

From Cognitive to Holistic: Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education at the Elementary Level

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Abstract

The problem of radicalism in the name of Islam requires the dissemination of moderate Islamic character education from the elementary level. This study aims to identify the implementation of moderate Islamic education for students at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Mambaul Islam (MI) Losari Soko, Tuban, East Java. The qualitative approach in this case study integrates Moderate Education Theory and Islamic Education Theory as the basis for perspective. Data was collected through data triangulation. The results of the study show that moderate Islamic education at MI Mambaul Islam is implemented through the internalization of moderate Islamic character-building values by combining the curriculum, teaching and learning processes, extracurricular activities, and habituation. This study contributes to the emphasis on moderate religious education at the elementary level holistically, so that it is not only cognitive but also integrated with the curriculum and the wisdom traditions of the institution's environment.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Religious Moderation, MI Mambaul Islam

Abstrak

Problem radikalisme atas nama Islam menuntut diseminasi pendidikan karakter keberagamaan Islam moderat sejak tingkat dasar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi implementasi pendidikan Islam moderat bagi peserta didik Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Mambaul Islam Losari Soko, Tuban, Jawa Timur. Pendekatan kualitatif dalam jenis studi kasus ini mengintegrasikan Teori Pendidikan Moderat dan Teori Pendidikan Islam sebagai landasan perspektif. Data dikumpulkan melalui triangulasi data. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan pendidikan Islam moderat di MI Mambaul Islam diimplementasikan melalui internalisasi nilai pembentukan karakter Islam moderat dengan memadukan antara kurikulum, proses belajar mengajar, ekstrakurikuler, dan habituasi. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada penekanan pendidikan keagamaan moderat di level pendidikan dasar secara holistik, agar tidak hanya pada aspek kognitif, melainkan diintegrasikan dengan kurikulum, dan tradisi kearifan lingkungan lembaga.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Moderasi Beragama, MI Mambaul Islam.

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of radicalism and indoctrination of extreme ideology from an early age has become a real challenge for education in Indonesia (Hardiansyah et al., 2025; Isabella & Nofrima, 2024; Malik, 2023; Muttaqin & Muttaqin, 2025; Yani et al., 2024). The takfiri ideology, which often undermines national unity, requires a concrete response through the strengthening of education based on the values of moderation (Abd Razak et al., 2025; Iyrot, 2025; Muslih et al., 2024; Musyahid & Kolis, 2023; Nuraniyah & Solahudin, 2023; Sugara, 2021).

Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah (MI) as a basic education level has a vital role because at this stage the character and mindset of students begin to be fundamentally formed (Sholikah et al., 2025; Sholikah & Aziz, 2024). As emphasized by Lessy et al. (2022), a moderate approach at the elementary school level is a necessity because students are in a crucial phase of distinguishing between good and bad values, so that the exploration of religious teachings must be carried out in depth to avoid narrow understanding (Lessa et al., 2022; Lessy & Rohman, 2022; Salsabila & Lessy, 2022).

The implementation of moderate Islamic education at Madrasah Ibtidaiyyah (MI) Mambaul Islam Losari Soko, Tuban, East Java is a manifestation of efforts to protect the younger generation from exclusionary ideologies (A. Fauzi, 2022; M. Fauzi, 2024). The main challenge faced is how to transform the abstract concept of moderation into everyday practices that can be understood by elementary school children. Contemporary research by Sugiarti and Ozay (2022) shows that the integration of moderate values in character education in elementary schools is effective if done through a multicultural approach, which instills respect for differences in identity from an early age (Retno Sugiarti & Ozay, 2022).

Theoretically, Islamic moderation or Wasathiyah is based on the pillars of al-tawassuth, al-tawazun, and al-tasamuh (Muhammad Miftah, 2023; Ramadhan Wahyu Setiawan & Muhammad Shohib, 2025; Ulfa & Sari, 2024). According to scholars such as M. Yusuf Qardawi, moderation is a balance between spiritual (ruhiyyah) and material (maddiyah) aspects. At a practical level, Nurhuda and Karimah (2023) emphasize in their study that conveying the message of moderation through real examples of multiculturalism is the best instrument for teaching that diversity is a gift from God, not a reason to dominate one another (Nurhuda et al., 2023).

The purpose of this study is to identify the implementation of moderate Islamic education for students at MI Mambaul Islam Losari Soko, Tuban, East Java. The qualitative approach in this case study integrates Moderate Education Theory and Islamic Education Theory as the basis for perspective. Data was collected through data triangulation. This study will formulate a model of moderation education based on spiritual habituation that can be used as a prototype for Islamic elementary education institutions.

Previous research related to moderate education in education has often focused on moderation at the university level, but recent trends show a shift towards primary education. Suprpto (2020) explains that the development of a moderate PAI curriculum in primary schools has been shown to produce students who are more tolerant, open to

dialogue, and able to reject disinformation or hoaxes (Suprpto, 2020). Furthermore, Cahyanti et al. (2025) emphasize the importance of using interactive media as an innovative strategy in instilling values of moderation in the alpha generation in madrasahs (Cahyanti et al., 2025).

Recent literature reviews indicate that the internalization of moderation values at an early age is a golden period. However, there is a significant *research gap*. Most previous studies, such as those conducted by Ahmad Sodikin and Muhammad Anas Ma'arif (2021), tend to focus on the university level (Sodikin & Ma'arif, 2021).

There is a scarcity of research that examines how *wasathiyah* values are transmitted in heterogeneous rural areas. As noted by Gunada et al. (2023), the main obstacle often lies in the absence of explicit written material in the curriculum, so that teachers' creativity in contextualizing values through local wisdom becomes a key factor that has not been widely researched (Agus Gunada et al., 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in the originality of its locus and focus, namely the integration between the religious ideology of the organization (Nahdlatul Ulama) and the *hidden curriculum* mechanism applied at MI Mambaul Islam Losari. Unlike general research in urban areas, this study explores how rural traditions become catalysts in strengthening the *tawassuth* attitude. Another novelty is the analysis of mitigation strategies for radicalism through "moderate spirituality habituation," which involves synergy between classroom learning and collective rituals in a diverse Muslim community. Therefore, this research is important to conduct.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study type to explore in depth the implementation of moderate Islamic education at MI Mambaul Islam Losari. Moderate Education Theory and Islamic Education Theory are used as a framework for analyzing descriptive verbal field data. The researcher acts as the main instrument in collecting concrete information directly from the research location to understand the construction of pluralism in PAI learning.

Data collection methods were carried out through participatory observation, in-depth interviews with school stakeholders, and curriculum documentation studies. The variables observed included the Teaching and Learning Process as an independent variable and the formation of moderate character in students as a dependent variable. The data analysis technique used the Miles and Huberman model (reduction, presentation, and verification) with a systematic narrative style to describe the direct influence of moderation implementation on student behavior.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Spirituality-Based Moderate Character Education

The implementation of moderation values at MI Mambaul Islam emphasizes a balance between physical and spiritual aspects (M. Fauzi, 2024). Based on Yusuf Qardawi's

perspective, strong spirituality is built through the habit of praying and praying in congregation to create a balance between individual and collective interests. This is in line with efforts to produce "intellectual scholars and scholarly intellectuals" through the integration of intellectual and religious aspects.

Moderate character education in this institution fosters the value of tolerance as an attitude of mutual respect for the uniqueness of each individual (Khubaid, 2024) . Students are taught to avoid bullying as a form of respect for differences. The internalization of these spiritual values is not only done explicitly in Islamic Education (PAI) lessons, but also through *the hidden* curriculum that is integrated into the school culture.

Through the hidden curriculum, the school subtly but consistently reinforces student discipline and social awareness. This practice of moderate spirituality is reflected in routine activities such as morning studies aimed at fortifying students' spirituality (Khubaid, 2024) . This character education emphasizes that being religious must be polite and loving towards fellow human beings regardless of differences in background, ethnicity, or religious organization.

The value of *al-tawassuth* is taught so that students develop a way of thinking that is neither rigid nor too free. The attitude of *al-tawazun* trains students to take wise actions after going through a process of careful consideration. Moderate spirituality in this madrasah includes teaching about the awareness that differences are a gift from God that should be appreciated, not contested (M. Fauzi, 2024) .Strengthening religious identity is done without claiming absolute truth that blames others. This is very important in the diverse Losari community to prevent social friction. Spiritual education is directed at forming a calm soul that is tolerant of the existence of other groups such as Muhammadiyah and LDII, which are neighbors of the madrasah (Maskup, 2024).

The implementation of moderate spirituality involves the role of teachers as primary role models in character guidance. Teachers ensure that all learning content is integrated with the values of Islamic moderation. Thus, students grow into individuals who do not prioritize ego in their thoughts and actions, but rather prioritize the common good and social peace (Khubaid, 2024) . This character education also emphasizes the principle of *al-adalah* or fairness in treating fellow friends. Sincerity or *al-ikhlas* becomes the spirit in every worship performed by students at school. Overall, the basis of spirituality that is built aims to prevent radicalism from an early age through an inclusive and humanistic understanding of religion (M. Fauzi, 2024).

The religious character that is formed includes a routine of prayer and salat that is carried out consistently every day. In addition, students are taught to have moral responsibility towards the environment and cleanliness as part of their faith. All these elements form a unified moderate character based on Islamic spiritual values that are profound and relevant to real life (Maskup, 2024).

The tradition of shaking hands and respecting teachers is a manifestation of the value of moderate *humility*. Students are trained to have good communication ethics, both with their peers and with older people. This is part of the formation of good character, which is at the core of moderate Islamic education at MI Mambaul Islam (Maskup, 2024).

Finally, strengthening spirituality provides students with mental resilience in facing negative external influences. With a foundation of moderate faith, students have a filter to sift through information that has the potential to divide unity. This success proves that spirituality is a key pillar in the successful implementation of moderate Islamic education at the elementary level (M. Fauzi, 2024).

Paradigm of Moderate Islamic Education

The concept of moderation in Islam is removed by the term *wasathiyyah* which represents the middle position, balance and justice. (Helmy, Kubro, et al., 2021). Afrizal Nur, referring to Al-Asfihani, explains that *wasathan* is equivalent to *sawā'un*, namely an attitude of being between two extreme poles that protects humans from excessive tendencies (*ifrāt*) or neglect (*tafrīt*). (Cahyo et al., 2024; Fitri, 2015; Jayana et al., 2022; A. Nur & Lubis, 2015; D. A. Nur & Mukhlis, 2015). In the context of education, this principle becomes a normative foundation for the formation of students' thought patterns so that they do not grow in radical or permissive reasoning, but within a proportional and civilized framework.

Ibn 'Asyur emphasized that *wasath* does not merely mean a structural position in the middle, but rather a value orientation that shapes a straight and non-excessive way of thinking (Aziz et al., 2019; Ibn 'Asyur, n.d.). The concept of *ummatan wasathan* (QS. al-Baqarah: 143) positions Muslims as a just and moral community that has the epistemic capacity to bear witness to civilization. In Islamic education, this meaning has implications for learning objectives that not only transmit religious knowledge but also shape moderate characters capable of interacting constructively with plural social realities.

Terminologically, moderation is understood as an attitude of avoiding extremes and choosing a middle path. However, in academic discourse, moderation is conceptual and contextual. Masdar Hilmy, citing John L. Esposito, states that the term moderate is not explicitly recognized in classical Islamic literature, so it needs to be understood through conceptual equivalents such as *al-tawassuṭ* (moderation), *al-qisṭ* (justice), *al-tawāzun* (balance), and *al-i'tidāl* (harmony).

In the context of Indonesian Islamic education, moderation is interpreted as a pedagogical orientation that rejects violence, prioritizes rationality, uses a contextual approach to texts, and opens up space for *ijtihad* as a mechanism for curriculum and learning adaptation (Hilmy, 2012; Jayana et al., 2022; Lessy & Rohman, 2022; Mumtahanah et al., 2026; Musyahid & Kolis, 2023).

Moderate Islamic education does not stop at the transfer of normative values, but is manifested in curriculum design, methods, and school culture. Hilmy formulated that moderation is reflected through non-dogmatic learning, openness to modern science, strengthening classroom democracy, respect for human rights, and critical dialogue between text and context. Thus, moderate Islamic education serves as a social instrument for building tolerance, harmony, and cross-identity collaboration from an early age (Hilmy, 2012; Sholikah et al., 2021; Sholikah & Latif, 2024).

Azyumardi Azra, as quoted by Toto Suharto, defines moderate Islam as a peaceful expression of religiosity that is friendly to modernity. When applied to education, this perspective leads to pedagogical practices that integrate Islamic values with global realities, without losing their normative identity. Yusuf Qardhawi emphasized that *wasatiyyah* is synonymous with *tawāzun*, namely the balance between spiritual and material dimensions, individual and social interests, doctrinal stability and the dynamics of change. In education, this balance is reflected in the integration of moral development, strengthening critical thinking, and developing students' social competencies (Aziz et al., 2021; Cahyo et al., 2024; Jayana et al., 2022; Muhammad Miftah, 2023; Ribeiro, 2014; Suharto, 2015).

However, moderation cannot be reduced to a passive, compromising attitude. Quraish Shihab emphasized that *wasatiyyah* is not indecision, but rather the pedagogical ability to combine gentleness with firmness (Helmy, Jumadil Kubro, et al., 2021; Muttaqin & Muttaqin, 2025). In the context of Islamic education, this means teachers must not only be tolerant facilitators but also firm educators instilling values, ethics, and academic discipline in a dialogical and humane manner.

Based on this construction, moderate Islamic education can be formulated as a pedagogical paradigm that rejects ideological extremism and moral permissiveness, prioritizing rationality, dialogue, proportionality, and non-violence in the learning process. Moderate Islamic education serves as an ethical and methodological framework for developing students who are religious, inclusive, critical, and adaptive to social change, while also being able to maintain harmony in a multicultural society.

Internalization of Moderate Islamic Religious Education Values at MI Mambaul Islam

The implementation of moderate Islamic education in this madrasah is carried out through three channels: formal curriculum, extracurricular activities, and habituation. In the formal curriculum, the value of moderation is incorporated mainly in the subjects of PAI and Keaswajaan. Teachers use a dialogical approach to instill the values of *I'tidal* and *Tasamuh*, ensuring that students understand that Islam is a religion of peace (Maskup, 2024).

Extracurricular activities such as Scouting are effective means of implementing social and national values. In Scouting, students are trained to work together without distinguishing backgrounds. In addition, non-formal religious activities such as reciting *istighosah* or *tahlil* are part of strengthening a moderate Aswaja identity while still respecting local traditions (Khubaid, 2024).

Daily habits or habituation are the key to successful implementation in this madrasah. Morning activities begin with the tradition of shaking hands, symbolizing respect. The existence of *Dhuha* and *Dzuhur* prayers in congregation strengthens collective spiritual discipline. This process indirectly shapes students' characters to be consistent and have high integrity in religion (M. Fauzi, 2024).

The aspect of social awareness is implemented through concrete actions such as visiting sick friends and helping those affected by disasters (Syaeun, 2024). The culture of

greeting and forgiving each other is emphasized to maintain unity. This is in accordance with the principles of *Ukhuwwah Islamiyah* and *Watanyah* taught by Nahdlatul Ulama as the ideological basis of the madrasah.

The implementation of *tawazun* values is seen in the scheduling of academics and talent development. In decision-making in the classroom, students are taught to hold discussions and *seek clarification* when conflicts arise. This educates students to be democratic and fair individuals from an early age, in line with Indonesian national values (Maskup, 2024).

The school involves parents in monitoring their children's character development at home through a communication book. This collaboration ensures that the value of moderation is not lost when students return to their families. The positive impact is the creation of a safe, comfortable learning environment that is free from the seeds of intolerance that disturb the surrounding community (M. Fauzi, 2024).

The output of this implementation is students with inclusive characters who consciously appreciate differences (Khubaid, 2024). Students no longer compare differences in beliefs negatively but consider them cultural riches. The religious character that is formed is not rigid but flexible and able to adapt to the social reality of rural areas.

Moderate Islamic education at MI Mambaul Islam has succeeded in preventing the growth of radicalism by providing a correct understanding of religion. This structured implementation proves that madrasahs can be at the forefront of maintaining diversity. The entire program makes religious values the spirit behind every activity at the school (Maskup, 2024).

The *tawassuth* attitude is manifested in the students' willingness to be friends with anyone regardless of their parents' organizational background. This is crucial in Losari, which has a diversity of Islamic mass organizations. Madrasahs act as unifiers that erode ideological barriers through joint educational activities (M. Fauzi, 2024). Overall, the implementation at MI Mambaul Islam shows that moderation is a way of life, not just a theory. This success contributes practically to the development of a diversity-friendly madrasah model in Indonesia. Instilling these values from an early age is a long-term investment for the future peace of the Republic of Indonesia.

The interpretation of the results shows that MI Mambaul Islam has successfully implemented an Islamic education model that is in line with the Theory of Moderate Education. The attitude of *al-tawassuth* helps students avoid extreme religious understandings, proving that basic education can be an agent of inclusive change. The concept of *al-tawazun* is seen in the integration of intellectual and spiritual education, ensuring the emotional maturity of students (Faisal, 2023; Salabi et al., 2023; Shidiq & Haryanto, 2024; Sholikhah & Istiani, 2024).

The practice of tolerance reflects the successful internalization of pluralism, where students respect differences out of awareness, not coercion (Aziz et al., 2015; Daniati et al., 2023; Erlangga, 2018). The use of *the* hidden curriculum contributes significantly to strengthening religious identity without rigid doctrination (Mujrimin & Aziz, 2025b;

Sholikah & Latif, 2024). This supports the literature that the school environment has a major influence on student morality.

This success is supported by the institution's background, which is affiliated with NU, which has a long track record of promoting moderation. Aswaja values form a strong foundation for formulating policies that are friendly to diversity (Mujrimin & Aziz, 2025; Ririn, 2025; Santoso, 2025). The impact is comprehensive character development, ranging from social awareness to an inclusive leadership spirit.

The *tabayyun* process taught trains students to think critically about information, a crucial skill in the era of disinformation to prevent hatred. When compared to Suharto's (2017) research, these findings reinforce the argument for the importance of "Indonesianization of Islam" in educational institutions rooted in local traditions (Mujrimin & Aziz, 2025a, 2025b; Suharto, 2017).

This study is in line with Fitri (2015) regarding the role of Wasathiyah Islamic education against takfiri, but at MI Mambaul Islam, the approach is more practical and habitual (Fitri, 2015). The findings on the effectiveness of *the hidden curriculum* are also in line with the study by Dini and Musthofa (2024), showing the universality of the hidden curriculum method in shaping Islamic culture (A. Fauzi, 2022).

This research also validates Rahman's (2016) view of local wisdom as the basis for moderation in primary education (Rahman, 2016). The difference is that this study provides a micro picture of the village of Losari, which has unique mass organization dynamics. This enriches the theory of conflict management based on moderate education at the grassroots level.

The theoretical implication is the need to integrate national moderation values with local religious practices. Practically, madrasah management must prioritize the exemplary role of educators. Teachers should not only teach but also serve as moral mentors who practice tolerance in every interaction with students.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the implementation of moderate Islamic education at MI Mambaul Islam Losari Soko Tuban is systematically implemented through the integration of the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and daily habits rooted in Nahdlatul Ulama values. Various moderate Islamic values are internalized, including *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, and *tasamuh*.

This study emphasizes the importance of a holistic strategy in implementing moderate religious education at the elementary school level, which not only focuses on the cognitive level but is also integrated through a hidden curriculum that is integrated with the local wisdom traditions of the school institution. In practical terms, this integrative strategy in the implementation of moderate Islamic education can be replicated by other educational institutions to fortify the younger generation. It is recommended that future research use mixed methods to quantitatively measure the level of success in internalizing these values on a broader regional scale.

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