



ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN PLURAL SOCIETIES: EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL HARMONY

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Abstract: Religious diversity has become a defining characteristic of contemporary societies, particularly in multicultural countries where individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds interact within shared social spaces. In such contexts, religious moderation plays a crucial role in maintaining social harmony and preventing intolerance or religious extremism. Islamic education is widely recognized as an important instrument for cultivating moderate religious perspectives and promoting peaceful coexistence in plural societies. This study aims to examine the role of Islamic education in strengthening religious moderation and promoting social harmony in multicultural communities. The research employed a qualitative library research approach by analyzing academic literature related to Islamic education, multicultural education, and religious moderation. Data were collected from scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and policy-related publications discussing the relationship between Islamic education and social harmony. The findings indicate that Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of tolerant attitudes, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive religious understanding. Educational institutions, including schools and pesantren, play a strategic role in fostering moderation values through curriculum design, character education, and community-based learning activities. The study highlights that Islamic education can function as an important social instrument for strengthening religious moderation and promoting peaceful coexistence within plural societies.

Keywords: Islamic education; religious moderation; plural society; religious tolerance; social harmony

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity has become one of the most prominent characteristics of contemporary societies. In many countries, individuals from different religious traditions, cultural backgrounds, and social identities interact within shared social environments. These interactions create opportunities for mutual understanding but also present challenges related to intolerance, social conflict, and religious polarization. Within this context, the concept of religious moderation has gained increasing attention as an important approach for promoting social harmony and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities.

Recent academic discussions have highlighted the growing importance of examining religious moderation within Islamic education from multiple perspectives, including curriculum development, institutional culture, and educational interaction within Islamic learning environments. These perspectives are also explored in the inaugural issue of *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Azzahro*, which presents several studies addressing moderation in Islamic education (Partahian, 2025).

In multicultural societies, religious moderation refers to balanced religious attitudes that emphasize tolerance, dialogue, and respect for diversity. This concept encourages individuals to practice their religious beliefs while maintaining openness toward other religious traditions. Religious moderation therefore functions as an ethical framework that enables communities to live together peacefully despite differences in religious beliefs and cultural practices (Azra, 2019). In societies characterized by pluralism, the development of moderation values becomes essential for preventing religious extremism and strengthening social cohesion.

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes toward religious diversity. Educational institutions serve as important environments for developing students' understanding of religion and their perspectives on social interaction. Through educational processes, students learn not only religious knowledge but also social values that guide their interaction with others in diverse communities. Islamic education, in particular, has the potential to contribute significantly to the cultivation of moderation values by promoting ethical teachings that emphasize compassion, tolerance, and social responsibility (Hidayat, 2020).

In Indonesia, Islamic education occupies a strategic position within the national education system. Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren, madrasas, and Islamic schools have long played an important role in shaping religious understanding among Muslim youth. These institutions provide religious instruction while also promoting ethical values and social responsibility within educational environments. Research shows that Islamic educational institutions can contribute to the development of inclusive religious perspectives that encourage peaceful coexistence within plural societies (Hefner, 2016).

The role of Islamic education in plural societies becomes increasingly important in the context of globalization and rapid social change. Contemporary societies are

characterized by increasing interaction among individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. These interactions require educational approaches that encourage dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for diversity. Educational scholars argue that Islamic education must adapt to these social transformations by promoting moderation values that support peaceful social relations (Mahfud, 2019).

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of moderation-based education in addressing challenges related to intolerance and religious extremism. Research indicates that educational environments that promote tolerance and intercultural dialogue can significantly influence students' attitudes toward diversity. Islamic education that integrates moderation values into learning processes helps students develop balanced perspectives on religion and encourages them to interact constructively with individuals from different backgrounds (Wajdi & Tobroni, 2020).

In addition, the development of multicultural educational approaches within Islamic education can strengthen the role of educational institutions in promoting religious moderation. Multicultural education encourages students to understand cultural and religious differences as part of social reality. Through educational practices that emphasize respect for diversity and social justice, students can develop inclusive attitudes that support peaceful coexistence in plural societies (Lubis, 2018).

Recent studies have also highlighted the importance of integrating moderation values into educational policies and institutional practices. Educational institutions increasingly adopt programs that promote tolerance, intercultural dialogue, and social cooperation as part of broader efforts to strengthen moderation values within society. These initiatives demonstrate that Islamic education can function as an important instrument for promoting social harmony and preventing the development of intolerance (Musyahid & Kolis, 2023).

Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions have the potential to contribute significantly to the development of social cohesion within plural societies. Through curriculum development, character education, and community-based learning activities, Islamic education can promote values such as empathy, respect, and social responsibility. These educational approaches help students understand religion as a source of ethical guidance that encourages peaceful interaction with others (Rahman, 2022).

Despite the growing recognition of the role of Islamic education in promoting religious moderation, many studies focus primarily on institutional practices or educational policies. Research that specifically examines how Islamic education contributes to social harmony in plural societies remains relatively limited. Understanding the broader social role of Islamic education in promoting moderation values therefore becomes important for developing educational strategies that support peaceful coexistence.

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the role of Islamic education in strengthening religious moderation and promoting social harmony within plural societies. By analyzing theoretical perspectives and previous

research on Islamic education and moderation values, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how educational institutions can contribute to the development of tolerant and inclusive communities in contemporary multicultural societies.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative literature-based research design to examine the role of Islamic education in promoting religious moderation and strengthening social harmony in plural societies. Literature-based research is widely used in educational studies to explore theoretical perspectives and analyze scholarly discussions related to social and educational phenomena. This approach enables researchers to synthesize ideas from various academic sources and develop a comprehensive understanding of specific research topics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The data for this study were obtained from academic publications discussing Islamic education, religious moderation, multicultural education, and social harmony. These sources included scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant policy documents that address the relationship between Islamic education and plural societies. The selected literature was chosen based on its relevance to the themes of religious moderation, tolerance, and educational strategies for promoting peaceful coexistence.

Data collection was conducted through a systematic review of academic literature by identifying key publications that discuss Islamic education in multicultural contexts. The collected literature was then examined to identify conceptual arguments and educational approaches related to moderation-based education.

The data analysis process employed qualitative interpretative analysis. This method involved categorizing the literature, identifying recurring themes, and synthesizing theoretical perspectives concerning the role of Islamic education in fostering tolerance and social cohesion. Through this analytical process, the study explains how Islamic education can contribute to strengthening religious moderation within plural societies.

RESULTS

This section presents the conceptual findings of the study concerning the role of Islamic education in strengthening religious moderation and promoting social harmony within plural societies. Based on the analysis of relevant academic literature, the findings highlight four important dimensions: the position of Islamic education in plural societies, the development of religious moderation as a social value, educational strategies for promoting interreligious harmony, and the broader contribution of Islamic education to social cohesion.

Islamic Education in Plural Societies

Plural societies are characterized by the coexistence of individuals and communities with diverse religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and social identities. In such environments, educational institutions play a crucial role in

shaping attitudes that encourage tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Islamic education, as an integral part of the educational system in many Muslim-majority societies, has significant potential to contribute to the development of inclusive religious perspectives.

Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren, madrasas, and Islamic schools serve not only as centers for religious learning but also as environments for character formation and social interaction. Within these institutions, students are introduced to Islamic teachings that emphasize ethical values such as compassion, justice, and respect for others. These values provide a moral foundation for developing moderation attitudes that support peaceful coexistence in plural societies (Hefner, 2016).

Furthermore, Islamic education in plural societies encourages students to understand religious diversity as part of social reality. Through educational processes that emphasize contextual understanding of religious teachings, students learn to appreciate differences and develop constructive attitudes toward individuals from diverse backgrounds (Hidayat, 2020). This educational perspective strengthens the role of Islamic education as a platform for promoting inclusive religious understanding.

Religious Moderation as a Social Value

Religious moderation can be understood as a social value that promotes balanced religious attitudes and responsible interaction within diverse communities. Moderation encourages individuals to practice their religious beliefs while maintaining openness toward others and respecting differences in religious interpretation. In plural societies, such attitudes are essential for maintaining social stability and preventing religious conflict.

Within Islamic education, moderation values are cultivated through the integration of ethical teachings and social awareness in learning processes. Islamic teachings emphasize principles such as justice, balance, and compassion, which form the foundation of moderation-based religious attitudes. Educational environments that highlight these ethical principles help students develop awareness of their responsibilities toward society and encourage them to engage constructively with others (Azra, 2019).

The development of moderation as a social value is also closely related to the cultivation of tolerance and empathy. Educational scholars argue that tolerance education can strengthen social cohesion by encouraging individuals to respect differences and engage in dialogue across cultural and religious boundaries (Wajdi & Tobroni, 2020). By integrating tolerance values into Islamic education, educational institutions contribute to the formation of inclusive and responsible citizens.

Educational Strategies for Promoting Interreligious Harmony

Educational strategies play a central role in promoting moderation values and strengthening interreligious harmony. Islamic educational institutions employ various learning approaches that encourage students to develop critical thinking, dialogue skills, and respect for diversity.

One effective strategy involves integrating multicultural perspectives into Islamic education. Multicultural education encourages students to understand social diversity and recognize the importance of cooperation among individuals from different backgrounds. Through discussions on cultural and religious diversity, students develop broader perspectives on social interaction and learn to appreciate differences as part of social reality (Lubis, 2018).

Another important strategy is the implementation of dialogical learning approaches. Dialogical learning encourages open discussion and reflection on social and religious issues, allowing students to explore different viewpoints in constructive ways. Such educational environments promote mutual understanding and strengthen students' ability to engage in respectful dialogue with others (Mahfud, 2019).

In addition, community-based learning activities can strengthen students' awareness of social responsibility. Educational programs that involve students in social engagement activities provide opportunities for them to interact with diverse communities and apply moderation values in real-life contexts. These experiences help students understand the practical importance of tolerance and cooperation in maintaining social harmony.

The Contribution of Islamic Education to Social Cohesion

Islamic education contributes significantly to the development of social cohesion within plural societies. Educational institutions that emphasize moderation values create learning environments that encourage cooperation, empathy, and responsible citizenship. These educational processes help students develop inclusive perspectives that support peaceful coexistence in multicultural communities.

Research indicates that Islamic educational institutions can function as important agents of social integration by promoting values of tolerance and mutual respect. Through curriculum development, character education, and community engagement programs, Islamic education can strengthen students' ability to interact constructively with diverse social groups (Rahman, 2022).

Moreover, Islamic education contributes to the prevention of intolerance and social conflict by encouraging balanced religious understanding. Educational approaches that emphasize ethical reflection and social responsibility enable students to view religion as a source of guidance for building harmonious relationships within society. Such perspectives strengthen the role of Islamic education as a foundation for developing moderate religious attitudes and inclusive social values.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Islamic education plays a vital role in strengthening religious moderation and promoting social harmony in plural societies. By integrating moderation values into educational practices, Islamic educational institutions can contribute to the development of tolerant communities that support peaceful coexistence among individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that Islamic education plays an important role in promoting religious moderation and strengthening social harmony in plural societies. In multicultural contexts where individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds coexist, educational institutions serve as important platforms for shaping attitudes that encourage tolerance and mutual respect. Islamic education therefore contributes not only to the transmission of religious knowledge but also to the development of social values that support peaceful coexistence.

From the perspective of social theory, plural societies require social mechanisms that encourage dialogue and cooperation among diverse communities. Scholars of pluralism argue that social harmony in multicultural societies depends on the ability of individuals to respect differences while maintaining shared ethical values that support collective life (Azra, 2019). Within this framework, education becomes a key instrument for cultivating attitudes that promote social cohesion. Islamic education, when oriented toward moderation values, can function as a medium for developing balanced religious perspectives that encourage constructive interaction within diverse communities.

The results of this study are consistent with previous research emphasizing the role of Islamic education in promoting tolerance and intercultural understanding. Studies indicate that Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren and Islamic schools contribute significantly to the development of inclusive religious perspectives among students. Educational environments that emphasize ethical teachings and social responsibility encourage students to develop respectful attitudes toward individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds (Hefner, 2016).

Furthermore, the findings highlight that moderation values within Islamic education are closely related to broader educational efforts to strengthen tolerance and multicultural awareness. Previous research suggests that educational programs that integrate multicultural perspectives can improve students' understanding of social diversity and strengthen their ability to engage constructively with others (Lubis, 2018). By incorporating multicultural values into learning processes, Islamic educational institutions create opportunities for students to develop empathy and social awareness.

Another important finding is the role of dialogical learning and social interaction in promoting interreligious harmony. Educational practices that encourage open discussion and critical reflection enable students to explore different perspectives and develop balanced views on religious issues. Such approaches help students understand that religious diversity should be addressed through dialogue and cooperation rather than conflict (Mahfud, 2019). These perspectives support the argument that moderation-based education can strengthen social harmony in plural societies.

In addition, Islamic education contributes to the development of social cohesion by promoting ethical values that guide individuals' interactions within society. Islamic teachings emphasize principles such as justice, compassion, and mutual

respect, which serve as foundations for responsible social behavior. When these ethical principles are integrated into educational practices, students are encouraged to understand religion not only as a system of belief but also as a source of moral guidance for social interaction (Hidayat, 2020).

The findings also highlight the importance of integrating moderation values within educational institutions' broader social roles. Islamic educational institutions often serve as centers of community engagement where students interact with broader society through social activities and community-based learning programs. These interactions provide opportunities for students to practice moderation values in real-life contexts and strengthen their understanding of social responsibility (Rahman, 2022).

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the growing discourse on religious moderation in Islamic education by emphasizing the broader social role of education in plural societies. While many previous studies focus on institutional practices or educational policies, this research highlights the importance of examining Islamic education as a social instrument for promoting peaceful coexistence. By analyzing the relationship between education, moderation values, and social harmony, this study provides a broader perspective on how Islamic education can contribute to the development of inclusive communities.

Furthermore, this study reinforces the argument that Islamic education has the potential to function as a bridge between religious commitment and social harmony. Educational environments that emphasize moderation values can help students develop balanced religious identities while simultaneously encouraging constructive engagement with diverse communities. Such perspectives demonstrate that Islamic education can contribute significantly to strengthening tolerance and promoting peaceful coexistence in plural societies.

Previous studies on Islamic education have highlighted various educational approaches that contribute to the development of religious moderation among students. Empirical research on pesantren education demonstrates that moderation values can be cultivated through the integration of spiritual education, civic learning, and communal interaction within Islamic boarding school environments (Partahian et al., 2025; Lubis et al., 2025).

Overall, the discussion indicates that the development of religious moderation through Islamic education requires comprehensive educational strategies that integrate ethical teachings, multicultural awareness, and dialogical learning. Through these approaches, Islamic educational institutions can cultivate students who possess moderate religious perspectives and are capable of contributing positively to the development of harmonious and inclusive societies.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic education plays a significant role in promoting religious moderation and strengthening social harmony within plural societies. In multicultural environments where individuals from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds interact, educational institutions serve as important

platforms for cultivating values of tolerance, dialogue, and mutual respect. Islamic education therefore contributes not only to the transmission of religious knowledge but also to the development of ethical awareness and responsible social attitudes among students.

The findings indicate that moderation values can be strengthened through educational approaches that integrate character education, multicultural understanding, and dialogical learning processes. Through these educational strategies, students are encouraged to develop balanced religious perspectives and constructive attitudes toward diversity.

Furthermore, Islamic educational institutions such as schools, madrasas, and pesantren have the potential to function as important agents of social cohesion. By integrating moderation values into educational practices and community engagement activities, Islamic education can contribute to the development of tolerant and inclusive societies that support peaceful coexistence in plural social contexts.

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