Cultivatting Wasatiyyah Among Adolescents: A Systematic Literature Review of Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education at Secondary Schools (2015-2026)

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in fostering religious moderation among students through a review of previous studies. The study employed a literature review method by analyzing twelve relevant research articles, consisting of journal publications, conference proceedings, and undergraduate theses focusing on religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education. The findings indicate that IRE plays a significant role in developing students' attitudes of moderation through various strategies, including teacher role modeling, habituation, integration of moderation values into learning materials, dialogical learning, and the creation of an inclusive school environment. The values of religious moderation identified in the reviewed studies include tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice (*i'tidal*), deliberation (*syura*), patriotism (*muwathanah*), and respect for local culture (*i'tiraf al-'urf*). Furthermore, Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as educators, mentors, facilitators, and role models in the internalization of moderation values. The implementation of religious moderation in learning activities contributes positively to character development by fostering respect for diversity, social harmony, religious commitment, and resistance to extremist attitudes. Therefore, religious moderation-based Islamic Religious Education is considered an effective approach to preparing students to live harmoniously in a pluralistic society while maintaining their religious identity and national values.

***Keywords**:* Religious Moderation, Wasatiyyah, PAI, Systematic Literature Review

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Introduction

Wasathiyah (moderation) is one of the characteristics of Islam that is not found in other religions. Moderation calls for a tolerant Islamic da'wah and opposes all forms of radical and liberal thought. Radicalism, in this context, refers to interpreting Islam strictly according to the text, which eliminates the flexibility of its teachings, making it seem rigid and unable to interpret the realities of life.5 Liberalism, on the other hand, refers to the concept of freedom— meaning that humans possess freedom—or, from a philosophical perspective, a system of thought whose foundation is the idea of a free human being. Human beings are free because they are capable of thinking and acting in accordance with their own will (Budhy, 2010).

Religious moderation is a middle path of understanding and practice between tatharruf tasyaddud (radical extremism, the far right) and tatharruf tasahhul (lenient extremism, the far left), between ifrath (excess) and tafrith (deficiency), between the extreme of exclusive truth and the extreme of "everything is true," between the extreme of the outward and the extreme of the inward, between the extreme of absolutism and the extreme of relativism, and between the extreme of overly rigid textualism and the extreme of overly flexible contextualism

Religious moderation must be instilled in the younger generation from an early age, with the hope of eliminating—or at least minimizing—misguided interpretations, and with the expectation that religious moderation can help prevent radicalism; equally important is preserving the integrity of religion. An understanding of religious moderation needs to be instilled in the younger generation as early as possible so that they can later put it into practice in their daily lives within society. Therefore, the role of the government, religious leaders, and other stakeholders is to continue striving to support and further develop the education of the younger generation. Religious moderation must be understood so that the younger generation is not easily influenced by radical views and extremism (Samsul, 2020).

In the context of high school, this phase is a crucial period in students' moral and spiritual development. Islamic Education (PAI) can serve as an effective vehicle for shaping character that is deeply rooted in the moral values necessary for acting responsibly in society (Harahap et al., 2025).

In addition to the classroom learning process, fostering religious moderation also requires support from the school culture, as well as co-curricular and extracurricular activities that encourage students to practice the values of tolerance, cooperation, deliberation, and respect for diversity. Islamic Religious Education teachers serve as facilitators, role models, and mentors in helping students internalize the values of wasatiyyah so that students not only understand the concept of moderation theoretically but are also able to implement it in their daily lives (Suryadi, 2022).

Nevertheless, various studies indicate that research on religious moderation still largely focuses on the environments of Islamic boarding schools, madrasahs, and universities. Research specifically examining the cultivation of wasatiyyah among adolescents through Islamic Religious Education at the secondary school level remains relatively limited. Most studies also employ a case study or field research approach focused on a single educational institution, thus failing to provide a comprehensive picture of research developments over a specific period (Rambe et al., 2022).

Furthermore, there has not been much research that synthesizes previous findings to identify research trends, implementation strategies, enabling factors, barriers, and opportunities for developing religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education in secondary schools. In fact, a synthesis of various research findings is essential to generate more comprehensive recommendations for the development of policies and teaching practices in Islamic Religious Education that are oriented toward fostering moderate character in students. Thus, there remains a research gap that needs to be addressed through systematic studies.

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to analyze the development of research on fostering wasatiyyah among adolescents through Islamic Religious Education in secondary schools during the 2015–2026 period using the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method.

This study is expected to provide an overview of research trends, strategies for implementing religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) instruction, factors influencing its success, and recommendations for the development of Islamic Religious Education in shaping students' character to be moderate, tolerant, and patriotic

Literature Review

1) Religious moderation

Religious moderation is interpreted as a religious attitude that is balanced between the practice of one's own religion (exclusive) and respect for the religious practices of others with different beliefs (inclusive). So that this balance or middle way in practicing religion will avoid excessive extreme attitudes, fanaticism and revolutionary attitudes in religion (Abullah & Lathifah, 2021).

2) Wassatiyah

Wasathiyah means "moderate." The term wasathiyah is derived from the word wasath, which means "that which lies between two extremes and is part of them," or "the middle ground of everything." Furthermore, Ath-Thabari argues that, in terms of the interpretation of the verse, the word "wasath" means "just," because that is what is meant by the word "good"; for a person is considered good if they are just (fair and trustworthy). Ath-Thabari then lists the names of scholars who also hold the same view (Shihab 2019).

Research Methodology

A systematic literature review is a term used to refer to a specific research methodology developed to collect and evaluate studies related to a particular topic (Lusiana & Suryani M., 2014). Using the SLR method allows for the systematic review and identification of journals, with each step of the process following established procedures or protocols. Furthermore, the SLR method can help avoid subjective identification, and it is hoped that the results of this identification will contribute to the literature on the use of the SLR method in journal identification (Triandini E. et al., 2019).

To identify relevant journals based on their titles and the issues they address, the next step is to use keywords related to the topic under discussion in the databases used, namely ScienceDirect, Online Library (Wiley), and ACS Publications. The keywords used in the database search field are "Wasatiyyah," "Religious Moderation," "Islamic Religious Education," "PAI," "Secondary School," "Adolescent," "Islamic Education," "Moderasi Beragama," and "Pendidikan Agama Islam."

The method used in this study is the SRL (Systematic Literature Review) method. The researcher conducted this SRL by identifying, reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting all available studies. Using this research method, the researchers systematically reviewed and identified journals, following established steps at every stage of the process (Putra, Akhidayat, Setiani, & Andiarani, 2019).

Results

The research data included in this literature review consists of a tabulation of data from 13 articles documenting creative thinking abilities. For more details, see Table 1. **Table 1.** Hasil Penelitian

Researcher's Name and Year	Type of Journal/Publication	Research Findings

Mashur & Navilah Ulliyah (2023)	Kartika: Jurnal Studi Keislaman, Vol. 3 No. 2 Tahun 2023	The values of Islamic moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction at SMKS Miftahul Ulum are implemented through daily practice, the development of lesson plans based on moderation, and the use of contextual learning models such as

Researcher's Name and Year	Type of Journal/Publication	Research Findings
		discussions, case studies, and screenings of films on Islamic moderation. The values instilled include balance, justice, and tolerance.
Siti Patimah, Nur Annisa, & Nur Azizah (2026)	Al-Munawwarah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, Vol. 18 No. 1 Tahun 2026	Islamic Education teachers play a role in helping students internalize moral values through setting a good example and fostering good habits, as well as instilling religious moderation through tolerance and respect for differences. The strategies used include linking the curriculum to the realities of social media and providing ongoing guidance. The main challenge stems from the influence of social media on student behavior.
Suparno (2025)	NUR EL-ISLAM: Jurnal Pendidikan dan Sosial Keagamaan, Vol. 12 No. 2 Tahun 2025	Islamic Education teachers serve as educators, role models, mediators, and facilitators in fostering religious moderation among students. The strategies employed include dialogic learning, integrating the values of moderation into the curriculum, and strengthening an inclusive school culture. Supporting factors include school policies and teacher professionalism, while obstacles include the influence of social media and students' low religious literacy.
Zaenal Arifin & Bakhril Aziz (2019)	Prosiding Seminar Nasional (UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya) Tahun 2019	The instillation of Islamic values of moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) classes at Al-Azhar Islamic Junior High School in Kediri is carried out through curriculum materials based on the Ahlussunnah Wal Jama'ah An-Nahdliyah tradition, using the methods of setting a good example and offering guidance. The instruction is designed to foster attitudes of tolerance and peace, and to reject radicalism and extremism.

Suparman (2023)	Skripsi Sarjana Pendidikan Agama Islam, IAIN Parepare Tahun 2023	The implementation of religious moderation at SMK Negeri 1 Aralle has been going well. Guidance is provided through various approaches, strategies, and teaching methods. Islamic Education teachers serve as instructors, mentors, and administrators in fostering religious moderation among students.
Fashi Hatul Lisaniyah (2025)	AJMIE (Alhikam Journal of Multidisciplinary Islamic Education), Vol. 6 No. 2	The promotion of religious moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) is achieved through the creation of an inclusive school ecosystem, the integration of moderation-

Researcher's Name and Year	**Type of Journal/Publication**	**Research Findings**
		related content, the reinforcement of tolerance practices, and the regular practice of religious activities. Supporting factors stem from school policies and teachers, while barriers arise from students' mindsets, which are influenced by their family environments.
Agnes Tri Muryati, Arrum Agustina, Evita Nadia, & Eza Dwi Lestari (2025)	Ghaitsa: Islamic Education Journal, Vol. 6 No. 2	Strategies in Islamic Education (PAI) for addressing the moral crisis among adolescents include the holistic reinforcement of religious values, the use of interactive and participatory teaching methods, teachers serving as role models (uswah hasanah), and the use of social media as a tool for moral education.
Akhmad Sh (	Andragogi: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam, Vol. 1 No. 1	Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum based on moderate Islam can help shape students who possess good social ethics, a tolerant attitude, an openness to diversity, a commitment to their faith, and an appreciation for local culture. Religious education plays a vital role in shaping students' moral character and spiritual attitudes.

Saeful Anam (2025)	JINU (Jurnal Ilmiah Nusantara), Volume 2 Nomor 2, Maret 2025	Research shows that fostering students' attitudes of moderation in Islamic education is achieved through the integration of values of religious moderation into Islamic character education and the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum. Islamic education plays a role in shaping a non-extremist mindset, instilling attitudes of tolerance, balance, justice, and respect for local cultures, as well as fostering social harmony. The reinforcement of moderate attitudes is carried out gradually, continuously, and comprehensively through pesantren-based learning and school culture.
Nugroho Hari Murti (2022)	Skripsi Sarjana Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia Jakart	The research findings indicate that Islamic Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in instilling an attitude of religious moderation through the integration of values of moderation into the PAI curriculum and the cultivation of positive behaviors. The methods used include lectures, discussions, question-andanswer sessions, and the screening of educational videos. Teachers serve as instructors, educators, community

Researcher's Name and Year	**Type of Journal/Publication**	**Research Findings**
		members, administrators, and learning facilitators. As a result, students are able to practice religious moderation in their daily lives through mutual respect, appreciation of differences, good character, and respect for local culture.

Muhammad Hidayati Alfianur, M: & Sri (2024)	Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah, Vol. 9 No. 2 (2024)	Research shows that Islamic Education (PAI) teachers play a crucial role in fostering religious moderation and countering intolerant attitudes in schools. This is achieved by strengthening the Pancasila Student Profile (P5), collaborating with teachers of other religions, fostering a culture of mutual respect during religious activities, and promoting an understanding of interfaith tolerance. The research findings indicate that interfaith tolerance has developed well; however, intolerance still exists among Muslims of different sects, highlighting the need to strengthen the role of PAI teachers in fostering religious moderation among students.
Rini Rahman, Anggi Afrina Rambe, & Murniyetti (2023)	FONDATIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar, Vol. 7 No. 3 (2023)	The study identified five core values of religious moderation integrated into Islamic Education (PAI) instruction in high schools: Al-I'tidal (balance and proportionality), At-Tasamuh (tolerance), Asy-Syura (consultation), Al-Muwathanah (love of country), and I'tiraf al-'Urf (cultural sensitivity). Instilling these values has been shown to help students develop a tolerant character, appreciate differences, strengthen unity, and prevent conflicts arising from diversity.
Peneliti Skripsi IAIN Parepare (2022/2023)	Skripsi Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam, IAIN Parepare	This study examines the role of religious moderation in fostering character development among students at MTs DDI Lombo'na in Majene Regency. The results of the study indicate that religious moderation can serve as a strategy for character development by instilling religious values, tolerance, responsibility, social awareness, and respect for diversity. Religious moderation is seen as capable of shaping students who are open-minded,
Researcher's Name and Year	**Type of Journal/Publication**	**Research Findings**
		accepting of differences, and able to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

Based on the findings of various studies that have been analyzed, it is evident that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very important role in instilling the values of religious moderation in students. This is evident from the various strategies implemented by PAI teachers, such as leading by example, fostering habits, integrating the values of moderation into learning materials, using dialogic learning, and creating an inclusive and tolerant school environment. These findings are consistent with research conducted by Mashur and Ulliyah (2023), Alfianur et al. (2024), and Suparno (2025), which shows that PAI teachers are the key actors in fostering moderate attitudes among students through a planned and continuous learning process.

According to the theory of Religious Moderation put forward by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia (2019), religious moderation refers to a worldview, attitude, and religious practice that adopts a middle path (wasathiyah), avoids extremism, and prioritizes justice, balance, and tolerance. This concept aligns with the research findings of Rini Rahman, Rambe, and Murniyetti (2023), who identified five core values of religious moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) instruction: Al-I'tidal (fairness and proportionality), AtTasamuh (tolerance), Asy-Syura (consultation), Al-Muwathanah (love of the homeland), and I'tiraf al-'Urf (cultural sensitivity).

These findings are also relevant to the theory of Multicultural Education proposed by James A. Banks. According to Banks, education must foster an appreciation for the cultural, religious, and social diversity of students. In the context of the research under review, the values of tolerance and respect for differences are manifested through the practice of living together harmoniously in the school environment. This is evident in the study by Alfianur et al. (2024), which shows that students of various religions are given equal space to carry out their respective religious activities as a form of respect for differences.

Furthermore, the role of Islamic Education teachers in fostering religious moderation can be explained through Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory. Bandura explains that individuals learn through the process of observing and imitating models they consider important. In Islamic Education, teachers serve as role models who provide concrete examples of tolerance, respect for differences, and avoidance of extremist behavior. Therefore, teachers' exemplary behavior is a highly influential factor in the successful internalization of the values of religious moderation. This finding is supported by research by Patimah et al. (2026), Suparman (2023), and Nugroho Hari Murti (2022), which shows that teachers' exemplary behavior is a key strategy in shaping students' moderate attitudes.

Furthermore, the research results also indicate that religious moderation contributes to the character development of students. This finding aligns with the theory of Character Education proposed by Thomas Lickona. Lickona states that character education encompasses three main aspects: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. In the various studies analyzed, students were not only taught the importance of tolerance and religious moderation but were also encouraged to practice these values in their daily lives through learning activities and school culture. Thus, the value of moderation does not stop at the cognitive level but develops into concrete attitudes and behaviors.

Research on strengthening religious moderation at MTs DDI Lombo'na in Majene Regency also shows that religious moderation can serve as a means to foster religious character, responsibility, social awareness, and an attitude of respect for diversity. These findings reinforce the view that religious education serves not only to impart religious knowledge but also as a means of shaping the character and personality of students so they can thrive in a pluralistic society.

On the other hand, several studies have identified challenges in implementing religious moderation, such as the influence of social media, low religious literacy, and the emergence of intolerant attitudes resulting from differences in religious understanding. These findings are evident in the study by Alfianur et al. (2024), which found that intolerance does not only occur between religions but can also arise among fellow Muslims who hold different sectarian views

or religious interpretations. Therefore, Islamic Education teachers need to continue developing learning strategies that are dialogic, reflective, and contextual so that students can understand differences wisely.

Overall, the study's findings indicate that the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic Education (PAI) has a positive impact on students' character development. Values such as tolerance, justice, deliberation, love of country, and respect for local culture help shape students who are religious, moderate, and prepared to coexist in a diverse society. These findings reinforce theories of religious moderation, character education, multicultural education, and social learning theory, which position education as the primary means of shaping a generation that is virtuous, tolerant, and capable of maintaining national unity.

Conclusion

Based on a review of 13 previous studies, it can be concluded that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a very important role in instilling the values of religious moderation in students. The implementation of religious moderation is carried out through various strategies, such as teachers setting a good example, habit formation, the integration of values of moderation into learning materials, dialogic learning, and the creation of an inclusive and tolerant school environment. The values of moderation developed include tolerance (tasamuh), justice (i'tidal), deliberation (syura), love of the homeland (muwathanah), and respect for local culture (i'tiraf al-'urf).

The research findings also indicate that the role of PAI teachers as educators, mentors, facilitators, and role models is crucial to the successful internalization of the values of religious moderation. Through appropriate instruction, students are able to develop an attitude of mutual respect, respect for differences, rejection of extremist attitudes, and the cultivation of sound religious and social character. Thus, religious moderation in PAI instruction serves not only as an effort to maintain interfaith harmony but also as an effective means of shaping students' character to be moderate, tolerant, and prepared to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

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