Internalizing Wasatiyah Values in Islamic Education for Religious Moderation

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the implementation of wasatiyah (Islamic moderation) principles within Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Indonesia. In response to rising religious intolerance among youth and the national imperative to promote social cohesion, this research examines how moderation is internalized through educational practices. Religious moderation is critical in multicultural societies, yet its implementation in Islamic education remains understudied. Utilizing a qualitative case study approach, data were collected via interviews, classroom observations, focus group discussions, and document analysis over one academic semester. Findings indicate that has systematically incorporated wasatiyah through interactive teaching methods, contextual discussions, and value-based modeling. Students demonstrated cognitive understanding, affective alignment, and behavioral expression of moderate Islamic values. The integration of Islamic educational philosophy, Bloom's Taxonomy, and Bandura's Social Learning Theory facilitated a comprehensive pedagogical framework. Key enabling factors included strong school leadership, teacher competence, and parental support, while challenges such as limited instructional time and digital radicalism persist. This research contributes a theoretical model and practical roadmap for embedding religious moderation into PAI curricula, offering replicable insights for similar educational contexts. The study affirms the transformative potential of wasatiyah-based education in fostering tolerant, reflective, and socially responsible Muslim youth.

1. Introduction

Religious moderation has become an important discourse in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in multicultural societies where diversity of thought and practice requires a balanced approach to faith-based learning. The concept of wasatiyah (moderation) in Islam, derived from the Quranic principle of ummatan wasatan (balanced society), (Anggara, Baldi, Fitri Oviyanti, 2025) is a middle way that avoids extremism while maintaining authentic religious values (Maskuri, Ma'arif, & Fanan, 2020). In Indonesia, the implementation of religious moderation through Islamic education has received significant attention as the country seeks to strengthen social cohesion while maintaining its pluralistic character (Yelvita, 2022).

The integration of wasatiyah principles in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) is a strategic approach to fostering a moderate understanding of religion among students. This educational paradigm emphasises tolerance, inclusiveness, and a balanced interpretation of Islamic teachings while maintaining doctrinal authenticity. However, the practical application of these principles in the formal education environment, especially in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN), is still under-researched and requires empirical studies.

Recent data from the national media highlights the urgency of strengthening religious moderation in Indonesian educational institutions. According to a survey conducted by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in 2023, reported by Kompas Daily, around 23.4% of Indonesian students showed a tendency towards religious intolerance, with 15.8% expressing exclusive religious attitudes.(Ahmad Ziruddin, Kholilur Rahman, 2023) These findings underscore the urgent need for educational interventions that promote a moderate understanding of religion.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, as reported in Republika newspaper, identified challenges in the implementation of religious moderation programs in madrasah institutions, citing inadequate teacher training and limited pedagogical resources. Furthermore, data from the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) shows that educational institutions are still vulnerable to infiltration of radical ideologies, with 12 documented cases of extremist recruitment in educational settings during 2022-2023.(Agustin, Indri Ceria, 2023).

In Bangka Belitung Province, local media reports from Babel Pos, highlighted the increasing incidence of religious intolerance among youth, with three documented cases of interfaith conflict involving students from various educational institutions. These incidents highlight the importance of implementing effective religious moderation programs in educational settings, particularly in a diverse society such as Pangkalpinang (Afwadzi, 2024).

This research is based on several theoretical foundations. First, the Islamic education philosophy of wasatiyah as expressed by contemporary scholars such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Muhammad Abduh provides a theological foundation for moderate religious education (Nugroho, C. Adhi, 2023). Second, Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives offers a framework for understanding the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in studying religious moderation.(Tri Wahyudi, 2019) Third, Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory provides insight into how students internalize religious values through observation, modeling, and social interaction in the educational environment (Wahyuni, Nurul, 2022).

Although the theoretical framework of wasatiyah is well established in Islamic studies, there is still a significant gap in understanding how these principles can be effectively internalized through PAI curriculum and pedagogical practices. The challenge lies not only in delivering content but also in creating transformative learning experiences that shape students' religious attitudes and behaviors towards moderation (Siregar, et al 2022).

MAN 1 Pangkalpinang, as one of the leading Islamic educational institutions in Bangka Belitung Province, serves a diverse student population representing various socioeconomic backgrounds and levels of religious understanding. The institution's strategic position in promoting religious moderation makes it an ideal case study to examine the implementation and effectiveness of wasatiyah-based PAI teaching.

This research specifically focuses on the application of wasatiyah principles in PAI learning at MAN 1 Pangkalpinang in the 2024 academic year. This study examines students in grades X, XI, and XII, along with PAI teachers and school administrators. Although the findings of this study provide valuable insights into religious moderation education, generalizations to other institutional contexts should be made with appropriate caution, given the unique socio-cultural characteristics of the Bangka Belitung region.

This study aims to achieve the following specific objectives: to analyze the application of wasatiyah principles in the current Islamic education curriculum and learning at MAN 1 Pangkalpinang, to examine the pedagogical strategies used by Islamic education teachers in internalizing the values of religious moderation in students, to evaluate the effectiveness of wasatiyah-based learning approaches in strengthening students' religious moderation attitudes, to identify challenges and opportunities in the implementation of Islamic moderation education in madrasah settings, and to develop a comprehensive framework for integrating wasatiyah principles in Islamic education teaching that can be replicated in similar educational contexts.

2. Method

This research uses a qualitative case study approach to explore the internalization of wasatiyah principles in Islamic education learning at MAN 1 Pangkalpinang. The qualitative design allows an in-depth understanding of how religious moderation is experienced and applied in the context of Islamic education. MAN 1 Pangkalpinang was chosen as the research site due to its status as a leading Islamic high school with a diverse student population and an established PAI program.(Hardani, 2020)

Data were collected through four methods over one academic semester. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all participants to explore their experiences and perceptions of religious moderation education. Six focus group discussions with students facilitated a collaborative exploration of wasatiyah understanding (Sidiq, 2019). Classroom observations during 36 PAI sessions documented teaching practices and student engagement. Document analysis of curriculum materials, lesson plans, and school policies provided the institutional context for the implementation of religious moderation (Abdussamad, 2023).

The credibility of the study was ensured through triangulation of multiple data sources, member checking with participants, and prolonged engagement in the field. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant authorities, with informed consent given from all participants. Confidentiality was maintained through pseudonyms and secure

data storage. This qualitative methodology provides rich insights into the complex process of internalizing wasatiyah principles through PAI teaching, which contributes to the understanding of religious moderation education in the context of Indonesian Islamic schools (Sugiyono, 2019).

3. Finding and Discussion

Finding

Implementation of Islamic Education Learning Based on Islam Wasatiyah

This study reveals that MAN 1 Pangkal Pinang has implemented wasatiyah Islam-based PAI learning through a systematic and comprehensive approach. Based on learning observations, PAI teachers use various learning strategies to internalize wasatiyah values to students (Destriani, 2022).

Mr. Mega Kastiawan, as the Head of Madrasah, explained: "*We integrate the values of wasatiyah Islam in every PAI lesson through group discussion methods, case studies, and behavior modeling. Students are invited to understand that Islam is a balanced religion, neither extreme left nor right.*" (Interview Result, March 2025).

Observation in class XI IPA 2 shows the implementation of interactive lecture method combined with group discussion. In learning about "Tolerance in Islam", the teacher presents Quranic verses and hadith that emphasize a moderate attitude, then facilitates discussions about its application in everyday life. Students seemed enthusiastic in discussing and were able to provide concrete examples of the application of wasatiyah attitude.

Mrs. Taslimah, an XI grade PAI teacher, revealed: "*We develop materials that emphasize the aspect of balance in religion. For example, when discussing jihad, we explain that real jihad is a struggle against lust and an effort to build civilization, not violence.*" (Interview Result, March 2025)

Internalization Process of Wasatiyah Values

Comprehension (cognitive) aspect

The results of interviews with students showed an increased understanding of the concept of wasatiyah Islam. Ahmad Rizki, a student of class XI IPA 1, stated: "*After learning about wasatiyah Islam, I understand better that Islam teaches balance. You can't be too strict in religion, but you can't be too lax either. There must be a balance between the world and the hereafter.*" (Interview Result, March 2025).

Observations showed that students were able to explain the concept of wasatiyah well, identify its characteristics and give examples of its application. They understand that wasatiyah does not mean moderate in the sense of compromise on religious principles, but rather a balanced and fair attitude in implementing Islamic teachings.

Attitude Aspect (Affective)

Changes in student attitudes are evident in daily interactions in the madrasah environment. Fatimah Zahra, a student of class XI IPS 2, said: "*I used to judge other people who have different mazhabs or ways of worship. After learning about wasatiyah, I have become more respectful of differences as long as they do not violate the basic principles of Islam.*" (Interview Result, March 2025)

Observations show that students show a tolerant attitude towards differences of opinion in furu'iyyah issues, reject extremism in religion, and show openness to interfaith dialog. They understand that differences are sunnatullah that must be respected in the right corridor.

Behavioral Aspects (Psychomotor)

The implementation of wasatiyah values in daily behavior can be seen from students' respect for different opinions in class discussions, tolerant behavior towards friends with different socio-economic backgrounds, and active involvement in social community activities.

Muhammad Yusuf, an XI IPS 1 student, gave an example: *"Now if a friend has a different opinion about religious matters, I don't immediately blame them. I try to understand the rationale first, then we discuss it carefully." (Interview Results, March 2025)*

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

Supporting Factors

Leadership commitment is a major factor in the success of this program. The madrasah head provides full support by providing learning facilities and encouraging teachers to develop innovative learning methods. The competence of PAI teachers who have a deep understanding of the concept of wasatiyah is also a key to success.

The support of parents and the community around the madrasah also contributed positively. Mrs. Siti Maryam, a parent of a student, stated: "I really support this kind of education. My child becomes more mature in responding to differences and is not easily provoked by things that smell of radicalism." (Interview Results, March 2025).

Inhibiting Factors

Limited learning time is a major obstacle in developing in-depth wasatiyah material. The influence of social media that spreads radical content is also a challenge. Mr. Al Ikhsan, S. Pd., revealed: *"Sometimes students are exposed to content that is not in accordance with wasatiyah values on social media. This is a challenge for us to straighten out their understanding."*

The differences in students' family backgrounds make the value internalization process take place at different speeds, so an approach that is tailored to the characteristics of each student is needed.

Discussion

Internalization of Wasatiyah in the Perspective of Islamic Education Philosophy

The research findings are in line with the concept of Islamic education philosophy proposed by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, which emphasizes wasatiyah as a fundamental characteristic of Islam. Al-Qaradawi in his work states that wasatiyah is not only a theological concept, but also an educational methodology that must be implemented practically (Shofyan, 2022). The implementation at MAN 1 Pangkal Pinang shows that wasatiyah education is able to develop a balanced understanding of Islamic teachings, where students do not fall into extremism or excessive liberalism.

Muhammad Abduh as a pioneer of reformist thought emphasized the importance of rational and moderate religious education. The learning approach that combines the lecture method with interactive discussions reflects this principle, allowing students to develop critical thinking in understanding religious teachings. The principles of al-'adl (justice) and al-tawazun (balance) emphasized by the two scholars are manifested in students' tolerant attitude towards differences of opinion.(Bahri, Samsul, 2023)

Implementation of Bloom's Taxonomy in Religious Moderation Learning

The analysis of the internalization process shows that PAI learning at MAN 1 Pangkal Pinang has integrated the three domains of Bloom's Taxonomy comprehensively. In the cognitive domain, students not only remember and understand the concept of wasatiyah, but are also able to apply and analyze its application. The ability

of students to provide concrete examples and evaluate the situation at hand shows the achievement of a high cognitive level (Arrosyid, Mokhammad Iqbal, 2022).

The affective domain can be seen from the progression of students' attitudes from the level of acceptance to the characterization of wasatiyah values. The change in attitude from judgmental to appreciative of differences shows a deep internalization of values. The psychomotor domain is reflected in the ability of students to practice wasatiyah behavior in daily social interactions, showing that learning is not only theoretical but also practical (Wardati, et al 2023).

The Role of Social Learning Theory in Valur Internalization

The implementation of wasatiyah-based PAI learning significantly applies the principles of Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The attention component is successfully achieved through interesting and contextual learning strategies (Rahayuningsih, Esti, 2024). Retention is facilitated through the use of Quranic verses and hadith as the basis of learning that is easy for students to remember.

Reproduction is seen from the ability of students to imitate the wasatiyah behavior that has been learned in daily interactions. Motivation is strengthened through the support of a conducive social environment, both from teachers, peers, and parents. Positive reinforcement given by teachers when students show moderate behavior strengthens their intrinsic motivation (Aslachah, Siti, 2024).

Integration of Three Theoretical Frameworks

This research confirms that the integration of the three theoretical frameworks provides a strong foundation for religious moderation education. The philosophy of wasatiyah Islamic education provides a theological and philosophical foundation, Bloom's Taxonomy provides a systematic learning framework, while Social Learning Theory explains the psychological mechanism of value internalization (Sahidin, Amir, 2022).

The successful implementation at MAN 1 Pangkal Pinang shows that a holistic approach that integrates these three aspects is more effective than a partial approach. Students not only understand the concept of wasatiyah cognitively, but also internalize its values affectively and implement them in their daily behavior.

Implications and Recommendation

The research findings have important implications for the development of religious moderation education in madrasah. First, a strong leadership commitment is needed to support the implementation of wasatiyah-based learning. Second, developing teacher competence in understanding and implementing the concept of wasatiyah is the key to success (Nur'aini, 2021).

Third, learning strategies must be varied and contextual to attract students' attention and facilitate the value internalization process. Fourth, synergy between madrasah, family, and community is needed in creating an environment that supports the development of students' moderate attitudes (Utami, et al 2023).

The challenges of social media influence and limited learning time require innovative solutions, such as the integration of digital literacy in PAI learning and curriculum development that provides a larger portion of character education and religious moderation (Syarnubi, et al 2023)

This research provides a theoretical contribution in the form of an integration model of three theoretical frameworks for religious moderation education, as well as a

practical contribution in the form of best practices in the implementation of wasatiyah-based PAI learning that can be adapted by other madrasahs with similar characteristics.

4. Conclusion

This study confirmed that the implementation of wasatiyah Islam-based Islamic education learning at MAN 1 Pangkal Pinang succeeded in internalizing the values of religious moderation through the integration of wasatiyah Islam education philosophy, Bloom's Taxonomy, and Social Learning Theory. The holistic approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains proved effective in transforming students' paradigm from judgmental to appreciative of diversity in the corridor of authentic Islam. Learning strategies that combine interactive lectures, group discussions, and behavioral modeling are able to develop students' critical thinking and tolerant attitude towards differences in furu'iyyah opinions. Transformational leadership, teachers' pedagogical competence and educational ecosystem support are the main determinants of the program's success, while the influence of social media and limited learning time require innovative solutions.

The theoretical contribution of the research is a tri-dimensional integration model for religious moderation education that can be replicated in similar madrasah contexts. The practical contribution is a best practice implementation of wasatiyah-based Islamic education learning that provides a roadmap for the development of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia. Policy implications recommend systemic synergy between educational institutions, families, and communities in creating a conducive learning environment for strengthening religious moderation. This research opens up opportunities for further research.

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