

Teacher Strategies in Cultivating Moderate Religious Attitudes among Students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia Medan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategies employed by teachers in instilling a moderate religious attitude among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia. Cultivating a moderate religious attitude is crucial for shaping students' character to be tolerant, fair, and capable of coexisting within diversity. This research adopts a qualitative approach with a field study method, conducted from late June to early August 2025. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers, general subject teachers, and students, complemented by observations within the school environment. The findings reveal that teachers applied strategies such as role modeling, habituation, integrating moderation values into classroom instruction, and strengthening extracurricular activities. These findings affirm that the success of internalizing moderate values depends not solely on instructional content but also on the active role of teachers as role models, facilitators, and mentors. This study contributes to the development of Islamic education practices that are responsive to the challenges of intolerance.

Keywords: *Teacher Strategies; Religious Moderation; Students; Islamic Education; MAS PAB 2 Helvetia*

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Introduction

Indonesia is a multicultural country characterized by religious, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. This diversity represents both an asset and a challenge in maintaining national unity. Amid such pluralism, the value of religious moderation becomes crucial to nurture from an early stage, particularly among the younger generation who are in the process of searching for their identity [1]. Education, especially religious-based education, plays a strategic role in instilling the values of moderation so that students may live peacefully and harmoniously side by side [2].

The phenomena of intolerance and radicalism still frequently emerge in Indonesia's social dynamics. The younger generation is often exposed to extremist ideologies that deny differences and prioritize violence. If not wisely addressed, this condition poses a serious threat to national stability [3]. Therefore, Islamic education in madrasahs is expected not only to convey religious knowledge textually but also to internalize Islam's universal values that uphold *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation) [4].

Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia, as one of the Islamic educational institutions in Medan, exists within a heterogeneous community. Its students come from various family backgrounds, social environments, and different levels of religious understanding. This heterogeneity requires teachers to actively instill attitudes of religious moderation, ensuring that diversity becomes a strength rather than a source of conflict.

Teachers hold a highly significant position in the tradition of Islamic education. They are not merely instructors who deliver subject matter but also role models, mentors, and moral guides [5]. The success of a teacher in instilling religious values is largely determined by the strategies employed, both in the classroom learning process and in daily interactions with students. In other words, teachers serve as central figures in building a moderate character within students [6].

The concept of religious moderation essentially refers to efforts to maintain balance in religious practice, so that individuals do not fall into right-wing or left-wing extremism. In the Islamic context, this moderate stance aligns with the principle of *ummatan wasathan*, which emphasizes justice, tolerance, and respect for differences. These values are highly relevant to Indonesia's pluralistic society [7]. Hence, strengthening religious moderation through education is an urgent necessity.

Several previous studies have affirmed the vital role of teachers in instilling moderation values. Teachers are expected to deliver contextual religious education that emphasizes the strengthening of tolerance-based character [4]. Character education strategies grounded in religious moderation should encompass cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. These findings reinforce the notion that the success of religious education cannot merely be measured by knowledge acquisition but must also be reflected in the internalization of attitudes [8].

Current social conditions demand madrasahs to adapt to global challenges, where the rapid flow of information often influences students' mindsets and religious attitudes. Access to social media, for instance, can enrich insights but also opens opportunities for the spread of intolerant ideologies. In this context, the teacher's role as a value filter becomes increasingly critical. Teachers are required to be creative in integrating instructional materials with moderation values that are relevant to contemporary needs.

Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia has sought to cultivate religious moderation through various programs, both curricular and extracurricular. However, these efforts are not without challenges, such as limited resources, diverse student backgrounds, and external environmental influences. Therefore, an in-depth study of teacher strategies in instilling religious moderation is highly relevant to undertake.

This study focuses on teachers' efforts to instill moderate religious attitudes through role modeling, habituation, integration in learning, and strengthening extracurricular activities. The research was conducted from late June to early August 2025, involving Islamic Religious Education teachers, general subject teachers, and students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2

Helvetia. The study aims to provide a comprehensive picture of the practical strategies implemented by teachers in the field.

Accordingly, this research is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education that is more responsive to the challenges of intolerance and radicalism. Furthermore, the findings may serve as practical references for educators, policymakers, and the wider community in fostering an educational culture rooted in the values of moderation. Education based on moderation will not only strengthen students' character but also safeguard national unity amid the increasingly complex dynamics of globalization.

Literature Review

Religious moderation is a concept that emphasizes balance in understanding and practicing religious teachings. According to the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), religious moderation is characterized by fairness, balance, tolerance, and upholding humanitarian principles. In the educational context, religious moderation can be integrated into the curriculum, learning activities, and extracurricular programs. Previous studies indicate that teachers play a crucial role in instilling the values of moderation through role modeling, habituation, and the provision of healthy dialogical spaces for students [5].

The study of teacher strategies in fostering moderate religious attitudes is closely related to character education theory, which emphasizes the importance of three components of character education: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. Teachers are responsible for guiding students not only to understand the values of moderation but also to internalize and practice them in daily life. Accordingly, teacher strategies should encompass the integration of values into the curriculum, contextualized teaching practices, and consistent personal guidance [4].

Research Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach using a field research method. The research site was Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia, with the research subjects consisting of Islamic Religious Education teachers, several general subject teachers, and selected student representatives. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, observation of teaching activities and student interactions at school, as well as documentation of educational programs related to religious moderation. The research was conducted from late June to early August 2025. Data were analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The validity of the data was strengthened through source and technique triangulation, ensuring that the findings could be academically justified.

Results

4.1 The Strategy of Role Modeling and Habituation of Moderation in Learning

The findings of this study reveal that the primary strategy employed by teachers in instilling moderate religious attitudes among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia is through role modeling. Teachers are perceived as central figures to be emulated by students; thus, their behavior inside and outside the classroom greatly influences students' attitudes. This role modeling includes patience, fairness, wisdom, and openness to differing opinions, which are demonstrated both in the teaching process and in daily social interactions.

In an interview on July 2, 2025, one Islamic Religious Education teacher stated that students find it easier to internalize moderation values when they see their teachers practicing them directly. The teacher emphasized, *"We always try to be fair to all students, without discriminating based on background, and we teach tolerance through daily behavior, not just theory."* This statement underscores the idea that role modeling is an effective means of shaping students' moderate character.

In addition, habituation also serves as an important strategy implemented by teachers. Habituation refers to the consistent effort to instill moderate attitudes through routine activities,

both curricular and extracurricular. Teachers encourage students to respect differences of opinion, communicate politely, and uphold fairness in every activity.

Field observations show that before starting lessons, teachers lead students in joint prayers without distinction of background. Simple practices such as greetings, friendly interactions, and appreciation for students' opinions are part of the habituation of moderation values. Through such habits, students learn that religiosity is not only about ritual practices but is also reflected in daily respectful interactions with others.

In an interview on July 15, 2025, a student admitted that small habits applied by teachers—such as giving every student an equal chance to speak in class—helped them learn the importance of equality. *“Our teacher never shows favoritism; every student is given the chance to speak. From that, we learned to respect differences,”* said the student. This illustrates that the habituation of moderate attitudes in simple interactions significantly shapes students' perspectives.

Teachers' role modeling is also evident when dealing with differing opinions that often arise during class discussions. Teachers respond wisely, provide space for dialogue, and teach students how to express criticism respectfully. This practice not only fosters tolerance but also trains students to think critically and to voice opinions without fear of being judged.

Habituation of moderation values is also manifested in school religious activities. For instance, during the commemoration of Islamic holidays, teachers involve students from various backgrounds to collaborate. They are accustomed to working together in preparing events, respecting role differences, and emphasizing solidarity. Such practices reinforce students' awareness that religious moderation is not merely an abstract concept but an attitude that must be realized in collective life.

In an interview on July 28, 2025, a general subject teacher also affirmed that habituation of moderation values is not limited to religious education alone. *“Even in mathematics class, we accustom students to work in groups, help one another, and avoid belittling peers who struggle. That is part of a moderate attitude,”* the teacher explained. This demonstrates that moderation values can be integrated across all subjects by emphasizing attitudes and social interactions.

The researcher's observations further reveal that students have begun to demonstrate moderate attitudes in their daily lives. They appear more polite in interactions, more open to discussions, and less inclined to reject differences. These behavioral changes result from consistent role modeling and habituation practices applied by teachers in various activities. In essence, these strategies effectively shape students' ways of thinking and behaving.

Therefore, the strategies of role modeling and habituation implemented by teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia have proven to be a vital foundation for instilling moderate religious attitudes. Teachers' role modeling provides tangible examples for students to emulate, while habituation reinforces the internalization of values in daily behavior. The combination of both creates an inclusive, tolerant, and conducive learning environment for developing students' moderate character.

4.2 Strategies of Integrating Religious Moderation in Extracurricular Activities and School Life

The findings of this study indicate that teachers at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia instill moderate religious attitudes not only in the classroom but also by integrating them into extracurricular activities. Extracurricular programs are viewed as effective non-formal learning spaces for fostering values of togetherness, tolerance, and cooperation, since students can interact more freely beyond the limitations of the curriculum.

In an interview on July 28, 2025, an OSIS (student council) advisor explained that extracurricular activities are consistently directed toward strengthening students' moderate attitudes. *“We strive to incorporate tolerance values into all OSIS activities, whether meetings, discussions, or community service. The students are trained to respect differing opinions, share*

responsibilities, and collaborate amidst diversity,” the teacher noted. This demonstrates the important role of extracurricular activities in broadening the internalization of moderation values.

Field observations revealed that scouting activities serve as one of the most effective means of instilling moderation. Students are trained in discipline, teamwork, and compassion for others. In practice, they frequently face differences of opinion within groups but are taught to resolve them through deliberation. This process nurtures tolerance while fostering a spirit of solidarity among students.

In addition to scouting, teacher-facilitated religious discussion forums also serve as a medium for learning moderation. In these forums, students are given the freedom to express their opinions while maintaining mutual respect. A student interviewed on August 5, 2025, remarked, *“When we have differing opinions in discussions, teachers always emphasize respecting our peers’ views. No one is immediately considered wrong; instead, everything is explained fairly.”* This shows that teachers have successfully fostered a healthy culture of dialogue.

Community service activities further reinforce moderation values. Teachers encourage students to directly assist the surrounding community regardless of religious or social background. In one activity observed in late July 2025, students and teachers jointly visited local residents to provide aid. Such activities cultivate empathy, solidarity, and the awareness that religiosity must be manifested through social concern rather than merely ritual practices.

The school environment itself also serves as an arena for internalizing moderation values. Teachers foster an inclusive school culture that emphasizes togetherness, openness, and fairness. For example, in assigning classroom duties, teachers consistently stress cooperation without regard to social status. This practice builds a sense of collective responsibility while embedding the habit of respecting differences.

In an interview on August 2, 2025, the principal emphasized that integrating religious moderation is part of the school’s vision. *“We want students not only to excel academically but also to embody tolerance, fairness, and moderation. Therefore, we encourage all teachers to integrate moderation values into both teaching and school activities.”* This policy reflects that the implementation of religious moderation at the school is systematic and continuous.

Teachers also integrate moderation values into arts and sports activities. Through speech competitions, drama performances, or sporting events, students are taught to compete fairly, respect rules, and accept results gracefully. A teacher of the arts mentioned that students often perform plays with themes of tolerance during Islamic holidays, which creatively reinforce the message of moderation.

Observations further indicated that the school culture fostered through extracurricular activities has created a socially conducive climate. Students are accustomed to collaborating across classes, supporting one another in school events, and demonstrating mutual respect in various activities. This illustrates that integrating religious moderation into school life significantly contributes to shaping students’ open and tolerant character.

Thus, the integration of religious moderation values into extracurricular activities and school life at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia has proven effective in strengthening students’ internalization of moderate attitudes. Extracurricular activities serve as practical media for fostering togetherness, dialogue, and social concern, while an inclusive school culture ensures the consistent application of moderation values. This strategy complements role modeling and habituation in classroom learning, thereby shaping a generation that is not only intellectually capable but also moderate in religious practice.

Conclusion

This study concludes that teachers’ strategies in fostering moderate religious attitudes among students at Madrasah Aliyah Swasta PAB 2 Helvetia are carried out through two main approaches: the strategy of role modeling and habituation of moderation in learning, and the

integration of moderation values into extracurricular activities and school life. Teachers' role modeling serves as the primary factor shaping students' attitudes, while habituation and practical activities strengthen the internalization of values. Therefore, efforts to instill moderate religious attitudes must be implemented consistently, integrated into various aspects of education, and supported by the entire school community.

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