



Religious Moderation as a Strategy to Counter Radicalization: A Study of Islamic Education Students at Indonesia Higher Education

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of religious moderation as an effort to overcome radicalization among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students of UIN Walisongo Semarang. This research uses a descriptive qualitative method. This approach was chosen to describe and analyze the phenomenon of the implementation of religious moderation as an effort to overcome radicalization among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students of UIN Walisongo Semarang in depth which is designed to explore students' understanding of religious moderation and radicalism. The results showed that most students had a fairly good understanding of the concepts of radicalism (54%) and religious moderation (60%). The majority of respondents (65%) consider religious moderation to be very important in preventing radicalism in the educational environment, while the level of radicalization among students is considered low by (55%) respondents. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of inclusive Islamic Education in higher education. Theoretically, this research enriches the scientific treasures of Islamic education by integrating the concept of religious moderation as a preventive step against radicalism, while strengthening the conceptual foundation for the development of a nationalistic PAI curriculum. Practically, the findings of this research can be used as a reference for lecturers, PAI study program managers, and higher education policy makers in designing learning strategies that are able to fortify students from the influence of radicalism, so as to create a generation of religious educators who are moderate, tolerant, and contribute positively to the harmony of national and religious life.

Kata Kunci:

moderasi beragama, pendidikan Agama Islam, radikalisme

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis implementasi moderasi beragama sebagai upaya penanggulangan radikalisme di kalangan mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) UIN Walisongo Semarang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif. Pendekatan ini dipilih untuk menggambarkan dan menganalisis fenomena implementasi moderasi beragama sebagai upaya penanggulangan radikalisme di kalangan mahasiswa Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) UIN Walisongo Semarang secara mendalam yang dirancang untuk menggali pemahaman mahasiswa tentang moderasi beragama dan radikalisme. Hasil penelitian

menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar mahasiswa memiliki pemahaman yang cukup baik tentang konsep radikalisme (54%) dan moderasi beragama (60%). Mayoritas responden (65%) menganggap moderasi beragama sangat penting dalam mencegah radikalisme di lingkungan pendidikan, sementara tingkat radikalisasi di kalangan mahasiswa dinilai rendah oleh (55%) responden. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi signifikan dalam pengembangan Pendidikan Islam yang inklusif di perguruan tinggi. Secara teoritis, penelitian ini memperkaya khazanah keilmuan pendidikan Islam dengan mengintegrasikan konsep moderasi beragama sebagai langkah preventif terhadap paham radikal, sekaligus memperkuat landasan konseptual bagi pengembangan kurikulum PAI yang berwawasan kebangsaan. Secara praktis, temuan penelitian ini dapat dijadikan acuan bagi para dosen, pengelola program studi PAI, serta pemangku kebijakan pendidikan tinggi dalam merancang strategi pembelajaran yang mampu membentengi mahasiswa dari pengaruh radikalisme, sehingga tercipta generasi pendidik agama yang moderat, toleran, dan berkontribusi positif bagi keharmonisan kehidupan berbangsa dan beragama.

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INTRODUCTION

Radicalization is widely recognized as a serious threat capable of undermining social harmony and destabilizing national integrity (Azra, 2016). This phenomenon is no longer confined to isolated extremist groups, but has increasingly penetrated broader segments of society, including university students who inhabit diverse and dynamic academic environments (Wahid Foundation, 2016). As part of a critical and transitional generation, students are particularly susceptible to ideological influence due to their ongoing search for identity, meaning, and life direction (Erikson, 1968). This developmental phase often involves exploration and experimentation, which, without adequate guidance, may lead to the internalization of rigid or extreme worldviews. The vulnerability is further intensified by limited and fragmented religious literacy, leaving students exposed to persuasive and systematically constructed extremist narratives (BNPT, 2021). These narratives are often disseminated through both direct interactions and increasingly sophisticated digital platforms, making them more accessible and difficult to counter. Empirical evidence supports this concern, as previous studies have documented the involvement of university students in radical networks and even terrorist activities (Setara Institute, 2018). Such findings highlight that higher education institutions are not immune to ideological infiltration, and instead may serve as critical arenas where competing narratives of religion, identity, and nationalism intersect.

Concrete cases further illustrate the urgency of addressing radicalization within academic settings. One prominent example is the arrest of Krisna Dwi Wardhana (KDW), also known as Abu Aliyah Al Indunisy, a student from the Faculty of Mathematics and

Natural Sciences at the University of Indonesia, who was apprehended by the Densus 88 Anti-Terror Police in June 2021 in Bogor, West Java (Kompas, 2021). He was reportedly affiliated with the Jamaah Ansharut Daulah (JAD) network and played a role in supplying materials for bomb-making. This case underscores that individuals with higher education backgrounds are not inherently protected from radical influences. Similarly, the involvement of five undergraduate students within the Pepi Fernando network demonstrates that educated youth can actively participate in extremist activities (Nasution, 2013: 78). These incidents are not isolated anomalies, but rather indicators of a broader and systemic issue that requires comprehensive intervention. Scholars such as Tibi (2012) emphasize that radicalization in intellectual environments reflects deeper ideological crises and failures in educational frameworks. Therefore, universities must not only function as centers of knowledge production, but also as spaces that actively cultivate critical thinking, tolerance, and resilience against extremist ideologies.

One of the primary factors contributing to the emergence of radical attitudes is the lack of a deep, contextual, and inclusive understanding of religious teachings, coupled with environmental influences that reinforce intolerance (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). In many cases, religious doctrines are interpreted in a rigid and literal manner, detached from their broader ethical and historical contexts. This narrow interpretation often leads to exclusivist attitudes, where individuals claim absolute truth and reject alternative perspectives (Muqoyyidin, 2013). According to Qodir (2014), such extremism is characterized by resistance to dialogue, unwillingness to accept diversity, and a tendency to delegitimize other groups. In response to these challenges, the concept of religious moderation emerges as a crucial framework for fostering balanced and contextual religious understanding. Religious moderation encourages individuals to adopt a middle path, emphasizing tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for diversity. It serves not only as a cognitive guideline but also as an ethical compass that shapes attitudes and behaviors in a pluralistic society. Furthermore, it functions as an ideological safeguard that equips students with the ability to critically evaluate various streams of thought that may threaten national unity (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

This study is positioned as a response to existing gaps in the literature concerning the implementation of religious moderation in higher education contexts. Previous research has contributed valuable insights, yet often with differing emphases. Rahma Khoirunnissa (2022), for instance, highlights the general urgency of religious moderation education in addressing student radicalism, while Jumah Purnomo (2024) examines its integration within the Independent Curriculum framework at Islamic higher education institutions. Meanwhile, Aisyah Hanan (2022) focuses on the conceptual internalization of moderation values within Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Despite these contributions,

there remains a lack of in-depth analysis regarding how religious moderation is concretely implemented within PAI study programs as a strategic effort to counter radicalization. This study aims to fill that gap by systematically exploring the practices, impacts, and influencing factors of religious moderation among PAI students. Theoretically, it seeks to enrich the discourse of Islamic education by positioning religious moderation as a preventive framework against extremist ideologies. Practically, the findings are expected to inform educators, program administrators, and policymakers in designing effective pedagogical strategies that foster moderate, tolerant, and socially responsible graduates.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research method, which is intended to describe, record, analyze, and interpret phenomena that occur naturally without manipulating the research setting or providing specific treatment to participants (Moleong, 2017). This approach is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to explore deeply the implementation of religious moderation as an effort to overcome radicalization among students of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at UIN Walisongo Semarang. Qualitative inquiry emphasizes a holistic and contextual understanding of social phenomena, allowing the researcher to capture the complexity of students' lived experiences in relation to religious values and practices (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, this study adopts a descriptive design to systematically portray how religious moderation is understood and practiced in academic and social contexts. The focus is directed toward students' experiences, perceptions, and practices, which are inherently subjective and cannot be adequately measured using quantitative instruments (Sugiyono, 2019; Rahmaddani, 2025). By prioritizing meaning-making processes, this research seeks to uncover how students interpret religious moderation within their daily interactions and learning environments. In this sense, the qualitative method not only facilitates rich and nuanced data collection but also allows for flexibility in exploring emerging themes during the research process. Thus, this methodological choice aligns with the study's objective of providing an in-depth, comprehensive, and contextually grounded understanding of religious moderation and its role in preventing radicalization.

The subjects of this research consist of students majoring in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at UIN Walisongo Semarang, who were selected based on their relevance to the research focus and their active engagement in academic and social activities related to religious discourse. The selection of participants was conducted using purposive sampling, a technique that involves choosing informants based on specific criteria aligned with the research objectives rather than random selection (Sugiyono, 2019: 218). These criteria include students' exposure to religious moderation concepts, participation in campus religious activities, and willingness to share their experiences and

perspectives openly. The use of purposive sampling is particularly suitable for qualitative research, where the emphasis is not on the quantity of respondents but on the depth, richness, and relevance of the information obtained (Bungin, 2007). By carefully selecting participants who possess substantial knowledge and experience related to the topic, the researcher ensures that the data collected is meaningful and capable of addressing the research questions effectively. In addition, this sampling approach allows for the inclusion of diverse viewpoints, thereby enhancing the comprehensiveness of the findings. Through this method, the study aims to capture a wide range of insights into how religious moderation is perceived and implemented among students, as well as the factors that influence their attitudes toward radicalism within the academic environment.

Data collection in this study was carried out using two primary techniques to ensure comprehensive and credible findings. First, questionnaires were administered to gather preliminary data regarding students' understanding, attitudes, and general perspectives on religious moderation and radicalism (Arikunto, 2013). These questionnaires serve as an initial mapping tool to identify patterns and tendencies among participants before conducting deeper exploration. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted to obtain detailed and nuanced insights into students' experiences, interpretations, and practices related to religious moderation in both academic and social contexts (Sugiyono, 2019). The interviews were semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to express their views while still maintaining alignment with the research objectives. This combination of data collection techniques is intended to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings through source triangulation, which involves comparing and cross-checking information obtained from different methods (Moleong, 2017). Furthermore, the data analysis process follows an interactive model, involving data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, enabling the researcher to continuously interpret and refine findings throughout the study. By integrating multiple data sources and analytical steps, this research ensures a rigorous methodological framework that supports a thorough and credible understanding of the implementation of religious moderation among students.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Radicalism and Religious Moderation in a Student's Perspective

In the context of diversity and religious life in Indonesia, radicalism and religious moderation are often positioned as two opposing poles within a broader interpretive spectrum. Students do not simply fall into one category or the other; rather, their understanding evolves through layered interactions between formal education, peer influence, media exposure, and lived experiences. Radicalism, as defined by extreme views or actions that seek to transform existing social, political, or religious systems through intolerant or coercive means, represents a rigid and exclusionary worldview that

contradicts pluralistic values (Ainiyah, Nur 2013). In contrast, religious moderation emphasizes balance (*wasatiyyah*), openness, and respect for diversity, positioning itself as a mediating framework that accommodates differences without erasing identity. Students' interpretations of these concepts are therefore not static but dynamic, shaped continuously by institutional curricula, religious discourse, and digital narratives circulating through social media platforms. Moreover, these influences operate simultaneously across cognitive (knowledge), affective (attitudes), and behavioral (actions) domains, creating complex patterns of belief formation. As noted by (Anas, Herman 2020), the interplay of these factors significantly determines whether students develop inclusive or exclusive religious perspectives, highlighting the urgency of structured educational interventions.

Within this spectrum of understanding, students can generally be categorized into three dominant patterns: pro-radical, pro-moderation, and ambivalent orientations. The pro-radical group tends to align with rigid ideological frameworks, often shaped by selective religious interpretations and reinforced through closed social or digital networks. These students may exhibit a strong sense of certainty but limited openness to alternative viewpoints. Conversely, the pro-moderation group actively embraces pluralism, tolerance, and coexistence, reflecting internalization of inclusive religious values that promote harmony in diverse societies (Azami, Tomi 2018). The ambivalent group occupies an intermediate position, characterized by uncertainty, partial knowledge, or inconsistent attitudes toward both radicalism and moderation. This group is particularly because it represents a transitional space where educational interventions can have the most impact. The existence of these three categories has significant implications for educational policy and curriculum design. Integrating religious moderation values into learning materials, strengthening digital literacy to counter radical propaganda, and promoting experiential interfaith engagement are essential strategies (Akhmadi, Agus 2019). Furthermore, expanding empirical research through surveys, interviews, and case studies across diverse institutional contexts will enrich theoretical development and provide evidence-based recommendations.

Through the distribution of questionnaires examining students' understanding of radicalism and religious moderation, the findings reveal a nuanced landscape of self-perceived knowledge. A majority of respondents, accounting for 54%, indicated that they possess a sufficient understanding of radicalism, suggesting a baseline level of awareness among students. Meanwhile, 34% reported a very strong understanding, indicating a segment of the population that may have engaged more deeply with the concept through academic study or personal exploration. However, 12% acknowledged that their understanding remains limited, highlighting the presence of knowledge gaps that cannot be overlooked.

In parallel, the data on religious moderation demonstrates slightly higher levels of perceived comprehension. Approximately 60% of respondents stated that they sufficiently understand the concept, while 30% claimed a very strong understanding. Only 10% admitted to lacking adequate comprehension. These figures suggest that religious moderation, as a concept, may be more accessible or more frequently promoted within educational and social discourse compared to radicalism. Nevertheless, the reliance on self-assessment introduces potential biases, as respondents may overestimate or underestimate their actual understanding due to confidence levels, social desirability, or varying interpretations of what constitutes “sufficient” knowledge.

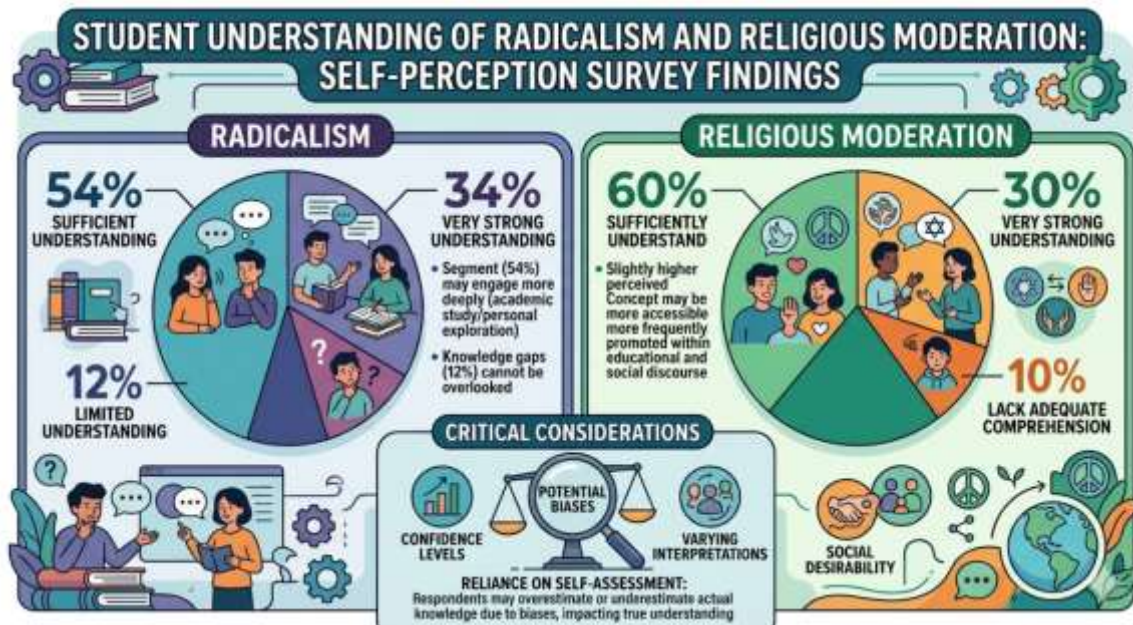


Fig 1: Student Understanding of Radicalism and Religious moderation

Despite the apparent clarity of these findings, a critical examination reveals several underlying limitations that must be addressed. First, self-reported understanding does not necessarily equate to deep or accurate comprehension. The concept of radicalism is inherently complex and contested, with varying definitions across academic, political, and religious frameworks. As a result, respondents’ claims of “sufficient” or “very good” understanding may reflect superficial familiarity rather than analytical depth (Ainiyah, Nur 2013). Second, the relatively small percentage of respondents who admit to not understanding—12%—may obscure a broader issue of overconfidence. Students may perceive themselves as knowledgeable due to exposure to simplified narratives, particularly through social media, without critically engaging with the underlying concepts.

Third, there is a crucial distinction between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Understanding radicalism conceptually does not guarantee the ability to

identify its manifestations in real-life contexts, such as online radical narratives or subtle forms of intolerance. Without triangulation through objective assessment tools, such as scenario-based evaluations or in-depth interviews, the data risks creating an inflated perception of campus readiness in countering radical ideologies.

As for the concept of religious moderation, the data indicates a relatively strong level of acceptance and familiarity among students, with 60% reporting sufficient understanding and 30% claiming a high level of comprehension. This suggests that the discourse of moderation has been successfully integrated into mainstream educational and social narratives, potentially through curriculum initiatives, public campaigns, and institutional policies promoting tolerance. Students who report a deep understanding often describe religious moderation as a balanced approach that avoids extremism while respecting diversity, aligning with core principles such as justice, wisdom, and compassion. However, the presence of 10% of respondents who lack understanding highlights persistent gaps that require targeted intervention. More importantly, even among those who claim to understand, there may be limitations in translating conceptual knowledge into practical strategies for preventing radicalization.

For instance, many students struggle to articulate concrete actions or educational approaches that can counter extremist ideologies. This indicates that current learning processes may emphasize theoretical definitions rather than applied competencies. Consequently, there is a pressing need for more comprehensive educational programs that integrate critical thinking, contextual analysis, and real-world problem-solving related to religious moderation.

Nevertheless, these findings also offer a strong foundation for optimism and future development. The high proportion of students who report at least a sufficient level of understanding indicates that awareness of radicalism and religious moderation has already been established within the academic environment. This initial awareness can be viewed as a form of social capital that institutions can leverage to develop more advanced and transformative educational strategies. One promising approach involves empowering students who demonstrate a high level of understanding to serve as peer educators, facilitating knowledge sharing and fostering a culture of critical dialogue. By designing participatory and context-based learning interventions, campuses can bridge gaps in understanding and promote collective resilience against radical ideologies. Furthermore, effective educational strategies must go beyond cognitive transmission of knowledge and focus on developing critical thinking, empathy, and ethical reasoning. These competencies enable students to engage with complex social realities in a nuanced and reflective manner. Ultimately, the success of counter-radicalism efforts depends on the ability of educational institutions to transform passive awareness into active, informed, and compassionate engagement within a diverse society.

B. The Urgency of Religious Moderation in Building Social Harmony

Religious moderation is an important concept in building social harmony in the midst of societal diversity, particularly in plural societies where differences in belief, culture, and identity intersect in everyday life. As an approach that emphasizes balance, religious moderation encourages inclusiveness, tolerance, and respect for differences in beliefs without sacrificing core religious values that individuals hold as sacred. This balance is crucial because it allows individuals to remain committed to their faith while still engaging constructively with others who may hold different perspectives. In the context of education, religious moderation is an effective strategy to prevent extremism and radicalism that have the potential to undermine social cohesion and disrupt peaceful coexistence (Halik, Abdul. 2016).

Educational institutions serve as strategic spaces where values are not only transmitted but also negotiated and internalized through interaction. Through moderation, individuals are encouraged to understand religion as a source of peace that prioritizes dialogue, empathy, and cooperation across cultures and beliefs. This understanding fosters mutual respect and reduces the potential for ideological conflict. Furthermore, religious moderation promotes critical thinking and openness, enabling students to navigate differences without resorting to hostility. In this way, the application of moderation contributes to the formation of a just, peaceful, and civilized society that is resilient against divisive ideologies and capable of sustaining long-term harmony (Elok, Novia 2022).

Through the distribution of questionnaires related to the prevention of radicalism in universities, particularly focusing on the learning of religious moderation and its implementation in daily life, the findings reveal a strong positive perception among students. The data showed that most students (65%) considered the value of religious moderation to be very important in preventing radicalism, while 30% considered it important, and the rest categorized it as quite important. This indicates a high level of awareness among students regarding the urgency of moderation in countering extreme ideologies. Similarly, as many as 68% of respondents considered religious moderation very important in daily life, and 28% considered it important, suggesting that students not only acknowledge its theoretical significance but also recognize its practical relevance. In efforts to prevent radicalism within educational institutions, these findings demonstrate a consistent pattern of strong support for moderation values. The repetition of these percentages across institutional and personal contexts reinforces the argument that religious moderation is widely accepted as a guiding principle. This confirms that religious education institutions that integrate the values of moderation into their curriculum are able to create a harmonious learning environment that is relatively free from ideological conflicts. Such institutions play a central role not only in preventing

radicalism but also in building sustainable social harmony in everyday interactions (Abidin, 2021).

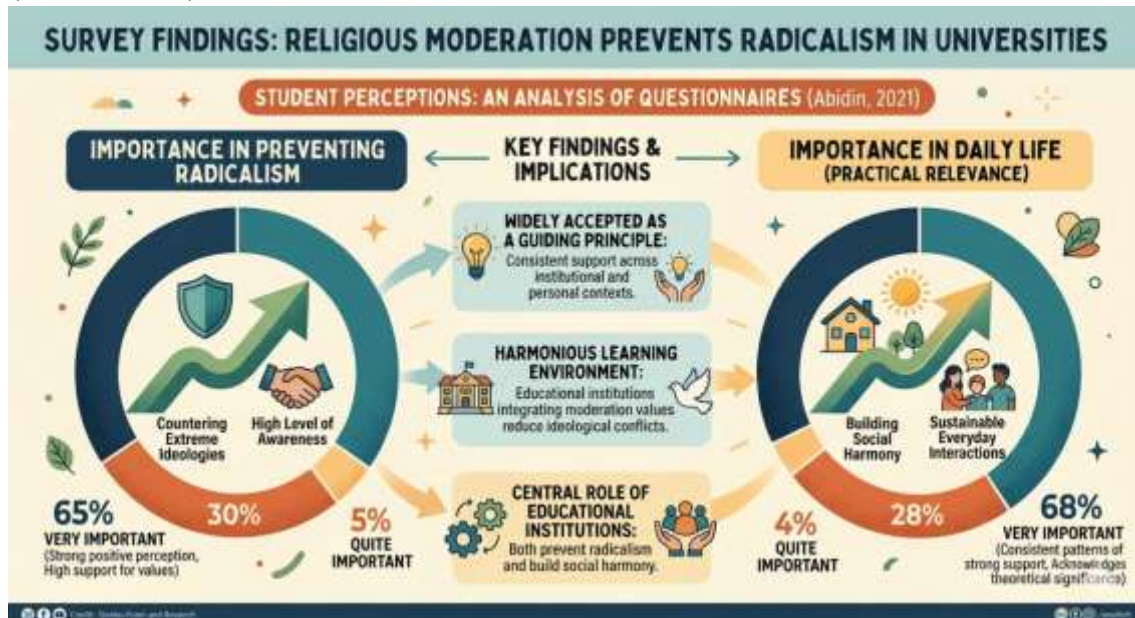


Fig 2: Religious moderation prevents radicalism

It is interesting to critically examine the data presented above, particularly the absence of any students who stated that religious moderation was “not important.” While this may initially appear as a highly positive outcome, a near-perfect consensus can also indicate the presence of conformity bias or normative pressure, where students may feel uncomfortable expressing views that deviate from what is socially or academically expected. In such contexts, responses may reflect perceived expectations rather than genuine personal beliefs. Furthermore, the slight difference between the perception of the importance of religious moderation in educational institutions (65% very important) and in daily life (68% very important) raises important analytical questions.

Do students truly perceive continuity between these two domains, or do they unconsciously separate “religious moderation as an academic discourse” from “religious moderation as a lived practice”? This distinction is crucial because it highlights the potential gap between knowledge and application. Third, and perhaps most importantly, data on perceived importance do not necessarily correlate with actual behavior. Individuals may intellectually agree with the principles of moderation, yet in real-life situations involving conflict, disagreement, or identity tension, they may still adopt exclusive or intolerant attitudes. Without supporting data on behavioral practices or lived experiences, the gap between attitudes and actions remains a significant gray area that requires further investigation.

However, despite these critical considerations, the percentage results that show an almost universal consensus on the importance of religious moderation, both in

institutional and personal contexts, reflect the emergence of a strong common ground for building an inclusive and tolerant campus culture. This shared understanding can serve as a foundational value that unites students from diverse backgrounds, reducing the likelihood of ideological fragmentation. It also indicates that the internalization of moderation values may extend beyond mere compliance with institutional discourse, suggesting a deeper level of acceptance among students.

When awareness of the importance of religious moderation is strengthened by authentic lived experiences, the campus environment evolves into more than just a space for academic learning. It becomes a dynamic arena for social transformation. In this context, the campus not only functions as a preventive mechanism against radicalism but also acts as an engine for cultivating a pluralistic society that prioritizes mutual respect and peaceful coexistence. This perspective is further reinforced by student testimonies that define radicalization as an extreme belief system that leads to violence and division, demonstrating their awareness of its dangers and their commitment to maintaining social harmony.

C. Students in the Midst of Radicalism

The level of radicalization among students can be understood as a gradual process that involves an individual's ideological transformation towards extreme views that can influence their attitudes and behaviors (Citra Lipia Dewi 2021). This process often begins with exposure to radical ideologies through the social environment, digital media, or certain groups, which is then followed by the internalization of these values as part of an individual's identity. College students, as a young age group with high curiosity and idealism, are easy targets for radical groups that exploit sensitive issues such as social, economic, or religious injustice to influence them. This level of radicalization is also influenced by the lack of education that equips students with critical thinking skills, religious moderation, and tolerance (Chadidjah, Sitti, Agus Kusnayat, Uus Ruswandi, and Bambang Syamsul Arifin 2021). Therefore, strengthening digital literacy, teaching moderation values, and open dialogue in the campus environment are important keys to preventing the development of radicalization among students. (Chamidi, Agus Salim)

The results of the questionnaire distributed to find out the level of radicalization among students showed that as many as 55% of respondents rated the level of radicalization among PAI students at UIN Walisongo low, 35% rated moderate, and 10% rated high. In terms of influence, it showed that most students (90%) stated that they had never felt affected by extreme or radical views during their college period, while 8% stated that rarely, and 2% stated that they had never.

Analysis of this questionnaire data shows several strengths as well as weaknesses that need to be observed. On the positive side, the data indicates a convincing trend that

the majority of students (55%) rate radicalization as low with 90% of students claiming not to be influenced by extreme views, which reflects the effectiveness of the academic environment in building moderate thinking. However, there are several methodological weaknesses that need to be noted. First, this data is highly dependent on the subjectivity of students' perceptions of the concept of "radicalization" without a clear operational definition, so that the assessment standards of "low," "moderate," or "high" can vary greatly between respondents. Second, there is an inconsistency between the assessment of the level of radicalization (10% rated it high) and the experience of being affected (only 2% have), which raises the question of whether students assess themselves or observe others. Third, the likelihood of social desirability bias is quite high, where respondents may be reluctant to admit exposure to radical ideologies due to social stigma. In addition, the data did not explore more deeply the profiles of the 10% of students who rated the level of radicalization as high and 2% who had been affected, even though this minority group is actually important for a more targeted prevention strategy.

Despite these methodological limitations, this data still provides an optimistic signal that the majority of PAI UIN Walisongo students have a strong ideological fortress against radicalization. The 90% of students who are not affected by extreme views shows that moderate and contextual Islamic religious education has been successfully instilled in the campus environment. This finding is a positive foundation to continue to strengthen the Islamic *wasathiyah* (moderate) narrative in the curriculum and student activities. In the future, institutions can take advantage of this momentum by remaining vigilant and paying special attention to vulnerable minority groups, developing stronger digital literacy and critical thinking programs, and creating a healthy and inclusive intellectual dialogue space. Thus, the campus is not only a place for knowledge transfer, but also a laboratory for the formation of moderate Muslim characters who are able to contribute positively to society and the nation. This position is consistent with Kiai Hasyim's educational philosophy, which conceptualizes knowledge as a moral and spiritual need for others that aims to maintain human dignity and social order (Ahmad Ainuri and Mirza Wijaya, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that religious moderation plays a highly strategic role in overcoming radicalization among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students at UIN Walisongo Semarang. The findings reveal that the majority of students possess a relatively strong and comprehensive understanding of both religious moderation and radicalism, indicating that they are not only familiar with these concepts at a theoretical level but are also able to contextualize them in real-life situations. Students show awareness that moderation values—such as tolerance, balance, inclusivity, and respect

for diversity—are essential in preventing the spread of radical ideologies within both academic environments and broader social interactions. This awareness is reflected in their attitudes and behaviors, which tend to reject extreme viewpoints and promote peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the level of radicalization among students is categorized as low, suggesting that institutional efforts to integrate religious moderation into the curriculum have been effective. These efforts include embedding moderation values into course content, encouraging critical thinking, and fostering open dialogue among students. As a result, students are better equipped to critically assess radical narratives and resist ideological manipulation. Overall, this study highlights that a well-structured educational approach that incorporates religious moderation can significantly contribute to building resilience against radicalism, thereby supporting the creation of a more harmonious and stable academic community.

This research also makes a significant contribution to the development of Islamic education by reinforcing the idea that integrating religious moderation into the curriculum is not merely an academic formality, but a transformative strategy capable of shaping a more tolerant and inclusive learning environment. The presence of moderation-based educational programs encourages students to engage in constructive dialogue, appreciate differences, and avoid ideological polarization that often leads to conflict. In this context, the role of educational institutions becomes crucial, as they are responsible for designing curricula that do not only focus on cognitive achievement but also emphasize character building and social harmony. Moreover, this study underscores the importance of collaboration among students, lecturers, and institutional leaders in strengthening and sustaining moderation values. Lecturers act as role models who demonstrate moderate perspectives, while students actively participate in discussions and activities that promote inclusivity. Institutional support, such as seminars, workshops, and community engagement programs, further enhances the internalization of these values. Consequently, religious moderation emerges as a foundational principle that can guide Islamic educational institutions in producing graduates who are not only academically competent but also socially responsible. This model can serve as a reference for policymakers and educators in other institutions seeking to develop educational frameworks that prioritize peace, tolerance, and constructive social engagement.

However, despite its valuable findings, this study has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. One of the primary limitations lies in its scope, as the research focuses exclusively on students of the PAI program at UIN Walisongo Semarang. This limited sample restricts the generalizability of the findings, as different Islamic educational institutions may have diverse social, cultural, and institutional characteristics that influence the implementation and effectiveness of religious moderation programs. Therefore, caution must be exercised when applying these results to other contexts.

Additionally, this study does not deeply explore the impact of external factors that may contribute to radicalization, particularly the influence of digital media and online platforms. In today's digital era, social media has become a significant channel for the dissemination of radical ideologies, especially among young people who are highly engaged with digital content. The lack of in-depth analysis on this aspect represents a gap that future research should address. Further studies are recommended to investigate how digital exposure interacts with educational interventions in shaping students' perspectives on radicalism. By expanding the research scope and incorporating these external dimensions, future investigations can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to effectively prevent radicalization in contemporary society.

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