



Mitigating the Risk of Radicalization: Management Strategies for Religious Moderation Programs in Islamic Boarding Schools

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ABSTRACT

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This study aims to explore the implementation of religious moderation values as a preventive measure against radicalism in Islamic elementary education. The research adopts a qualitative case study approach. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documents. The Findings show that key values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderation), *i'tidal* (balance), and *muwathanah* (civic responsibility) are systematically embedded in formal learning, religious practices, and school culture. Teachers and principals play vital roles as role models and facilitators who promote inclusive dialogue and critical thinking. Contextual teaching methods—such as open discussion, case studies, and reflective practice—help students internalize these values beyond theoretical understanding. Extracurricular activities further support character formation by encouraging cooperation, leadership, and respect for diversity. However, implementation is challenged by the absence of specific instructional materials, limited teacher training in diversity education, and the influence of unregulated digital content that may expose students to radical narratives. This study highlights the importance of incorporating religious moderation into Islamic elementary education as a means to counter radicalization. The findings suggest that educational institutions should prioritize teacher training, develop specific teaching materials, and enhance digital literacy to safeguard students from radical influences.

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INTRODUCTION

Radicalism has become a serious threat to the order of national and religious life. This ideology infiltrates various sectors, including educational institutions based in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools). Therefore, *pesantren*-based schools, as institutions that combine formal education and Islamic values,

have a strategic role in preventing radicalism (Ibda et al., 2024), (Sadiah, 2022). One practical approach is to implement the values of religious moderation in every aspect of learning and the daily life of the santri (students).

In recent years, the issue of radicalism has drawn serious attention in the education world, including within pesantren environments, especially at Pesantren Syamsul Jinan Besuki Situbondo. This phenomenon illustrates that certain groups can exploit religious enthusiasm without a profound and comprehensive understanding to disseminate ideas that contradict national and humanitarian values. Therefore, Rohma (2024) states that educational institutions play an important role in studying and examining religious moderation, one of which is in pesantren.

Religious moderation is a balanced approach to practicing religion, one that is neither extreme nor disrespectful of diversity. This moderation emphasizes the importance of tolerance, deliberation, and fairness towards others, both fellow Muslims and people of other religions. In the context of Islam, moderation is known as the principle of *wasathiyah*, which is a core teaching of Islam. The Middle Path, also known as *wasathiyah* in Islamic terms, is a religious approach that is neither extreme nor rigid, balancing textual sources with contextual realities and upholding human values (Ma`arif et al., 2022; Dian et al., 2023). The primary values of religious moderation encompass tolerance, nonviolence, respect for differences, and love for one's homeland.

One of the values inherent in religious moderation is tolerance; moderation entails not siding with any particular party, being impartial, and refraining from hatred towards other groups (Hasibuan, 2023). This principle is very relevant to be applied in pesantren to counteract radical narratives that often appear disguised in religious language. The urgency of religious moderation in pesantren is a place for shaping the character of santri (Saepudin et al., 2023). Here, Islamic values that embody mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil' alamin*) are instilled. If the values of moderation are not correctly implemented, there is an excellent potential for pesantren to be infiltrated by radical ideologies that exploit the religious zeal of young people. Therefore, education in moderation becomes the frontline of prevention. Pesantren are known as pioneers of national movements, tolerance, and the spread of peaceful Islam. However, the changing times demand pesantren to continuously strengthen their ideological resilience system so they do not become targets of radical ideological infiltration (Yaqinah, 2025).

Based on the results of initial observations conducted by researchers to Mrs. Mita Dwi Anjar Pratikta S.Pd as the principal of MI Syamsul Jinan Besuki Situbondo on May 4, 2025, several phenomena were found, including a lack of

understanding regarding the values of religious moderation and minimal social interaction in the school environment, especially at MI Syamsul Jinan. Strategies for Implementing Religious Moderation to prevent radicalism in Islamic Boarding Schools include: 1. Exemplary Teachers and Kyais: Teachers and kyais must be examples of being moderate. An inclusive, non-judgmental, and open attitude towards differences must be reflected in everyday life. 2. Habituation in the Life of Students: Students are trained to discuss, express opinions politely, and respect differences in views. Student deliberation forums and cross-group social activities can serve as a platform to practice the value of moderation. 3. Strengthening Extracurricular Activities: Extracurricular activities such as religious discussions, leadership training, and cultural arts can be effective media to strengthen moderation. Through this activity, students learn to express their opinions politely, respect differences, and channel positive energy within a diverse framework. This is a concrete step in building an inclusive and tolerant character.

MI Syamsul Jinan is an Islamic boarding school-based educational institution that has integrated the values of religious moderation into its learning system and the daily lives of its students. The implementation of moderation in this school is evident not only in the curriculum but also in the development of tolerance, openness to differences, and the instillation of a strong national spirit. The uniqueness of MI Syamsul Jinan lies in its combination of a traditional Islamic boarding school approach and modern formal education, making it a potential place to study how the values of moderation can be applied systematically and effectively. In the context of the increasing challenge of radicalism targeting the younger generation, particularly through education and digital media, it is important to examine how institutions such as MI Syamsul Jinan play an active role in fortifying students from extremist ideologies. Therefore, this study focuses on the implementation of the values of religious moderation as a strategy to counter radicalism in Islamic boarding schools, with MI Syamsul Jinan as a case study.

Based on previous research conducted by Juhaeriyah, it is stated that in the realm of education, Islamic boarding schools play a significant role and make a real contribution to Indonesia by fostering a comprehensive understanding of Islam (2022). The presence of Islamic boarding schools, in addition to their primary goal of promoting friendly and tolerant Islamic preaching, also aims to maintain a balanced social and cultural life (tradition), particularly in facilitating social transformation within the community surrounding the Islamic boarding school environment. Also, previous research by Raharja et al stated that Internalization of religious moderation for students of the Tahfidzul wa Ta'limul

Qur'an Islamic Boarding School of the Great Mosque of Surakarta to ward off radicalism is through the formation of an attitude of *tawassuth* (middle), *i'tidal* (not easily shaken), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *deliberation*, *ishlah* (reform), *muwathanah* (love of the homeland), *al'la urf* (anti-violence), and *i'tiraf bil urf* (2023). Rusmiati stated that the initial understanding of partners (Islamic boarding school communities) was that many were unfamiliar with the term "religious moderation," even though they were already substantially familiar with the values of moderation, having learned about them through studying the holy books (2022).

This research has significant differences compared to the study on the Internalization of religious moderation values at the Tahfidzul wa Ta'limul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School. This study focuses on MI Syamsul Jinan, a formal educational institution rooted in the Islamic boarding school system, which structurally implements religious moderation values through curriculum development, fostering a tolerant attitude, promoting acceptance of diversity, and instilling national values. The approach applied is a combination of the modern education system and Islamic boarding school traditions, making it a relevant response to the threat of radicalism targeting the younger generation, primarily through education and digital media. On the other hand, research at the Tahfidzul wa Ta'limul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School is more oriented towards the instillation of cultural and traditional moderation values, such as *tawassuth* (moderate), *i'tidal* (just), *tasamuh* (tolerant), and love for the homeland, which are formed through the process of character development in the daily lives of students.

The main differences between these two studies lie in the form of the institution, the approach used, and the context of the strategy for internalizing the value of moderation, where MI Syamsul Jinan prioritizes integration in formal education to protect students from radicalism in a planned manner, while the Tahfidzul wa Ta'limul Qur'an Islamic Boarding School emphasizes strengthening moderate Islamic values through Islamic boarding school culture. The objectives of this study are to: Describe the form of implementation of the values of religious moderation applied in Islamic boarding school-based schools. Analyze the role of the values of religious moderation in preventing radicalism in Islamic boarding school-based environments. Identify supporting and inhibiting factors in the implementation of religious moderation as a deradicalization effort. Provide strategic recommendations for Islamic boarding school managers in strengthening the values of religious moderation in order to create a peaceful and inclusive educational environment.

This research presents a novel approach in examining the implementation of religious moderation values specifically in Islamic boarding schools, not just in the context of traditional Islamic boarding schools. The focus of this research is not only on identifying moderation values, such as *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, or *muwathanah*, but also on exploring concrete strategies, pedagogical approaches, and the roles of teachers and educational institutions in integrating these values into the curriculum and school activities to systematically prevent radicalism. Thus, this research not only fills the existing literature gap but also makes a practical contribution to the development of Islamic religious education policies in Islamic boarding schools that are more responsive to the challenges posed by extremist ideologies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to provide an in-depth description of the process of implementing the values of religious moderation in preventing radicalism within the MI Syamsul Jinan environment, particularly among students in grades 4, 5, and 6. This approach was chosen because the researcher wanted to understand the meaning, perceptions, and experiences of educational actors in a real social and cultural context (Murdiyanto, 2020).

The research was conducted at Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI) Syamsul Jinan, a pesantren-based school located in [mention location if available]. The research subjects consisted of the madrasah principal, Islamic religious education teachers, class teachers, and students in grades 4, 5, and 6. Subjects were selected purposively, based on their strategic roles in the educational process and the development of religious values. Data were collected through several techniques, including observation (Abdussamad, 2021). Researchers directly observed the learning process, teacher-student interactions, and religious activities that incorporated the values of religious moderation. In-depth interviews: Conducted with the madrasah principal, Islamic religious education teachers, and several students in grades 4, 5, and 6 to explore their understanding and experiences related to values such as tolerance, *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *muwathanah*. Documentation study Researchers reviewed curriculum documents, lesson plans, textbooks, records of religious activities, and other supporting documents that showed the practice of religious moderation in the school. Data analysis employed the Miles and Huberman technique, which included three stages (Sugiyono, 2018): data reduction, Filtering, and summarizing data relevant to the research focus. Data presentation: Organizing data into narratives, matrices, and thematic categories for easy understanding.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Implementing the Values of Religious Moderation to Prevent Radicalism

This study reveals that the implementation of religious moderation values at MI Syamsul Jinan has been carried out through various educational approaches, both directly in learning and through religious and cultural activities of the school. The results of observations, interviews, and documentation show that the school has instilled values such as tolerance (*tasamuh*), a middle attitude (*tawassuth*), balance (*i'tidal*), and love for the homeland (*muwathanah*) to students in grades 4, 5, and 6.

The integration of religious moderation values at MI Syamsul Jinan in the 2024–2025 academic year has been carried out systematically in learning for grades 4, 5, and 6. Teachers consciously insert values such as tolerance, anti-violence, and love for the homeland in the subject matter, especially in the subjects of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), Aqidah Akhlak, and History of Islamic Culture. Classroom observations show that teachers actively relate material to real life, particularly when explaining differences in schools of thought, culture, and worship methods.

Interviews with teachers indicate that they receive internal training from the madrasah (Islamic board) on integrating the values of religious moderation. Teachers are trained to recognize potentially radical content and are taught how to respond to it with a persuasive and educational approach. This has resulted in more open, tolerant, and solution-oriented teacher-student communication patterns.

Extracurricular activities also play a crucial role in integrating the values of religious moderation. Activities such as scouting, Islamic study groups, and Islamic speech training are aimed at fostering leadership, cooperation, and empathy. In each activity, students are trained to work in heterogeneous groups and complete tasks together regardless of background.

Students live in multicultural dormitories, where they learn to live side by side with friends from different regions and cultures. These daily interactions serve as a highly effective medium for internalizing values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *tawassuth* (the middle path). Teachers use a thematic-integrative approach in delivering material.

Religious and extracurricular activities embodying the values of moderation are also implemented through routine school activities such as *tadarus* (Islamic recitation), congregational prayer, religious study groups, and Islamic competitions. Teachers actively incorporate moderate religious messages during daily activities such as congregational prayer and morning recitation.

Teachers and the principal are highly aware of the importance of stemming the influence of radicalism from an early age. Prevention is carried out through teacher training, strengthening the moderate vision and mission, and monitoring teaching materials and methods. Teachers receive direct guidance from the principal to integrate the values of religious moderation into all learning activities.

Interviews with students revealed that they are able to explain the meaning of tolerance and respect for differences in their own words. They cited concrete examples, such as not teasing friends who differed in prayer recitation or dress style. Some students expressed that they enjoyed participating in religious activities because they learned how to be kind to their peers and exemplified the importance of helping each other.

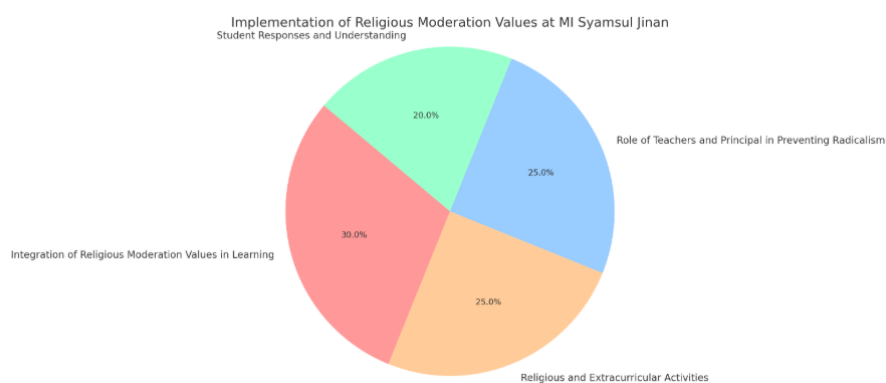


Figure 1. The Implementation of Religious Moderation Values

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors

One of the key factors supporting the implementation of the value of religious moderation at MI Syamsul Jinan is the strong commitment of the institution's leadership, particularly the principal and teachers. This commitment is manifested in the planning of a character education program that instills moderate, tolerant, and peaceful attitudes from an early age. The principal actively directs every aspect of religious activities and learning to reinforce these values. Furthermore, the presence of a pesantren (Islamic boarding school) environment integrated with the school system creates a conducive atmosphere for students to learn to appreciate differences directly. They live in a boarding community with diverse cultures and worship traditions, which naturally teaches the values of diversity and respect for others.

The role of teachers as role models and facilitators of moderate values is also a significant supporting factor. Teachers not only convey religious material in a normative manner but also foster open dialogue in the classroom, provide concrete examples of tolerant behavior, and incorporate messages of peace into

various learning activities. These efforts are consistently implemented to prevent the emergence of exclusive or discriminatory religious narratives. Furthermore, parental support also strengthens the implementation of religious moderation. Through parenting activities and parent-teacher meetings, schools convey the importance of a friendly and balanced Islam, thereby encouraging parents to support the process of developing inclusive and tolerant character in their children at home.

Extracurricular activities oriented toward cooperation, leadership, and tolerance, such as scouting, Islamic speeches, and thematic religious studies, also play a significant role in supporting the value of moderation informally. These activities provide students with opportunities to apply moderation in real life, rather than simply understanding the concept theoretically. However, implementing the value of moderation in schools presents several challenges. One is the lack of learning media and teaching materials that explicitly discuss religious moderation for elementary school-aged children. As a result, teachers must develop their appropriate teaching materials and methods, which inevitably requires time, energy, and creativity.

Research at MI Syamsul Jinan shows that the implementation of religious moderation values has been carried out systematically and structured through formal learning, religious activities, and daily habits. The active involvement of the madrasah principal and teachers in this process demonstrates that the success of character education is highly dependent on the role of key actors in the school. The learning methods implemented at MI Syamsul Jinan are quite adaptive to the needs of elementary-aged students and relevant to current social dynamics. Teachers use group discussions, role-playing simulations, and educational videos to illustrate the attitudes of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the principles of tolerance among religious communities. Religious and extracurricular activities, such as scouting, Islamic speeches, hadrah (Islamic calligraphy), and calligraphy, provide important spaces for practical internalization of the value of moderation.

The factors supporting the successful implementation of religious moderation at MI Syamsul Jinan reflect the importance of collaboration between educational stakeholders. The commitment of the principal and teachers provides a solid foundation, especially when teachers are given the space to innovate in delivering values-based material. Life in a multicultural Islamic boarding school environment also fosters social learning, as students become accustomed to interacting with diverse individuals from various backgrounds. However, the reality on the ground shows that this process is not yet fully supported by the national education system. The absence of teaching materials and thematic modules on religious moderation at the elementary level remains a

challenge that must be addressed immediately.

The most significant external challenge in implementing the value of religious moderation in the digital age is exposure to social media, which presents uncurated religious content, sometimes with exclusive and radical overtones. Several students at MI Syamsul Jinan have been identified as accessing online lectures with harsh narratives, which have the potential to cause value confusion. This situation reinforces the urgency of digital literacy support in the religious education curriculum. Furthermore, limited teacher training in systematically presenting the theme of religious moderation poses a serious obstacle. Teachers need more than just good intentions; they also require being equipped with pedagogical skills and standardized teaching materials.

Discussion

The findings indicate that MI Syamsul Jinan has effectively integrated religious moderation values into both its learning and extracurricular activities, contributing to a positive environment that is resistant to radical ideologies. This approach aligns with the work of Razum & Barudžija (2023) and Munawir et al. (2023), who argue that direct teaching and activities related to religious moderation can shape students' attitudes toward tolerance and respect for differences. MI Syamsul Jinan ensures that religious moderation is not only understood as a concept but also applied in students' daily lives, fostering an inclusive and peaceful school culture.

A key factor in the success of this integration is the commitment of the school leadership, particularly the principal and teachers. This commitment is reflected in their role in planning and guiding character education programs that instill moderate, tolerant, and peaceful attitudes in students. The principal actively directs all religious activities and learning to reinforce these values, which supports the view of Ibda et al. (2024) that strong leadership is necessary for embedding moderation values into the school's culture. The multicultural environment within the Islamic boarding school also plays a vital role in fostering tolerance and mutual respect among students, reinforcing the values of *tasamuh* (tolerance) and *tawassuth* (moderation).

Teachers at MI Syamsul Jinan play a critical role as both role models and facilitators of moderate values. They encourage open dialogue in the classroom and provide concrete examples of tolerant behavior, making religious moderation more tangible for students. This is consistent with Suhermanto (2023), who emphasizes that teaching approaches should go beyond the normative and incorporate practical examples. Additionally, the support of parents through parenting activities and meetings helps extend the influence of religious moderation into the family sphere, creating a consistent message about

the importance of peace and tolerance.

Extracurricular activities, such as scouting, Islamic speeches, and religious study groups, further support the implementation of religious moderation. These activities provide students with real-life opportunities to practice the values of moderation, making the concepts more concrete and applicable. Aulia et al. (2024) highlight the importance of extracurricular activities in complementing classroom learning and shaping students' character. These activities not only promote leadership and cooperation but also allow students to internalize moderation values through interaction with peers from diverse backgrounds.

However, challenges remain in fully implementing religious moderation. One significant challenge is the lack of teaching materials specifically addressing religious moderation for elementary school students. Teachers often have to create these materials themselves, which can be time-consuming and resource-intensive. This reflects a broader issue in the national education system, where there is insufficient support for creating and providing thematic teaching modules on religious moderation at the elementary level.

The digital age also presents an external challenge, as exposure to uncurated religious content on social media can sometimes promote radical and exclusive narratives. The study found that some students at MI Syamsul Jinan had accessed online lectures with harsh religious narratives, highlighting the need for digital literacy support in religious education. Religious education curricula must include a focus on critical engagement with online content to prevent the spread of radical ideologies, as the digital media landscape often fosters ideological confusion among young students.

Lastly, limited teacher training in religious moderation is another barrier to the successful implementation of this approach. While teachers may have good intentions, they require the necessary pedagogical skills and access to standardized teaching materials to effectively convey the values of moderation. The findings point to the need for comprehensive teacher training and the development of educational modules on religious moderation. This necessitates collaboration between the government and educational institutions to equip teachers with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively teach these values. Despite these challenges, the success of MI Syamsul Jinan in integrating religious moderation provides a valuable model for other schools, though broader policy changes and increased national support are necessary to expand this approach across the education system.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of religious moderation values at MI Syamsul Jinan underscores the potential of pesantren-based education in fostering tolerance,

inclusivity, and peace among students. Through a systematic approach, religious moderation values are integrated into formal learning, religious activities, and daily routines within both the school and dormitory environments. The active involvement of the principal, teachers, and the broader school community has been crucial in ensuring that values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawassuth* (moderation), and *muwathanah* (citizenship) are not only taught but also practiced. Various learning strategies, including open discussions, case studies, and social simulations, have effectively promoted students' awareness of the importance of coexisting in a diverse society. This approach has been reinforced by extracurricular programs, which provide students with opportunities to express and internalize these values in real-life contexts.

However, challenges remain in the broader integration of religious moderation education, particularly due to the absence of targeted teaching materials and learning media at the elementary level. Teachers are often required to develop their own resources, which can be time-consuming and demanding. Moreover, the national curriculum's limited emphasis on moderation values and insufficient teacher training in multicultural education present structural barriers that hinder the sustainability of this approach. The influence of social media, which sometimes promotes provocative religious narratives, further complicates the situation. Therefore, to strengthen and expand the impact of religious moderation education, systemic support is necessary, including curriculum enhancements, the development of thematic modules, teacher training, and digital literacy programs. The model implemented at MI Syamsul Jinan offers valuable lessons for other schools and represents a crucial step in addressing radicalism, both locally and globally. For future research, exploring the scalability and impact of this approach across various educational settings is crucial for understanding how to best implement religious moderation on a broader scale.

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