning, collaborative activities, and contextual interpretation has proven effective in fostering openness, empathy, and mutual respect among students. This confirms that transformative pedagogy is essential in converting normative moderation values into lived experiences within educational environments.

Another important conclusion of this study is that Islamic educational institutions function not only as centers of knowledge transmission but also as spaces for social transformation. The integration of moderation values into institutional culture, extracurricular activities, and community engagement programs demonstrates that education extends beyond formal classroom settings. Students are actively involved in social initiatives that promote intergroup cooperation and civic responsibility. This finding highlights the role of Islamic education in bridging religious identity with multicultural citizenship. It also confirms that moderation is reinforced through experiential learning and social interaction, not solely through cognitive instruction.

However, the study also concludes that the implementation of religious moderation is not without challenges. The findings indicate the presence of ideological tensions, resistance to curriculum reform, and external influences from digital media that may promote polarized religious narratives. These challenges suggest that while Islamic education has strong potential to promote moderation, its effectiveness is influenced by broader sociocultural and technological environments. Educators and institutions must therefore continuously adapt their strategies to address emerging challenges, particularly those related to online radicalization and identity-based polarization.

The study further concludes that the integration of the three theoretical frameworks—Religious Moderation Theory, Transformative Education Theory, and Multicultural Education Theory—provides a comprehensive analytical lens for understanding the dynamics of moderation in Islamic education. These theories collectively explain how theological values, pedagogical transformation, and sociocultural diversity interact within educational systems. The synthesis of these frameworks demonstrates that religious moderation is a multidimensional construct that requires simultaneous attention to values, curriculum, and teaching practice. This integrative approach strengthens the theoretical contribution of the study and provides a more holistic understanding of Islamic educational transformation.

In relation to the research objectives, the study concludes that all objectives have been successfully achieved. The identification of moderation values within Islamic educational institutions reveals a strong commitment to inclusivity and balanced religious understanding. The analysis of curriculum structures confirms that moderation is systematically embedded within educational content. The examination of pedagogical practices shows that interactive and reflective teaching methods

effectively support value internalization. Additionally, the identification of implementation challenges provides important insights for future improvements in Islamic educational policy and practice.

The research also concludes that its findings contribute significantly to theoretical, academic, and practical dimensions. Theoretically, the study expands the discourse on Islamic education by integrating religious, pedagogical, and multicultural perspectives into a unified framework. Academically, it provides empirical evidence that enriches scholarly discussions on religious moderation and educational transformation. Practically, the study offers recommendations for educators, policymakers, and curriculum developers to strengthen moderation-oriented education through structured institutional strategies and innovative pedagogical approaches.

Overall, the central conclusion of this research is that strengthening religious moderation through Islamic education is achievable when supported by a coherent integration of values, curriculum, and pedagogy. Islamic education has the potential to serve as a transformative force in promoting tolerance, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies. However, this potential can only be fully realized through sustained institutional commitment, adaptive pedagogical strategies, and responsive curriculum development. The study ultimately affirms that Islamic education remains a vital instrument for shaping moderate, ethical, and socially responsible generations in contemporary global contexts.

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