

Implementation of Religious Moderation Values in Islamic Religious Education Learning at SDIT Dafa, Binjai City

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at Sekolah Dasar Islam Terpadu (SDIT) Dafa in Binjai City. Religious moderation has become one of the key educational agendas in Indonesia to prevent extremism, intolerance, and polarization among the younger generation. This research employed a qualitative approach with a field study design, utilizing observation, interviews, and documentation conducted from late June to early August 2025. The findings indicate that PAI teachers at SDIT Dafa apply the principles of religious moderation through three main strategies: integrating moderation values into teaching materials, applying dialogue- and deliberation-based learning methods, and strengthening tolerant and inclusive attitudes in religious extracurricular activities. These findings affirm that primary schools play a crucial role in shaping a generation that is moderate, tolerant, and capable of living harmoniously in diversity.

Keywords: *Religious Moderation; Islamic Religious Education; SD IT Dafa Binjai; Tolerance; Inclusivity*

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Introduction

Religious moderation is one of the strategic issues that has received considerable attention in Indonesian education [1]. This concept emerges as an effort to balance religious understanding to avoid extreme attitudes, whether excessively radical or excessively liberal [2]. In Indonesia's plural society, religious moderation is viewed as the key to fostering social harmony, national stability, and sustainable development. Primary education, as the foundation of children's character formation, holds a critical role in the internalization of these moderation values.

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs has designated religious moderation as a national priority program. Four main indicators—national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture—must be instilled early on through educational institutions [3]. This urgency stems from the growing cases of intolerance and religion-based discrimination in public spaces and social media. Without reinforcement from the education sector, young generations remain vulnerable to intolerant narratives that may threaten social harmony.

Within the scope of Islamic education, PAI serves a dual role. It not only functions as a subject to strengthen students' faith and devotion, but also teaches them how to coexist peacefully with others [4]. Thus, PAI teachers in primary schools carry a strategic responsibility—not merely teaching ritual worship but also instilling religious moderation values that are suitable for children's psychological development [5].

Binjai City, located in North Sumatra, is characterized by high social and cultural diversity. As a rapidly developing urban area, its population comprises various ethnic and religious groups living side by side. This condition presents both challenges and opportunities for schools in Binjai to provide inclusive, tolerant, and nationally oriented religious education. Consequently, Islamic integrated primary schools in the region become vital platforms for instilling moderation from an early age.

SDIT Dafa Binjai is one such institution that emphasizes the integration of general and religious education. The school focuses not only on academic achievement but also on instilling humanistic Islamic values. Through both curriculum and extracurricular activities, SDIT Dafa prioritizes character education grounded in religious moderation. This study seeks to examine how the school practically implements moderation values in PAI learning.

Religious moderation at the primary school level requires strategies different from those used at secondary or higher levels [6]. This is because primary school students are in the cognitive and affective development stages, requiring contextual, simple, and practical approaches. Teachers must be creative in selecting learning methods that can internalize moderation values, such as dialogue, educational games, and role modeling. Accordingly, this study emphasizes not only theoretical aspects but also classroom and school practices.

Previous studies have shown that Islamic integrated schools have great potential in promoting religious moderation because they integrate the strengths of religious and general education. However, most research tends to focus on curriculum or school policy aspects, while actual classroom implementation remains underexplored. By focusing on SDIT Dafa Binjai, this study provides an empirical picture of PAI teachers' strategies in embedding religious moderation values.

The urgency of this study also lies in the role of primary education as a formative stage of personality and thinking patterns. Values instilled from an early age will shape children's future social interactions. If children are accustomed to respecting differences, rejecting violence, and promoting togetherness from primary school, they are more likely to grow into moderate, tolerant, and unity-preserving individuals.

Moreover, this study is significant because it contributes practically to Islamic education in Indonesia. Its findings may serve as a reference for other schools seeking to develop PAI learning based on religious moderation. The case of SDIT Dafa Binjai offers valuable lessons and best practices that can be replicated in other primary schools across the country.

Based on these considerations, this study specifically aims to analyze how religious moderation values are implemented in PAI learning at SDIT Dafa Binjai. It also seeks to identify teachers' strategies, the integration of moderation values into teaching materials, and the impact of extracurricular activities on students' attitudes. Ultimately, this article contributes both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic education rooted in moderation at the primary school level.

Literature Review

In academic discourse, religious moderation is understood as a middle-ground stance in interpreting religious teachings—neither extremely radical nor excessively liberal. Its indicators include national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture [7]. In the context of Islamic education, moderation should be internalized through curriculum, teaching methods, and teacher role modeling [8]. Several studies highlight the strategic role of Islamic integrated schools in instilling moderation, given their integrative approach to general and religious education [9]. Nevertheless, implementation at the primary school level has rarely been studied in depth, thus creating a gap that this research seeks to address.

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative method with a field study approach. Data were collected through direct classroom observations in PAI, in-depth interviews with PAI teachers and the principal, and documentation of learning activities. The research took place at SDIT Dafa Binjai from late June to early August 2025. Data from interviews and observations were analyzed using the data reduction, data display, and conclusion-drawing techniques developed by Miles and Huberman [10]. Data validity was reinforced through source and method triangulation [11].

3.1 Integration of Moderation Values in Teaching Materials and Methods

The implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning at SDIT Dafa Binjai is clearly reflected in the integration of moderation concepts into teaching materials. PAI teachers do not only teach the normative aspects of worship but also relate them to social realities. For example, when teaching about morals, teachers emphasize that Islam guides its followers to be friendly, respectful, and to avoid excessive behavior. This demonstrates a systematic effort to contextualize moderation in students' daily lives.

In classroom observations in late June 2025, the teacher introduced the theme *"Differences in Prayer."* Instead of focusing solely on the procedures of worship, the teacher opened a discussion about the diversity of opinions among scholars. The teacher stressed that all these differences are valid and must be respected: *"We must not judge others as wrong just because their way of praying is different. What matters is sincerity of intention and adherence to Islamic guidance,"* the teacher stated during the lesson (Interview, June 30, 2025).

The learning methods applied by PAI teachers at SDIT Dafa strongly emphasize a dialogical approach. Teachers frequently position themselves as facilitators guiding children to understand differences, rather than merely as instructors delivering content. In this way, students are trained to express their opinions, listen to others, and draw conclusions collectively. This approach aligns with the principles of religious moderation, which prioritize deliberation and openness in dealing with differences.

One student even shared his experience after the lesson: *"I learned that not all Muslims worship in the same way, but they are still Muslims. So we should not mock or force others to follow our way."* (Interview, July 5, 2025). This testimony illustrates that the integration of moderation values is not confined to the classroom setting but has begun to be internalized in the students' understanding.

Beyond discussions, PAI teachers also use storytelling as a method to introduce moderation values. For instance, stories of the Prophet Muhammad respecting his Jewish neighbor or welcoming non-Muslims in Medina are presented as important examples for students. By narrating these stories, teachers seek to instill the understanding that Islam does not teach hostility but promotes peace and respect for all human beings.

In the context of worship lessons, teachers highlight the principles of balance (*tawazun*) and avoiding excess (*ghuluw*). When teaching voluntary fasting, for example, the teacher emphasized that fasting should not compromise children's health or interfere with their academic responsibilities: *"Moderation means balance—not being excessive but also not neglecting obligations. Children need to learn to place everything in proportion,"* explained one PAI teacher (Interview, July 15, 2025).

The integration of moderation values is also evident in learning assessments. Teachers evaluate not only students' cognitive abilities but also affective aspects such as respect and tolerance. In group assignments, for example, teachers observed how students collaborated despite differences in background. Findings showed that students became more open and accepting of diversity after being exposed to moderation values in their lessons.

Moreover, PAI teachers consistently connected Islamic teachings to the national context. While teaching *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), they emphasized the importance of safeguarding national unity amidst diversity. This corresponds to the moderation indicator of national commitment. Thus, PAI learning in this school not only fosters Islamic identity but also strengthens students' sense of national awareness from an early age.

An interview with the principal confirmed these findings. According to him, SDIT Dafa has been committed from the outset to integrating moderation values into every aspect of learning: *"We want our students not only to excel academically but also to grow into moderate individuals who respect differences and are not easily provoked by deviant teachings."* (Interview, August 2, 2025). This indicates that the implementation of religious moderation at the school is not just a teacher's initiative but an institutional policy.

From these findings, it can be concluded that the integration of moderation values in PAI teaching materials and methods at SDIT Dafa Binjai has been carried out systematically. Moderation values are instilled through teaching materials, dialogical learning methods, teacher role modeling, and attitude-based evaluations. This shapes students' understanding that Islam is a religion of peace, tolerance, and balance. Consequently, the school has successfully positioned PAI learning not merely as a transfer of knowledge but as an instrument for shaping moderate character from an early age.

3.2 Strengthening Tolerant Attitudes through Extracurricular Activities

In addition to the integration of materials and methods in the classroom, SDIT Dafa Binjai also instills the values of religious moderation through various extracurricular activities. These activities are designed to provide students with real-life opportunities to practice tolerance, cooperation, and social solidarity. The PAI teachers, together with the school, recognize that classroom learning must be reinforced with more contextual, hands-on experiences to ensure more effective internalization of moderation values.

One flagship program is the community service activity held in early August 2025. Students were invited to share food and school supplies with orphanages, including those managed by non-Muslim communities. Through this activity, students learned that generosity and compassion should not be limited by religious differences. A teacher explained: *"Children need to understand that social care is part of Islamic teachings, and we must help anyone regardless of their religion."* (Interview, August 5, 2025).

Another regular program is the *Children's Interfaith Friendship* activity. In this program, students engaged in simple discussions about the importance of respecting differences. Teachers emphasized that although they study in an Islamic institution, they live alongside a diverse society with various beliefs. Observations indicated that students responded

enthusiastically, with some even expressing their desire to have more friends from different religious backgrounds.

An interview with a fifth-grade student reinforced these findings. He said: *“I was happy when we visited the orphanage yesterday because I could play with new friends. Even though their religion is different, we could still play soccer and study together.”* (Interview, August 7, 2025). This statement shows that extracurricular activities successfully instilled tolerance in students’ ways of thinking and acting.

Beyond social activities, the school also organized Islamic cultural competitions combined with local art. For example, students were taught to perform *shalawat* accompanied by traditional Malay music. This integration of local culture taught students that Islam is inclusive and adaptable to cultural diversity. According to the principal, such activities are essential so that children understand from an early age that Islam does not oppose culture but rather embraces and preserves local wisdom (Interview, August 2, 2025).

In scouting activities, the values of moderation were also internalized through practices of cooperation and respect for differences. The scoutmaster explained that students were trained to work in heterogeneous groups and to respect each other’s opinions. The principles of deliberation, brotherhood, and social care were emphasized, in line with religious moderation’s focus on collective spirit and mutual cooperation.

One significant moment was recorded during the July 2025 scouting activity, when students were tasked with creating a mini-project on “Living Harmoniously at School.” Each group was asked to present ideas on how to maintain harmony in a school community with diverse backgrounds. Most groups emphasized respect, refraining from mocking peers, and cooperating in classroom cleanliness. This demonstrated that students were able to internalize moderation values through reflective activities.

Parents were also involved in some programs, such as the *Family Gathering on Moderation* held in late July 2025. This event brought together parents, teachers, and students to discuss the importance of religious moderation within families. By involving parents, the school hoped that the values instilled in class and extracurricular activities could continue at home. One parent shared: *“We are happy that the school teaches children not to discriminate against friends. At home, we also try to emphasize the same thing.”* (Interview, July 28, 2025).

Overall, extracurricular activities at SDIT Dafa were not merely recreational but carried strong educational dimensions. All programs—from community service, cultural arts, and scouting to family involvement—were designed to embed moderation values. This strategy provided students with concrete experiences in practicing tolerant and inclusive attitudes in daily life.

Thus, strengthening tolerant attitudes through extracurricular activities at SDIT Dafa Binjai has shown positive results. Students not only understand moderation values theoretically but also practice them in real interactions. This effort aligns with the national education goal of shaping a generation that is not only academically competent but also religious, tolerant, and firmly rooted in national identity.

Conclusion

The implementation of religious moderation values in PAI learning at SDIT Dafa Binjai was carried out through the integration of moderation into teaching materials and methods, as well as the strengthening of tolerant attitudes through extracurricular activities. The findings affirm the crucial role of primary schools in shaping moderate, tolerant, and inclusive generations. The efforts of SDIT Dafa can serve as a model for other primary schools in embedding religious moderation values, thereby supporting the national education goal of nurturing faithful individuals with a strong sense of citizenship.

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