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Strengthening Moderate Character and Inclusivity: Integrating Religious Moderation Values in Akidah Akhlag Learning for SDGs

Najamudin¹, Muhamad Abduh², Surahman Hidayat³

^{1,3}Universitas Ibn Khaldun Bogor, Indonesia

²Universiti Brunei Darussalam

¹najamudin@uika-bogor.ac.id, ²muhamad.abduh@ubd.edu.bn, ³surahman@uika-bogor.ac.id

Abstract

Objective: This study aims to comprehensively analyze the strategy of integrating religious moderation values in the learning of Akidah Akhlak and examine its impact on the formation of the character of students who are tolerant, inclusive, and with noble morals in the context of a pluralistic society in Indonesia. **Theoretical framework:** This study uses the concept of religious moderation, which includes tolerance, justice, balance, and national commitment associated with character education, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG 4 and SDG 16. **Literature review:** A literature review discusses the importance of religious moderation, the phenomenon of intolerance in the younger generation, and the role of moral faith education in shaping moderate character. **Methods:** The method used is a qualitative literature study with thematic content analysis supported by secondary quantitative data from national surveys. **Results:** The results of the study show that the systematic integration of religious moderation values through a multidimensional pedagogical approach has significant potential in improving the moderate and inclusive attitude of students. The main supporting factors include teacher professionalism, institutional commitment, and a conducive school environment, while the main challenges stem from the influence of external discourse outside the school and limited resources. **Implications:** This study emphasizes the importance of integrating religious moderation to prevent radicalism and strengthen social cohesion. **Novelty:** The novelty of this research lies in a comprehensive data-based pedagogical approach to learning Akidah Akhlak.

Keywords: religious moderation, value integration, islamic religious education, youth intolerance, sdgs.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, with its diverse society in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion, necessitates the understanding and practice of religious moderation as a fundamental pillar in maintaining national harmony and unity. This pluralistic reality demands that every individual develop attitudes of tolerance, mutual respect, and inclusivity [1]. This effort is not only crucial for national integrity but also aligns with global commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 16, which promotes peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. However, amidst this diversity, the challenges of intolerance and exposure to radical ideologies among the youth have become crucial issues requiring serious attention. Various national surveys present a worrying picture regarding these

challenges. For instance, the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) of UIN Jakarta found that 30.16% of university students in Indonesia have religious tolerance attitudes categorized as low or very low [2]. Meanwhile, a 2023 survey by the Setara Institute on high school students in five cities showed that although 70.2% of students were categorized as tolerant, 24.2% were classified as passively intolerant, and 5% as actively intolerant, with 0.6% potentially exposed to radicalism.² Data from INFID in 2020 also indicated a paradox: although 93% of youth generally reject intolerance and 94.4% reject religion-based extremism, 42.5% still exhibit discriminatory attitudes towards minority groups such as Shia and Ahmadiyya [3].

This condition indicates a gap between the idealism of religious education, which should instill values of tolerance and compassion, and the reality of attitudes among some young people. In the context of formal education, the Akidah Akhlak subject plays a strategic role in shaping student character that possesses not only cognitive intelligence but also spiritual maturity and moderate attitudes. Akidah Akhlak is a discipline focused on instilling correct basic beliefs (akidah) and forming noble character (akhlak) in accordance with Islamic guidance, which are essential foundations for developing a personality that contributes positively to sustainable development [4].

In the context of formal education, the Akidah Akhlak subject plays a strategic role in shaping student character that possesses not only cognitive intelligence but also spiritual maturity, noble morals, and moderate attitudes [5]. Akidah Akhlak is a discipline focused on instilling correct basic beliefs (akidah) about God and His teachings, and forming noble behavior and character (akhlak) in accordance with Islamic guidance. Both are essential foundations for developing a moderate personality, as a strong akidah will underpin tolerant, just, and public-interest-oriented (masalah ‘ammah) akhlak [6].

However, challenges arise when Akidah Akhlak learning tends to be doctrinal and lacks contextuality. Therefore, integrating religious moderation values, which are aligned with universal human values promoted by the SDGs, into the Akidah Akhlak curriculum and learning practices is crucial. Although the urgency of religious moderation has been widely discussed, research specifically examining its integration in Akidah Akhlak learning as a strategy to support the achievement of the SDGs still needs enrichment [7]. This study aims to fill this gap by deeply analyzing how religious moderation values can be effectively integrated, supported by empirical data, to foster a moderate character that is capable of contributing to social cohesion and national stability amidst global dynamics [8].

Although the urgency of religious moderation has been widely discussed, research specifically examining the models and effectiveness of its integration into Akidah Akhlak learning comprehensively, especially supported by recent empirical data on youth religious attitudes, still needs enrichment [9]. This study aims to fill this gap by deeply analyzing how religious moderation values can be effectively integrated into Akidah Akhlak learning, supported by empirical data analysis on intolerance challenges, and identifying pedagogical and policy implications. The novelty of this research lies in the synthesis of a multidimensional pedagogical approach (contextual, holistic, participatory, and digital technology) within the Akidah Akhlak learning framework, informed by the latest quantitative data analysis on intolerance challenges, and offering sharper, evidence-based recommendations for fostering moderate character [10]. The results of this study are expected to significantly contribute to educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers in designing religious education that is more relevant, inclusive, and effective in building social cohesion and national stability amidst global dynamics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept, Dimensions, and Indicators of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation, as a central concept in contemporary religious discourse in Indonesia, refers to religious attitudes and practices that adopt a middle path (*wasathiyah*) and avoid extremism in any form [11]. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs outlines four main indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. These indicators align with universal values including: tolerance (*tasāmuh*), which is the attitude of respecting differences in beliefs and willingness to coexist peacefully; justice (*al-'adl*), the ability to be objective and impartial; balance (*tawāzun*), a proportional attitude in viewing religious teachings, between text and context, rationality and spirituality, and individual rights and communal interests; and national commitment, reflecting loyalty to the state and constitution.

Several recent studies enrich the understanding of the dimensions of religious moderation. For instance, the implementation of values such as *tawassuth* (taking the middle path), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), and *syūrā* (consultation) is considered important in shaping a *wasathiyah* generation or moderate generation. Furthermore, the principles of religious moderation can be detailed into *tawassuth*, *tawāzun*, *i'tidāl* (straight and firm), *tasāmuh*, *musāwah* (equality), *syūrā*, *iṣlāḥ* (reform), *aulawiyah* (priority), *taḥaddur* (civilized), and *taṭawwur wa ibtikār* (dynamic and innovative). This variety of dimensions and indicators shows that religious moderation is not merely a passive or compromising attitude, but an active, dynamic, and comprehensive framework of thought and action. This demands an educational and internalization process that not only touches the cognitive aspect (knowledge about moderation) but also permeates the affective domain (attitudes and feelings about the importance of moderation) and psychomotor domain (concrete actions reflecting moderation in daily life).

Essence and Urgency of Akidah Akhlak Learning in Countering Extremism

The Akidah Akhlak subject in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has the fundamental goal of forming a strong belief (*'aqidah shahīhah*) and noble behavior (*akhlāq al-karīmah*) according to Islamic teachings [12]. Akidah, as the foundation of belief about Allah SWT, the pillars of faith, and unseen matters, serves as the main pillar for shaping students' worldview.³ Meanwhile, Akhlak focuses on implementing Islamic ethical and moral values in daily interactions, whether with God (*ḥabl min Allāh*), fellow humans (*ḥabl min al-nās*), or the environment (*ḥabl ma'a al-'ālam*) [13]. Therefore, Akidah Akhlak learning is not merely a transfer of knowledge but an internalization of values aimed at producing an *insan kamil* (perfect human being) [14].

The urgency of this learning increases in the modern era, where students face various information flows and ideologies that can erode noble values if not equipped with a strong and moderate foundation of akidah and akhlak [15]. A firm belief in Islamic teachings that are *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (a mercy to all worlds) will inherently foster tolerant, just akhlak that upholds human dignity, far from blind fanaticism and narrow exclusivism [16]. Thus, strengthening Akidah Akhlak with religious moderation values is not just a curriculum supplement but an essential prerequisite for producing citizens who are both religious and nationalistic, capable of contributing positively to national progress and civilization.

Integration with National Insight and the Pancasila Student Profile (P5)

The Merdeka Curriculum provides an ideal vehicle for this integration through its emphasis on the Pancasila Student Profile (P5). The P5 framework has six dimensions, including: 1) Faith, piety to God Almighty, and noble character, and 2) Global diversity. Official government documents explicitly state that a Pancasila Student "is moderate in their religious practice" and "avoids exclusive and extreme religious understandings and beliefs" under the element of "Morals towards Humanity" [17]. This provides a direct

mandate for this research's thesis, making the teaching of religious moderation an integral part of implementing the Merdeka Curriculum itself.

Theory of Value Integration and Innovative Pedagogical Approaches in Religious Education. Value integration in the curriculum is a systematic process of incorporating specific values into all educational components. Relevant integration models include the infused approach, where values are inserted into existing subjects like Akidah Akhlak; the hidden curriculum, where values are instilled through school culture and role modeling; and problem-based learning (PBL) and project-based learning (PjBL) approaches that allow value internalization through real experiences [18].

The initial manuscript identified several key pedagogical approaches: contextual (Contextual Teaching and Learning - CTL), holistic and affective, and participatory and dialogic. The use of digital technology was also emphasized as a means of spreading messages of moderation. Supporting research enriches these ideas. Studies on the use of technology in Akidah Akhlak learning show its potential in increasing student engagement and motivation. The integration of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework can help teachers design Akidah Akhlak learning that effectively utilizes technology (such as learning videos and PowerPoint presentations on religious moderation) to enhance student learning motivation. The role of technology in the transformation of Islamic education, in general, is also significant in improving the quality and accessibility of learning [19].

The use of technology in this context is not just as a tool for material delivery, but as a means to create more interactive, relevant learning experiences capable of developing students' critical thinking skills regarding contemporary religious issues. Given that extremist and intolerant narratives are also massively spread through digital platforms [6], Akidah Akhlak learning needs to equip students with critical digital religious literacy, the ability to critically analyze, evaluate, and respond to religious content online, as well as the ability to produce and disseminate moderate content as counter-narratives [20].

Participatory approaches, such as the Giving Question and Getting Answers (GQGA) method, group discussions, and sociodrama, can actively involve students in Akidah Akhlak learning, encouraging them to think critically and express their opinions [21]. The success of these participatory approaches and technology utilization heavily depends on teachers' readiness to transition from being the sole source of knowledge (single authority) to learning facilitators who guide and empower students. This role shift demands a change in teachers' mindset and continuous development of pedagogical competencies, particularly in facilitating sensitive discussions, managing collaborative projects, and integrating technology pedagogically, not just technically.

The Critical Role of Akidah Akhlak Teachers as Agents of Moderation and Their Challenges

Teachers play a central role not only as instructors (mu'allim) but also as educators (murabbī) and role models (uswah hasanah) [22]. In the context of integrating religious moderation, the professionalism of Akidah Akhlak teachers is crucial. Teachers must have a deep understanding of the concept of religious moderation, the ability to adapt learning methods to be relevant to student needs and contemporary challenges, and the ability to be models of moderate and tolerant behavior [23]. Research shows that PAI teachers have a strategic role as facilitators, motivators, and models in shaping moderate religious understanding among students.

However, in practice, Akidah Akhlak teachers face various challenges. Some include difficulties in determining objective and comprehensive attitude assessment instruments, time constraints amidst a dense curriculum, and difficulties in developing assessment criteria that can accommodate diverse student characters and backgrounds. Challenges also arise in fostering morals in the digital era, where students are exposed to various

information and influences from outside school [24]. Teachers' readiness to apply moderation values, both through personal behavior and opinions and through teaching techniques like social modeling and case studies, is a key factor. The discrepancy between the ideal role of teachers as agents of moderation and the practical challenges they face, including limited innovative pedagogical competencies, lack of supporting resources, and evaluation systems that may not fully support value internalization, indicates that efforts to strengthen religious moderation cannot solely be burdened on individual teachers [25]. Systemic support from schools, the government, and other related institutions is necessary.

Integration of National Insight in Islamic Religious Education

Integrating national insight into PAI, particularly in Akidah Akhlak learning, is another important aspect. Internalizing Islamic values based on national insight aims to create a peaceful national life (*dār al-salām*) and distance youth from radicalism. One applicable integration model is through the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in the Merdeka Curriculum. P5 themes like "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity) and "Suara Demokrasi" (Voice of Democracy) can be closely linked to the essence of PAI material, such as values of honesty, trustworthiness, the importance of consultation (*syūrā*), and tolerance (*tasāmuh*), which are then linked to dimensions of the Pancasila Student Profile like Faith, Piety to God Almighty, and Noble Character; Critical Reasoning; and Mutual Cooperation [26].

Islamic values relevant to national insight are not limited to ritual aspects but also cover personal, family, social, and economic life orders [27]. For example, Islamic teachings on justice, social care, cooperation in goodness, and the prohibition of causing mischief on earth all support the creation of a harmonious and civilized society. Integrating national insight into PAI provides a theological and practical basis for students to understand that being a devout Muslim is in line with being a good citizen, loving the homeland, and being responsible for national integrity. This approach can directly counter radical narratives that often pit religious teachings against state principles or promote transnational loyalties that ignore national commitment.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach with a library research type as the primary method, as outlined in the basic manuscript of this study. This approach was chosen for its relevance in deeply examining educational phenomena through the synthesis and interpretation of data available from various literary sources, thereby producing a comprehensive conceptual and theoretical understanding [28].

To enrich the context and demonstrate the empirical urgency of the problem under study, this research also integrates secondary quantitative data analysis. This data originates from published and credible national survey reports focusing on attitudes of tolerance, intolerance, and levels of radicalism exposure among youth, students, and university students in Indonesia. These survey data sources include institutions such as INFID, Setara Institute, and the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Jakarta.

Furthermore, the study employs a comparative case study analysis of religious education policies in Malaysia 21, Singapore 23, and Germany 25 to provide external benchmarks. Data sources include primary sources like government policy documents (e.g., PMA No. 3 of 2024 6, P5 framework 14) and survey reports 4, and secondary sources such as peer-reviewed academic journals and books. Data analysis utilizes thematic content analysis for qualitative literature and descriptive interpretation for quantitative survey data, with source triangulation to ensure the validity of conclusions.

Data sources in this study are categorized into two main types. First, primary sources, which include policy documents such as Laws, Government Regulations, and official policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia related to religious

education and religious moderation. Additionally, research reports or official guidebooks from government institutions or religious organizations focusing on religious moderation, as well as quantitative survey reports from the aforementioned institutions, are also categorized as primary sources.

Second, secondary sources in the form of scientific literature, including academic textbooks relevant to religious moderation, Islamic education, Akidah Akhlak pedagogy, value integration theory, and character development. Articles from peer-reviewed scientific journals from leading databases (such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Scopus, ERIC) discussing studies on religious moderation, the effectiveness of Akidah Akhlak learning, value integration strategies, challenges faced by PAI teachers, and the use of technology in education also form an important part of secondary sources.

The data collection procedure for the literature study was conducted systematically and iteratively, involving stages of identifying relevant keywords, comprehensive literature searching, selection and credibility evaluation of sources based on methodology and findings, and extraction of key relevant data from each selected literature. For secondary survey data, the process involved collecting published survey reports from relevant institutions, followed by extracting key quantitative data (such as percentages and key findings) relevant to the research topic.

The data analysis technique used is descriptive qualitative content analysis with a thematic approach for data derived from the literature study. These analysis stages include data reduction (selection, focusing, simplification, and abstraction of data), data presentation (organizing data into narrative form, thematic matrices, or conceptual schemes), conclusion drawing or verification (interpretation and formulation of conclusions based on emerging patterns and themes), and source triangulation to ensure the validity and objectivity of conclusions. For secondary quantitative data from surveys, the analysis performed is descriptive. This quantitative data is presented in summary tables and, if relevant for trend visualization, can be developed into simple graphs or infographics. This descriptive analysis focuses on interpreting these figures to highlight the scale of the intolerance problem and assert the urgency of intervention through moderation education. It should be noted that this study does not perform inferential statistical analysis on secondary survey data due to limitations as a user of such data. The combination of qualitative analysis from literature with the presentation and interpretation of quantitative data from surveys is expected to provide depth as well as breadth of understanding of the issue under study. Quantitative data helps establish "what" and "how large" the scale of the intolerance problem is, while qualitative data from literature explains "why" the problem occurs and "how" solutions through the integration of religious moderation in Akidah Akhlak learning can be developed and implemented. This combination aims to strengthen the validity of arguments and the overall urgency of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative Data Analysis: A Portrait of Religious Attitudes and Tolerance Challenges among Indonesian Youth

Analysis of various credible national survey reports presents a complex picture of religious attitudes and tolerance challenges among Indonesian youth. These data form an empirical foundation that underscores the urgency of strengthening religious moderation values through education.

Table 1. Summary of National Survey Data on Tolerance and Intolerance Levels among Indonesian Students/University Students (2020-2023)

Survey Institution & Year	Population/S ample	% Tolerant/F airly High	% Intolerant/ Low Tolerance (Details)	% Exposed/ Potential for Radicalism	Key Notes/Nuances
INFID (2020)	1,200 youth (18-30 yrs) in 6 major cities	93% agree with tolerance	42.5% discrimination against Shia/Ahmadiyya (down from 55.6% in 2016)	52% of terrorist convicts are youth	Strong rejection of religion-motivated violence (94.4%), but ambivalent on intolerance towards minority groups. The Internet is the main info source.
PPIM UIN Jakarta (2020)	2,866 university students in 92 HEIs	69.83% (fairly high)	30.16% (low/very low)	-	Social interaction with different groups positively correlates with tolerance.
Wahid Institute (cited 2017)	1,520 respondents (multi-stage random sampling)	-	57.1% intolerance towards disliked groups (up from 51% prev. year)	0.4% of the population is exposed to radicalism	39% of university students are exposed to radicalism (BIN data 2017). 24% univ. students & 23.3% students agree with NII.
Setara Institute (2023)	947 high school students in 5 cities	70.2% (tolerant)	24.2% (passive intolerant); 5% (active intolerant)	0.6% (potentially exposed)	Tolerance trend increased from 61.6% (2016). 56.3% agree Sharia law should be state-based. 74.4% disagree with calling other religions heretical.
MA Al Mujahidin Study (n.d.)	MA Students	78.18% (tolerant)	21.81% (less tolerant)	-	Tolerance from aspects of mutual acceptance, appreciation, and respect.

From the table above, it is evident that the majority of Indonesian youth, both high school and university students, generally maintain tolerant attitudes. The Setara Institute survey (2023) shows 70.2% of high school students are tolerant, and PPIM UIN Jakarta (2020) recorded 69.83% of university students with fairly high tolerance. Moreover, the INFID survey (2020) found that 93% of youth agree with tolerance and 94.4% reject religion-based extremism.

However, behind these positive figures lie several important notes indicating significant challenges. The percentage of youth with low tolerance or even intolerant attitudes is still considerably large. PPIM UIN noted 30.16% of university students with low tolerance, while Setara Institute found a combined 29.2% of high school students who are intolerant (passive and active) [29]. Furthermore, data from the Wahid Institute released in 2017 indicated that 57.1% of respondents showed intolerance towards disliked groups, an increase from the previous year. Concerns also arise from findings that some youth are exposed to radical ideologies or agree with the idea of a state based on a specific religion [30].

Factors correlating with intolerant or radical attitudes are quite diverse. A narrow and textual understanding of religion, focusing only on rules and prohibitions literally without understanding context and essence, can make individuals susceptible to extreme and radical religious interpretations. The influence of social media is also significant; the internet is a primary source of information for youth 5, but also a vehicle for spreading radical ideologies and hate narratives. Additionally, psychological factors such as identity crises among adolescents, making them easily swayed by new ideologies offering certainty and instant solutions, also contribute [31].

An interesting pattern emerging from this survey data analysis is a paradox in the religious attitudes of youth. On one hand, they generally reject violence in the name of religion and agree with the principle of tolerance in the abstract. However, on the other hand, some exhibit intolerant attitudes when faced with specific issues related to the religious practices of other groups, the existence of minority groups, or interfaith interactions in certain contexts. For instance, the INFID survey found that although the majority reject extremism, 42.5% of respondents still showed discriminatory attitudes towards Shia and Ahmadiyya followers. Similarly, research in Surabaya showed that although Muslim youth do not object to having non-Muslim neighbors, most feel uncomfortable extending religious holiday greetings to followers of other religions or donating funds for the construction of non-Muslim places of worship [32]. This indicates that the understanding of tolerance among some youth may still be superficial, selective, or not deeply internalized enough to be consistently applied in various concrete situations. Religious moderation education, therefore, must go beyond merely conveying definitions of tolerance; it must delve into case studies, simulations, and open dialogues on sensitive issues to build a more robust, critical, and applicable understanding.

Although the internet and social media play a major role as information sources and are often associated with the spread of radical ideologies, the INFID survey also revealed that the primary shapers of young people's religious understanding and awareness remain parents and religious teachers or Quranic tutors [33]. This finding is crucial as it reaffirms the central role of religious educators, including Akidah Akhlak teachers in schools, in instilling moderate values. It also underscores that school efforts will not be optimal without synergy with families. Thus, religious moderation strengthening programs in educational environments need to actively involve parents and equip students with critical digital religious literacy skills so they can sort and filter information received from various social media platforms.

Urgent Need for Integrating Religious Moderation in Akidah Akhlak Based on Empirical Evidence

The quantitative data presented above clearly demonstrate real challenges related to intolerant attitudes and potential exposure to extremist ideologies among Indonesian youth. These empirical findings serve as a strong justification underscoring the urgency to integrate religious moderation values more systematically, explicitly, and deeply into the learning process, particularly through the Akidah Akhlak subject. As described in the initial manuscript, Akidah Akhlak holds a strategic position as it directly aims to shape students' basic beliefs ('aqīdah) and moral character (akhlāq) [34].

If Akidah Akhlak learning focuses solely on doctrinal-normative aspects without being accompanied by the internalization of moderation values relevant to contemporary life contexts, the subject risks losing its relevance in addressing current challenges. Youth not equipped with a moderate, inclusive, and contextual religious understanding will be more vulnerable to hate narratives, provocations, and extremist ideologies that can threaten social harmony and national unity [35]. Therefore, integrating religious moderation values into Akidah Akhlak is no longer merely an option but a pedagogical necessity. Without appropriate and planned educational intervention, the negative trends of intolerance

manifested in these survey data could potentially erode social cohesion and national stability that have long been maintained.

Optimization of Multidimensional Pedagogical Approaches for Internalizing Moderation Values

To ensure that religious moderation values can be effectively internalized by students, the application of multidimensional and innovative pedagogical approaches in Akidah Akhlak learning is necessary. The initial manuscript identified several key approaches 3, which can be further elaborated with support from other research findings.

1. **Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Approach:** Akidah Akhlak learning must transcend the theoretical-dogmatic realm and be closely linked to students' real-life situations and relevant contemporary issues. For example, when discussing the concept of ukhuwah Islamiyah (Islamic brotherhood), teachers can connect it to issues of inter-religious unity in Indonesia, or integrate the value of justice (al-'adl) in the context of law enforcement and human rights. Another example is discussing the Medina Charter as a historical model of a pluralistic society that upheld tolerance and justice, then reflecting on Indonesia's current national condition [36]. This approach helps students see the relevance of religious teachings in solving social problems and developing critical attitudes towards intolerance phenomena they encounter.
2. **Holistic and Affective Approach:** Value integration targets not only the cognitive aspect (knowledge about moderation) but must also touch the affective (attitudes, feelings, and emotions) and psychomotor (actions and behavior) domains. Learning needs to be designed to stimulate empathy, care, and students' willingness to practice moderation values in their social interactions [37]. Activities such as conflict simulation and peaceful resolution, role-playing depicting interactions between individuals from different backgrounds, and deep self-reflection sessions can strengthen this affective dimension.
3. **Participatory and Dialogic Approach:** Encouraging open discussions, constructive dialogues, and case studies that actively involve students in analyzing various religious viewpoints and complex social issues is key [38]. This method trains students to think critically, present arguments politely, respect differences of opinion, and seek solutions together in the spirit of consultation (syūrā). Examples of applying participatory methods in Akidah Akhlak include using the Giving Question and Getting Answers (GQGA) technique, where students are encouraged to ask and answer questions related to the material, or through group discussions to address diversity issues and how to respond moderately.
4. **Utilization of Digital Technology and the TPACK Framework:** In the digital era, technology offers significant opportunities to enrich Akidah Akhlak learning and disseminate messages of moderation. This includes using educational videos, infographics, creating anti-SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup) hoax social media campaigns, and organizing safe and moderated online discussion forums [39]. The integration of the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework is important, where teachers not only master Akidah Akhlak content (CK) and pedagogical strategies (PK) but are also able to effectively integrate technology (TK) to achieve learning objectives. For example, teachers can use interactive PowerPoint presentations, learning videos about religious moderation practices in various cultures, or e-learning platforms to provide additional materials and relevant assignments [40]. This use of technology aims to increase learning motivation, student engagement, and facilitate a deeper understanding of moderation values.

Table 2. Comparison of the Effectiveness of Pedagogical Approaches in Internalizing Religious Moderation Values in Akidah Akhlak Learning

Pedagogical Approach	Brief Description	Potential Advantages in a Moderation Context	Potential Challenges/ Limitations	Specific Application Examples in Akidah Akhlak
Contextual (CTL)	Connecting material with students' real lives and contemporary issues.	Increases the relevance of religious teachings, motivates students, and develops problem-solving skills related to intolerance.	Requires teacher creativity in designing learning scenarios and the availability of contextual learning resources.	Analyzing SARA hoaxes from social media and discussing them from the Akidah Akhlak perspective; case studies of inter-religious conflicts and their solutions.
Holistic and Affective	Targeting cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects; stimulating empathy and care.	Encourages deep value internalization, forms moderate attitudes and character, not just knowledge.	Requires more time, is difficult to measure quantitatively, and requires emotional facilitation skills from teachers.	Conducting interfaith dialogue simulations; self-reflection on personal experiences related to differences; inter-religious social service activities.
Participatory and Dialogic	Actively involving students in discussions, case studies, and decision-making, training critical thinking.	Develops communication skills, polite argumentation, respect for differing opinions, and the ability to find solutions together.	Requires good classroom management, potential dominance by certain students, and needs teachers to be neutral and skilled facilitators.	Ethical debates on the limits of tolerance; group discussions analyzing films or short stories themed on diversity; the Giving Question and Getting Answers (GQGA) method on moderation issues.
Utilization of Digital Technology (TPACK)	Pedagogically integrating technology (videos, online platforms, social media) into the learning process.	Increases learning appeal, accessibility of learning resources, wider reach of moderation messages, and trains critical digital literacy.	Technology access gap, lack of digital skills in teachers/students, potential distractions, and risk of exposure to negative content.	Creating short video campaigns for "Peaceful Indonesia"; using e-learning platforms for discussing moderation materials; analyzing religious content on YouTube with teacher guidance using the TPACK framework.

A combination of these pedagogical approaches tends to be more effective than using a single approach in isolation. Synergy between approaches can create richer, deeper, and more transformative learning experiences. For example, project-based learning (PjBL) that is participatory can address contextual themes of inter-religious harmony, where students collaboratively use digital technology for research and product creation (e.g., short films or social media campaigns), and the process is designed to touch affective aspects and develop

a holistic understanding of moderation. Implementing such combined approaches requires teachers not only to master content and technology but also to possess skills in designing complex learning scenarios and dynamically facilitating student learning processes.

Comparative Perspectives: Lessons from International Religious Education Models

Analyzing religious education models in other countries provides valuable benchmarks.

Table 3. Comparative Overview of Religious Education Policies for Diversity

Country	Core Policy Approach	Key Curriculum Features	Strengths / Challenges
Indonesia	State-sponsored Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is mandatory for Muslim students.	National PAI curriculum with a new emphasis on moderation via P5.	Strength: Universal reach to Muslim students. Challenge: Risk of becoming doctrinal if not implemented innovatively.
Malaysia 21	Dual-track system: Islamic Education for Muslims, Moral Education for non-Muslims.	Separate curricula, but both aim to instill universal and national values.	Strength: Ensures all students receive value education. Challenge: Can inadvertently segregate students by religion.
Singapore 23	Secular approach: no religious instruction in schools; harmony values integrated into Character and Citizenship Education (CCE).	CCE is taught to all students, focusing on racial and religious harmony as part of national identity.	Strength: Maintains state neutrality and prioritizes national unity. Challenge: Heavy reliance on families and communities for religious education.
Germany 25	State-sponsored Islamic Religious Education, developed by universities, is taught in German.	Curriculum focuses on developing an integrated Muslim identity compatible with democratic values; it includes interfaith dialogue.	Strength: Proactively shapes a moderate, integrated "native" Islam. Challenge: Requires massive state investment in curriculum and teacher training.

This comparison reveals that Indonesia's model, with its state-sponsored PAI infrastructure, has immense potential. The challenge is to steer its practice towards the goals of the German model: fostering a religious identity that is contextual, moderate, and nationally integrated.

Broader Implications: Aligning Moderation Education with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Connecting this educational strategy to the SDGs elevates the discussion from a domestic policy issue to a contribution to a global framework.

1. SDG 4 (Target 4.7): Teaching tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and critical thinking is a direct implementation of "education for... a culture of peace and non-violence, [and] global citizenship".
2. SDG 16: Religious moderation education is a crucial upstream prevention strategy for achieving SDG 16. By fostering tolerance and reducing extremist recruitment among youth, it directly contributes to "significantly reducing all forms of violence" (Target 16.1) and building "peaceful and inclusive societies". Literature supports that religious moderation is a key catalyst for achieving SDG 16 by promoting dialogue and countering radicalization through education.

Comprehensive Implementation Strategy for Integrating Religious Moderation Values in Akidah Akhlak

Implementing the integration of religious moderation values in Akidah Akhlak learning requires a planned and comprehensive strategy, involving various elements within the education system:

1. **Development of Contextual Teaching Materials:** Akidah Akhlak materials need to be enriched with concrete examples, historical narratives, and actual case studies that highlight practices of tolerance, justice, balance, and national commitment in Islamic history and the Indonesian context. For example, in-depth discussions about the Medina Charter as the first constitution of a pluralistic society, stories of exemplary Nusantara scholars who were moderate and accommodative of local culture, or analysis of contemporary issues related to SARA (Ethnicity, Religion, Race, and Intergroup Relations) from a moderate Islamic perspective.
2. **Innovation in Learning Methods:** Teachers need to shift from monotonous lecture methods to more interactive and participatory methods. Some methods to consider include:
 - a. **Thematic Discussions:** Conducting guided discussion sessions on controversial yet relevant issues (e.g., the meaning of jihad in the modern context, limits of tolerance, attitudes towards differences in madhhab) to train students to think inclusively, present arguments logically and politely, and respect differing views.
 - b. **Analytical Case Studies:** Providing real cases related to intolerance, socio-religious conflicts, or hate speech on social media. Students are then asked to analyze these cases from the perspective of Akidah Akhlak and religious moderation principles, and formulate constructive solutions or attitudes.
 - c. **Project-Based Learning (PjBL):** Engaging students in collaborative projects themed on moderation, such as producing short videos about tolerance, creating "Peaceful Indonesia" campaign posters, writing reflective essays on experiences interacting with different groups, or organizing inter-religious social activities (with teacher guidance).
 - d. **Educational Visits and Interfaith Dialogues:** Organizing visits to other religious places of worship (if possible and with thorough preparation) or inviting figures from other religions/beliefs to dialogue at school (with teacher guidance and facilitation). These activities aim to foster empathy, direct understanding of diversity, reduce prejudice, and build communication bridges.
3. **The Role of Teachers as Role Models (Uswah Hasanah):** The exemplary behavior of Akidah Akhlak teachers in demonstrating moderate, tolerant, just, wise, and professional conduct in daily interactions (with students, fellow teachers, school staff, and the wider community) has a very significant influence, often more impactful than mere verbal knowledge transfer. Teachers must be living embodiments of the moderation values they teach.
4. **Habituation and Inclusive School Culture:** The entire school environment must be designed to encourage moderate religious practices, open dialogue, respect for differences, and togetherness. This can be realized through various means, such as:
 - a. Inclusive religious extracurricular activities that promote unity.
 - b. Celebration of religious holidays that are not merely ceremonial but also filled with activities that appreciate diversity and strengthen solidarity.
 - c. Implementation of anti-bullying programs based on religious and human values.
 - d. Development and enforcement of school policies that explicitly support a climate of tolerance, justice, and anti-discrimination.

5. Integration with Broader School Programs: Religious moderation values can be integrated with broader school programs, such as the Pancasila Student Profile Strengthening Project (P5) in the Merdeka Curriculum. P5 themes like "Bhinneka Tunggal Ika" (Unity in Diversity), "Suara Demokrasi" (Voice of Democracy), and "Bangunlah Jiwa dan Raganya" (Build a Soul and Body) provide an excellent platform for internalizing moderation values, national commitment, and noble character through contextual and relevant project-based learning.

Critical Analysis of Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Implementation

The successful implementation of integrating religious moderation values in Akidah Akhlak learning is influenced by various factors, both supportive and inhibitive.

Supporting Factors:

1. Teacher Professionalism and Competence: Teachers who possess a comprehensive understanding of the concepts and practices of religious moderation, supported by strong pedagogical competencies (ability to design innovative learning, facilitate discussions, use technology) and mature personalities (open, tolerant, fair, patient), are key assets.³ Studies show that PAI teachers capable of internalizing moderation values will be more effective in exemplifying and implementing them in learning [41].
2. Institutional Commitment and Support: The clear vision and mission of school principals and educational foundations in supporting the religious moderation agenda, manifested in school policies, adequate resource allocation (funds, facilities, training time for teachers), and the creation of a conducive school climate, are crucial for successful implementation [42].
3. Adaptive and Flexible Curriculum: A curriculum that provides space for teachers to adapt and innovate in material delivery and learning method selection, according to local contexts, student needs, and evolving contemporary issues, will facilitate more relevant and meaningful value integration [43].
4. Religious and Inclusive School Culture: A school environment that actively and consistently encourages moderate religious practices, dialogue among school members, respect for differences, and cross-identity togetherness will strengthen the internalization of moderation values among students [44].

Inhibiting Factors:

1. Influence of Social and Media Discourse Outside School: Radical ideologies, intolerant narratives, hate speech, and hoaxes widely spread on social media, within families, or in community settings can compete with or even delegitimize the moderation values instilled in schools. Students exposed to narrow and extreme religious interpretations from outside sources may resist moderate messages. This is the most complex challenge as it is beyond the direct control of educational institutions.
2. Limited Resources and Infrastructure: Lack of relevant, engaging, and moderate-perspective supporting teaching materials, minimal interactive learning media, or inadequate facilities to support innovative learning methods (such as computer labs or stable internet access) can be significant obstacles.
3. Suboptimal Teacher Understanding and Skills: Some Akidah Akhlak teachers may not fully understand the concept of religious moderation deeply or may find it difficult to translate it into concrete and effective classroom learning practices. Other challenges include difficulties in objectively and comprehensively assessing attitudes, and limited time for individual student guidance.
4. Less Comprehensive Learning Evaluation: Assessment systems are still overly focused on cognitive aspects (rote knowledge of religious teachings) without giving adequate

weight to measuring changes in attitudes, behaviors, and the internalization of religious moderation values, which can reduce the effectiveness of this integration program.

Table 4. Key Supporting and Inhibiting Factors for Implementing Religious Moderation Integration in Akidah Akhlak Education

Category	Key Factors
Supporting Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Teacher Professionalism & Competence (understanding of moderation, innovative pedagogy, mature personality).2. Institutional Commitment & Support (leadership vision, school policies, resource allocation).3. Adaptive & Flexible Curriculum (room for teacher innovation, contextual relevance).4. Religious & Inclusive School Culture (practice of moderation, dialogue, appreciation of diversity).
Inhibiting Factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Negative External Influences (intolerant discourse on social media, family, society).2. Limited Resources & Infrastructure (moderate teaching materials, interactive media, facilities).3. Suboptimal Teacher Understanding & Skills (conceptualization of moderation, pedagogical application, attitude assessment).4. Non-Comprehensive Learning Evaluation (dominance of cognitive aspects, neglect of affective & psychomotor).5. Challenges in Moral Development in the Digital/Pandemic Era (limited interaction, influence of online content).

Overcoming inhibiting factors, especially the influence of social discourse outside of school, requires a collaborative and cross-sectoral strategy. Schools cannot work alone. Strong partnerships are needed between schools, families, community leaders, moderate religious organizations, government, and mass media to jointly create a social ecosystem that supports the values of moderation, tolerance, and unity. This effort is also in line with the fact that curative deradicalization programs, conducted after someone has been exposed to extreme ideologies, often face various obstacles, are not yet optimal, and require substantial resources. This reality further strengthens the argument that investment in preventive programs such as integrating religious moderation in formal education, particularly through the Akidah Akhlak subject, becomes highly vital and strategic as an upstream prevention effort. If these preventive efforts are successful, the burden of downstream deradicalization programs is expected to decrease significantly.

Theoretical and Practical Implications for Developing Inclusive Religious Education Contributing to Social Cohesion

The integration of religious moderation values in Akidah Akhlak learning has broad implications, both theoretically and practically.

Theoretical Implications:

This research contributes to the development of several theoretical frameworks in religious education studies. First, it enriches the theory of value integration in religious education curricula by demonstrating how complex moderation values (including tolerance, justice, balance, and national commitment) can be embedded and internalized through core subjects like Akidah Akhlak. Second, this study offers a perspective on the application of critical pedagogy theory in the context of religious education. By encouraging students to critically analyze social issues related to intolerance, extremism, and injustice, and to reflect on religious teachings in that context, Akidah Akhlak learning can become a vehicle for empowering students to be positive social change agents. Third, the findings of this research add to a richer understanding of the dynamics of implementing religious moderation in formal education, particularly in identifying contextual factors influencing its success.

Practical Implications:

The positive impact of integrating religious moderation values in Akidah Akhlak learning is multifaceted. Individually, students are expected to develop tolerant and inclusive attitudes, characterized by the ability to accept differences, respect others' beliefs and practices, and interact constructively with individuals from various cultural and religious backgrounds. Case studies on the implementation of religious moderation programs in several Islamic schools in Indonesia show success in reducing intolerance levels among students and improving a more positive and harmonious school climate [45].

Furthermore, a moderate and comprehensive understanding of religion will fortify students against exposure to extremist ideologies and provocative narratives and reduce tendencies towards intolerant attitudes or even religion-based violence. The internalization of values such as justice, compassion, unity, and national commitment will shape individuals with noble character who contribute positively to national character building. At the communal and national levels, moderate students will become agents of peace and harmony in their families, schools, and communities. Collectively, this will contribute to strengthening social cohesion, reducing the potential for identity-based conflicts, and maintaining national stability.

Other practical implications include the need to develop religious education models that focus not only on ritual and doctrinal aspects (which are sometimes taught rigidly and dogmatically) but also place strong emphasis on developing social ethics, intercultural dialogue skills, appreciation for diversity, and critical thinking skills in addressing contemporary religious issues. The religious education model developed in Indonesia, with its emphasis on moderation and national context, has the potential to serve as a reference or at least a point of comparison for other countries facing similar challenges in managing religious diversity and preventing extremism. Although the socio-political context and education system in each country differ, Indonesia's experience in mainstreaming religious moderation through education can offer valuable lessons. For comparison, Singapore, as a country with a Muslim minority, also develops a unique approach to Islamic education aimed at fostering moderate thinking, openness, and inter-religious harmony, with significant roles played by institutions like madrasahs and mosques, as well as supportive government regulations.

CONCLUSION

This research confirms that integrating religious moderation values into Akidah Akhlak learning is a highly relevant, effective, and urgent strategy for shaping a moderate, tolerant, and inclusive student character in Indonesia. This urgency is underscored by empirical data on intolerance and is officially mandated by the Pancasila Student Profile (P5) framework and globally relevant through its alignment with the SDGs. A multidimensional pedagogical approach is the most effective way to internalize these values deeply. The success of this integration hinges on teacher professionalism and institutional commitment, though it faces significant challenges from external influences and resource limitations. Through the implementation of a multidimensional pedagogical approach including contextual, holistic, participatory approaches, and wise utilization of digital technology core moderation values such as tolerance (tasāmuḥ), justice (al-'adl), balance (tawāzun), and national commitment (al-muwāṭānah) can be internalized more deeply and meaningfully by students. The success of this integration process heavily depends on several key factors, particularly the professionalism and competence of Akidah Akhlak teachers as primary agents of moderation, and full commitment and support from institutional parties (schools and government). However, these efforts also face significant challenges, such as negative influences from social and media discourse outside the school environment, limited supporting resources, potentially suboptimal teacher understanding and skills, and a need for more comprehensive learning evaluation systems. The expected positive impacts of this integration include increased tolerance and inclusive attitudes,

strengthened resilience against radicalism and extremism, the formation of a noble national character, and the reinforcement of social cohesion and national stability. Thus, religious education, particularly through the Akidah Akhlak subject, plays a strategic role in building the foundation of a harmonious, adaptive, and civilized Indonesian society.

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Conflicts of Interest

All authors declare no conflict of interest.

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