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# The Integration of Religious Moderation in Multicultural Education to Strengthen Tolerance in Islamic Religious Education

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## ABSTRACT

*Religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and social diversity characterizes Indonesian society and requires an inclusive educational approach that promotes respect for differences. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays a strategic role in fostering balanced religious understanding while developing tolerant attitudes in a multicultural society. This article aims to analyze the integration of religious moderation values into multicultural education and formulate strategies for strengthening tolerance through Islamic Religious Education. This study employs a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach by examining relevant scholarly literature and policy documents. The analysis involves concept identification, comparison of previous research findings, thematic categorization, and conceptual synthesis. The findings indicate that strengthening tolerance requires the integration of religious moderation values into learning objectives, instructional materials, pedagogical strategies, educators' role modeling, school culture, and the assessment of students' attitudes. This article proposes a conceptual framework that connects value comprehension, multicultural learning experiences, reflective dialogue, behavioral habituation, and the assessment of tolerant attitudes. The framework positions tolerance as an educational outcome that cannot be measured solely through knowledge acquisition but must also be observed through behaviors that demonstrate respect for differences, the ability to engage in dialogue, fairness, and willingness to cooperate in communal life.*

**Keywords:** *Religious Moderation, Multicultural Education, Tolerance, Islamic Religious Education, Character Education.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Diversity is an inherent social reality in the life of Indonesian society. Differences in religion, belief, ethnicity, language, tradition, and social views shape a dynamic community life while simultaneously presenting challenges in building intergroup relations(Tarigan et al., 2026). This situation demands an education that is not only oriented towards knowledge mastery but also shapes students' abilities to coexist peacefully. Education needs to provide space for the recognition of differences, the formation of mutual respect, and the development of social responsibility. The educational environment holds a strategic position because it brings together students with diverse experiences, family backgrounds, and perspectives. Managing diversity through education can serve as the foundation for building a society that respects human dignity without eliminating individual religious identities.

Diversity issues do not always manifest in open conflicts. Intolerant attitudes can develop through prejudice, stereotypes, social exclusion, discrimination, and the rejection of groups with differing views. The digital environment also enables the spread of unverified information and narratives that reinforce identity polarization(Agusrianto et al., 2026). These conditions indicate that knowledge of religious teachings does not automatically produce tolerant behavior. Religious understanding needs to be linked with the ability to interpret differences proportionally, control prejudice, and build communication that respects others. Education that solely emphasizes content mastery risks failing to reach the dimensions of attitude and behavior. Therefore, strengthening tolerance requires an educational process that integrates knowledge, value internalization, social experience, and behavioral habituation.

Religious moderation serves as a relevant approach in responding to these issues. The Ministry of Religion explains religious moderation through four main indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and an accommodating attitude toward local culture(Agusrianto et al., 2026). These four indicators show that religious moderation is related to understanding and practicing religion in a balanced and responsible manner within communal life. Religious moderation is not intended to diminish a person's belief in their religion, but rather to direct religious expression so as not to produce discriminatory or violent acts. This understanding is crucial in Islamic education because steadfastness in practicing religious teachings can go hand in hand with respect for the rights of others. Religious moderation education needs to develop students' abilities to distinguish between personal beliefs and the obligation to respect human dignity in social relations.

Multicultural education provides a pedagogical foundation for developing these attitudes. This approach positions diversity as part of the learning experience that needs to be recognized, respected, and managed fairly(Agusrianto et al., 2026). Multicultural education is not merely about introducing various cultural groups to students, but also examining how social relations, opportunities for participation, and the treatment of differences unfold within the educational environment. Multicultural-oriented learning needs to prevent discrimination and open space for students to express their views responsibly. This perspective is interconnected with religious moderation because both emphasize respect for differences, justice, dialogue, and communal life. Integrating these two approaches in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning can strengthen the connection between the understanding of Islamic teachings and their application in a pluralistic society.

Islamic Religious Education has the responsibility to develop the dimensions of religious knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in an integrated manner(Iskandar et al.,


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2023). Materials concerning theology (*aqidah*), morals (*akhlak*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), the Qur'an, and Islamic cultural history can serve as learning spaces for the values of justice, compassion, brotherhood, and respect for others. These values need to be understood through real-life contexts so they do not stop at mere conceptual memorization. For example, discussing the integration of moderation and tolerance values in PAI learning through contextual, collaborative, value-based learning, dialogue, and simulation approaches.

Previous studies have examined the integration of religious moderation into Islamic education from various perspectives. (Armayanti & Nasution, 2026) emphasized the importance of integrating religious moderation values into the curriculum, strengthening educators' competencies, and fostering dialogue among educational stakeholders. Their study highlights the importance of institutional support and educator capacity in promoting religious moderation within educational settings. Meanwhile, (Abdul Rauf & Mujahid, 2025) discussed the role of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in developing religious moderation and addressing intolerant attitudes among senior high school students. Their study demonstrates the strategic role of teachers in translating religious moderation principles into educational practices. Although these studies provide important contributions, the discussion of religious moderation and multicultural education still requires a more comprehensive conceptual explanation of how religious values are integrated into pedagogical processes, supported by school culture, and evaluated through students' observable behaviors. In particular, the connection between the understanding of religious moderation, multicultural learning experiences, and the development of tolerant attitudes has not been sufficiently integrated into a single conceptual framework within the scope of the studies discussed. Therefore, further discussion is needed to explain how religious moderation and multicultural education can be systematically integrated into Islamic Religious Education learning to strengthen tolerance among students.

The research gap addressed in this article is the need for an integrated conceptual framework that explains the relationship between religious moderation values, multicultural pedagogical processes, educational culture, and the assessment of tolerant behavior in Islamic Religious Education. The distinctive contribution of this article lies in proposing a framework that connects four interrelated dimensions. First, foundational values provide the normative basis through principles of justice, balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity derived from Islamic teachings and religious moderation. Second, pedagogical processes translate these values into contextual learning activities, reflective dialogue, case-based discussions, and collaborative experiences that enable students to practice respect for differences. Third, educational culture reinforces the internalization of these values through educators' exemplary behavior, fair interactions, inclusive school policies, and peaceful conflict resolution. Fourth, tolerance assessment examines the extent to which these values are reflected in students' observable behaviors, including listening to different opinions, expressing disagreement respectfully, participating fairly, and resolving conflicts peacefully. The integration of these four dimensions offers a contribution beyond the separate discussion of curriculum integration, teaching strategies, or educators' roles by explaining how normative values, learning experiences, institutional practices, and behavioral evaluation function as interconnected components in strengthening tolerance. Theoretically, this framework contributes to the development of Islamic Religious Education by positioning religious moderation as both a foundation of educational values and an orientation for multicultural pedagogical practices and character formation. As a


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conceptual framework developed through literature synthesis, its applicability and effectiveness still require further empirical investigation in different educational contexts.

Based on this description, this article aims to analyze the interconnection between religious moderation and multicultural education in PAI learning, identify pedagogical strategies to strengthen tolerance, and formulate a conceptual framework for integrating these two approaches. This study is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of Islamic education that is responsive to diversity. Practically, the results of the discussion can serve as a consideration for educators in designing learning that connects religious understanding with respect for differences. The main orientation is to build PAI learning that remains grounded in Islamic teachings while simultaneously encouraging fair, dialogical, and responsible behavior in a multicultural life.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This article employs a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach(Harahap, 2020). The sources of the study include scientific articles concerning religious moderation, multicultural education, tolerance, and PAI learning, as well as relevant policy documents. The literature was selected based on its relevance to the research focus, the clarity of the sources, and its contribution to explaining the relationship between religious moderation values and educational strategies. The analysis was conducted through the identification of key concepts, thematic grouping, comparison of researchers' perspectives, and conceptual synthesis. The focus of the analysis encompasses the principles of religious moderation, the characteristics of multicultural education, PAI learning strategies, the role of educators, and indicators of tolerant behavior. The results of the analysis were structured into an integration framework connecting learning objectives, value internalization, multicultural experiences, behavioral habituation, and attitude evaluation. This research did not involve field data collection; thus, the resulting findings take the form of a conceptual synthesis that still requires empirical validation(Sugiyono, 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Religious Moderation as the Foundation for Strengthening Tolerance

Religious moderation is a perspective and religious practice that prioritizes balance, justice, and respect for communal life(Aluf et al., 2024). This concept does not position all beliefs as identical, but emphasizes that differences in belief must not be a reason to commit violence or treat others unfairly. In the context of Islamic education, religious moderation needs to be understood as an ethical orientation that connects commitment to Islamic teachings with social responsibility. Students still have the opportunity to deepen their religious beliefs while simultaneously learning to respect the rights of others to practice different beliefs. This relationship is important because a moderate attitude cannot be adequately assessed merely by the ability to state concepts, but also by how a person responds to differences in daily interactions.

The normative foundation of religious moderation can be traced to the concept of ummatan wasathan in Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 143. The expression refers to a community characterized by moderation, justice, and the ability to maintain balance in religious and social life. In interpreting this verse, Ibn Kathir explains that wasathan carries the meanings of the best, most excellent, and just community, particularly in


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relation to the responsibility of bearing witness to humanity(Kathir, 1999). Similarly, al-Tabari associates the concept of wasath with justice, emphasizing that the position of a middle community is closely connected to fairness and the avoidance of extremism. These interpretations demonstrate that ummatan wasathan does not merely refer to occupying a position between two extremes, but also reflects an ethical commitment to justice, proportionality, and responsible conduct. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, these principles provide a normative foundation for developing students' abilities to treat others fairly, respect differences, and avoid discriminatory attitudes. The principle of balance encourages students to maintain consistency in their religious beliefs while recognizing the rights and dignity of others. Meanwhile, the principle of justice can be implemented through equal treatment, fair participation, and constructive responses to differences of opinion. Thus, the concept of *ummatan wasathan* offers a Qur'anic ethical framework for integrating religious moderation into multicultural education, particularly through learning experiences that cultivate tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful social relationships.

Religious moderation is also related to four indicators developed in the Ministry of Religion's policy: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and an accommodative attitude toward local culture. These four indicators can be used as an initial reference for designing learning activities and evaluations, with adjustments made for students' ages and learning objectives.

National commitment can be developed through an understanding of civic life that respects diversity(Nurhidayati & Suharno, 2025). Tolerance can be fostered through the willingness to listen to different views and avoid discrimination. Anti-violence attitudes can be learned through peaceful conflict resolution, while appreciation for local culture can be realized through the critical and proportional introduction of community traditions. These indicators provide direction so that religious moderation can be translated into more operational learning objectives.

Tolerance in education needs to be distinguished from a passive attitude toward all forms of action(Khosiah et al., 2026). Respecting differences does not mean justifying discrimination, bullying, or violence. Students need to understand that tolerance goes hand in hand with the principles of justice and respect for human dignity. Q.S. al-Mumtahanah [60]: 8 provides a normative foundation regarding doing good and acting justly toward those who do not fight Muslims because of religion and do not expel them from their homes. This verse can be used as study material to show that peaceful social relations require justice and goodness. Teachers can invite students to analyze simple cases regarding differences in belief, group work, or social exclusion. These activities help students connect religious values with ethical considerations in decision-making.

Strengthening tolerance also requires an understanding that respecting humanity does not require a person to abandon their personal beliefs. Moderation education needs to avoid two tendencies: social exclusivism that unfairly rejects relationships with different groups, and an understanding of tolerance that ignores the boundaries of personal beliefs. Educators can explain the differences between respecting the rights of others, cooperating in social affairs, and equating all religious teachings. A proportional explanation helps students understand that respect for differences can go hand in hand with religious steadfastness. Thus, tolerance is not positioned as a compromise of beliefs, but rather as an ethic of social relations in a pluralistic society.


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## 2. Multicultural Education in PAI Learning

Multicultural education is an educational approach that recognizes diversity as an important reality in students' lives. This approach emphasizes respect for cultural differences and identities, justice in the educational process, and equal opportunities to participate in learning(Nurhasanah, 2021). Multicultural education is not sufficiently implemented merely through the introduction of group names, traditions, or cultural symbols. This approach needs to encourage students to examine how prejudices are formed, why discrimination occurs, and how social relations can be built fairly. Such learning positions students as active agents in understanding diversity, rather than mere passive recipients of information about other groups.

In Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning, multicultural education can be integrated through Islamic values such as akhlak (moral conduct), ukhuwah (brotherhood), justice, musyawarah (deliberation), and social responsibility(Afriyanto & Anandari, 2024). These values provide a pedagogical foundation for developing students' understanding of diversity and their ability to interact respectfully with others. Their integration should not be limited to explaining religious concepts but should be translated into meaningful learning activities that allow students to experience and practice these values. The value of akhlak, for instance, can be developed through role-playing activities in which students practice expressing disagreement politely, responding to different opinions, and avoiding language that demeans others. The value of ukhuwah can be internalized through heterogeneous group discussions and collaborative projects that encourage students from different social and cultural backgrounds to work together, share responsibilities, and appreciate one another's contributions(Azzahro et al., 2025). Justice can be implemented through case-based learning in which students analyze situations involving unequal treatment, discrimination, or exclusion and formulate solutions based on fairness and respect for human dignity. Meanwhile, musyawarah can be practiced through structured classroom deliberations, where students are encouraged to express their opinions, listen to alternative perspectives, consider collective interests, and reach decisions through constructive dialogue. Social responsibility can also be strengthened through collaborative social projects that address issues within the school or surrounding community. Through these activities, students do not merely acquire conceptual knowledge of Islamic values but also experience how these principles guide their behavior in multicultural social interactions. Therefore, the pedagogical integration of Islamic values and multicultural education creates a learning environment in which religious understanding is connected to practical experiences of cooperation, mutual respect, fairness, and peaceful coexistence.

The foundation of multicultural education from an Islamic perspective can be connected to Q.S. al-Hujurat [49]: 13, which explains the creation of humans into various nations and tribes so that they may know one another (lita‘arafu)(Firdaus et al., 2025). This verse can serve as an entry point to discuss diversity as a reality of life that demands mutual recognition and social responsibility. The purpose of knowing one another is not limited to knowing the identity of other groups, but can be developed into a willingness to listen to experiences, understand contexts, and reduce prejudice. Educators must ensure that discussions do not oversimplify all differences into mere similarities. Instead, students need to acquire the ability to recognize differences objectively while simultaneously developing a respectful attitude. This


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orientation aligns with the goal of multicultural education to build fair and meaningful interactions.

Integrating multicultural education into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) also requires the critical selection and development of teaching materials. Such materials should be reviewed in terms of their accuracy, contextual relevance, representation of diverse communities, and potential to reproduce stereotypes or discriminatory assumptions(Luthfi et al., 2025). Rather than presenting cultural or religious groups as homogeneous entities, teachers should provide balanced examples that acknowledge differences within communities and encourage students to examine social issues from multiple perspectives. This process may involve reviewing textbook narratives, identifying one-sided representations, and selecting texts, historical accounts, images, and case studies that reflect diversity without labeling particular groups negatively. (Siddik et al., 2025) emphasize the importance of contextual and collaborative approaches in developing multicultural values in Islamic education, while Gay (2015) highlights the need to make teaching responsive to students' diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences. In practice, Islamic history materials, for example, can introduce students to the diversity of intellectual traditions and scholarly interpretations in Muslim societies by explaining their historical and social contexts. Similarly, materials on akhlak can incorporate cases and reflective questions that encourage empathy, honesty, respect, and fair treatment of others. Importantly, an inclusive approach does not require teachers to relativize or abandon the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. Instead, teachers can use Islamic ethical principles, such as justice (‘adl), compassion (rahmah), human dignity, and mutual respect, as foundations for evaluating social issues and guiding classroom discussion. Likewise discuss the integration of multicultural values into Islamic Religious Education as a means of strengthening tolerance and inclusivity(Muhajir et al., 2025). Through this critical and principled approach, teaching materials can broaden students' understanding of diversity while maintaining the normative foundations of Islam and fostering a learning environment that is open, respectful, and non-discriminatory.

Sudirman and Nurzamsinar examined Islamic-based multicultural education as a strategy to prevent intolerance through the integration of the values of tolerance (tasamuh), mutual acquaintance (ta‘aruf), justice, and being a mercy to the worlds (rahmatan lil ‘alamin), as well as through dialogical pedagogy and teachers' exemplary behavior. This study strengthens the view that multicultural education needs to be connected with Islamic values and concrete educational practices. However, its application cannot rely solely on adding materials about diversity into the curriculum. Strengthening tolerance requires consistency among the materials taught, the way teachers treat students, and the culture of interaction within the school environment. If the learning teaches justice but the teacher allows exclusion, the educational message becomes inconsistent. Therefore, meaningful integration must encompass curricular, pedagogical, and social dimensions.

### 3. The Conceptual Relationship between Religious Moderation and Multicultural Education

Religious moderation and multicultural education have a complementary relationship, although the two are not entirely identical(Herawati et al., 2025). Religious moderation primarily provides an orientation regarding how to understand and practice religion in a balanced, fair, and responsible manner. Multicultural


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education provides a pedagogical approach to managing diversity, building equal participation, and developing a critical understanding of differences(Azhari et al., 2024). Religious moderation provides values and ethical direction, while multicultural education helps translate these values into learning experiences. Both can be integrated into PAI learning so that students not only understand the importance of tolerance but also experience a learning process that respects differences. This relationship serves as the basis for developing strategies that integrate learning content, methods, interactions, and evaluation.

The following table presents a conceptual synthesis of the relationship between these two approaches. The listed indicators are analytical formulations for the purpose of lesson planning, not standardized, validated instruments. Supporting instruments such as tables use only horizontal lines, the following example.

**Table 1**
**Synthesis of the Integration of Religious Moderation and Multicultural Education in PAI Learning**

| Dimension | Core Values or Principles | PAI Learning Strategies | Observable Behavioral Indicators |
|---|---|---|---|
| National Commitment | Social responsibility and respect for communal life | Case analysis of diversity and civic discussions | Respecting the rights of other citizens and participating in shared community activities |
| Tolerance | *Tasamuh* (tolerance), respect, and willingness to listen | Guided dialogue, group discussions, and reflective activities | Listening to differing opinions without insulting or excluding others |
| Non-Violence | Justice, self-control, and peaceful conflict resolution | Conflict-resolution simulations and case-based learning | Expressing disagreement without threats and choosing peaceful solutions |
| Appreciation of Local Culture | *Ta'aruf* (mutual understanding), openness, and respect for traditions | Examination of local traditions and contextual learning projects | Explaining cultural traditions proportionately without demeaning other groups |
| Equal Participation | Justice and respect for human dignity | Collaborative group work and fair distribution of responsibilities | Providing all group members with opportunities to contribute |
| Moral Reflection | Honesty, empathy, and responsibility | Reflective journals and self-assessment | Recognizing personal biases and making efforts to improve behaviors that may harm others |

Table 1 illustrates that religious moderation values need to be translated into learning experiences and observable behavioral indicators.

Tolerance, for example, cannot be adequately measured merely by students' ability to define tasamuh. This understanding needs to be examined through how students listen to different opinions, share roles within a group, and respond to disagreement. The anti-violence principle can be connected to the ability to resolve


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conflicts through dialogue, while appreciation for local culture can be assessed through the ability to explain traditions without making degrading generalizations. These indicators help teachers connect learning objectives with relevant behavioral evidence. Assessments still need to consider the context, opportunities for participation, and student development to avoid unfair labeling.

The synthesis also shows that the success of religious moderation-based multicultural education cannot rely on a single learning method. Open discussions will not be effective if students feel afraid to express their views. Group work does not automatically produce tolerance if the distribution of roles is dominated by certain students. The study of local culture can also lose its educational purpose if conducted merely as a ceremonial activity without critical reflection. Learning strategies need to be accompanied by clear interaction rules, educators' exemplary behavior, and consistent evaluation. The interrelationship among these components is what makes the integration of religious moderation and multicultural education more meaningful than simply adding terms to instructional materials.

## 4. Integration Strategies in Islamic Religious Education Learning

### a. Integration in lesson planning

The integration of religious moderation should begin at the lesson-planning stage(Oktavia et al., 2025). Teachers need to formulate learning objectives that connect students' conceptual understanding of religious moderation with ethical reasoning and observable social behaviors. These objectives should be specific, measurable, and aligned with the expected learning outcomes. For example, in a lesson discussing justice and respect for diversity, students are expected to: (1) explain the relationship between justice and respect for differences in accordance with Islamic teachings; (2) identify and analyze examples of discriminatory treatment in everyday social interactions; and (3) formulate appropriate responses to such situations based on fairness, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. To achieve these objectives, teachers can organize learning activities that include an introductory explanation of relevant Islamic values, group discussions analyzing cases of discrimination, presentations of proposed solutions, and individual reflections on how these values can be practiced in daily life. The assessment should correspond directly to the stated objectives and learning activities(Sewagegn, 2020). Students' understanding can be assessed through written questions or short explanations, their ethical reasoning through case-analysis assignments, and their social attitudes through observation of participation in discussions, respect for differing opinions, and willingness to consider alternative perspectives. For instance, students demonstrate the expected learning outcomes when they can explain the principle of justice, identify unfair treatment in a given case, propose a non-discriminatory solution, and express their arguments without demeaning others. This alignment between learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment indicators ensures that religious moderation is not merely presented as an additional moral message but is systematically integrated into the planning and implementation of PAI learning.

Planning also needs to consider the alignment between the chosen values and the taught PAI materials. Moral (*akhlak*) materials can be used to develop empathy and respect, while the Qur'an and Hadith can serve as the basis for examining the principles of justice and social relations(Jannatul Firdausiyah & Ainur Rofiq Sofa,


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2024). Islamic cultural history learning can be directed toward studying the interactions of societies with different backgrounds, provided the examples used align with their historical sources and contexts. Teachers need to avoid forcing every topic to cover all religious moderation indicators. Proper integration contextualizes values relevantly according to the learning objectives. This approach maintains the depth of the material while providing space for character development.

**b. Case-based contextual learning**

Contextual learning connects religious concepts with issues close to students' lives(Nasution & Salman, 2024). Teachers can present cases regarding peer rejection in groups, the spread of stereotypes, differences of opinion in discussions, or misunderstandings caused by digital information. Students are then asked to identify the problem, the affected parties, relevant Islamic values, and alternative solutions. This activity encourages students to connect the principles of justice and respect for others with concrete decisions. The teacher acts as a facilitator who helps test reasoning, clarify information, and prevent discussions from turning into attacks on group identities. Case-based learning gives students the opportunity to practice moral reasoning in situations resembling real-life issues.

The cases used should not exploit actual conflicts or make specific groups the targets of negative judgments(Nohlen et al., 2019). Teachers can develop hypothetical scenarios representing common problems so students can discuss issues without embarrassing certain parties. Each group can be asked to formulate solutions based on religious values, considerations of justice, and the impact of decisions on others. The discussion results are then compared to see differences in reasoning and the consequences of each choice. This process develops the ability to understand issues from multiple perspectives. Learning becomes more meaningful because students practice applying values, rather than just repeating definitions.

**c. Reflective dialogue and directed discussions**

Reflective dialogue provides space for students to express views, ask questions, and respond to others' opinions(Sunki Mahmud Sulthon et al., 2024). Teachers need to establish dialogue rules that prohibit insults, forced opinions, and generalizations that demean specific groups. Every student is given the opportunity to speak without having to agree with all the views presented(Novela Ananda & Hastini, 2023). The teacher's role is not to eliminate differences of opinion, but to help students test arguments and distinguish critiques of ideas from personal attacks. This activity can strengthen the ability to listen, express disagreement politely, and assess information critically. The experience of dialogue becomes a crucial part of forming tolerance because students practice the values they are learning.

Reflective dialogue can also be conducted after discussions or group work. Students are asked to evaluate whether they gave all members an opportunity, listened to different opinions, and avoided prejudice. This reflection is not intended to force students to reveal sensitive personal beliefs. Its focus is examining behavior and decisions during the learning process. Teachers can use questions like, "How did the group resolve differences of opinion?" or "What considerations made the


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group's decision fair?" These questions direct students toward evaluating the process and shared responsibility. Habitual reflection helps students recognize the connection between the understood values and the actions taken.

**d. Collaborative learning and social projects**

Collaborative learning can be used to build experiences of working together amidst differences in abilities, backgrounds, and views. Teachers need to organize groups and task distributions so all students have the opportunity to contribute. Group success is not solely assessed based on the final product, but also on communication processes, responsibility distribution, and appreciation for members' contributions. This strategy allows students to directly practice the values of justice and social responsibility. Project activities can take the form of anti-bullying campaigns, developing educational media on social media ethics, or school environment awareness programs. Project themes must align with learning objectives so they do not turn into ceremonial activities devoid of value reflection.

Well-designed social projects can unite religious knowledge with responsibility toward society. Students, for instance, can develop educational materials on how to respond to differences of opinion in digital spaces using polite language. They can identify examples of communication that potentially cause prejudice, then develop fairer and more informative alternative messages. Teachers assess content accuracy, the quality of collaboration, and students' ability to explain the ethical reasons behind their message choices. These activities expand learning from the classroom to the social environment. Collaborative experiences also provide opportunities for students to learn that respect for differences needs to be realized through shared responsibility.

**e. Educators' exemplary behavior and school culture**

Educators' exemplary behavior is a crucial element because students' attitudes are shaped not only through materials but also through experiences interacting with adults in the educational environment(Muhammad Ilham Qalit et al., 2025). Teachers who teach tolerance need to demonstrate fair behavior, listen to students' opinions, and provide proportional responses to differences. Degrading or discriminatory treatment can weaken learning messages, even if the taught material emphasizes respect for others. Consistency between words and actions helps build students' trust in the taught values(Na et al., 2023). Exemplary behavior is also reflected in how teachers address mistakes, resolve disputes, and provide speaking opportunities. Therefore, religious moderation education demands continuous reflection on educators' pedagogical practices.

School culture also determines whether tolerance values can be practiced consistently. Anti-bullying rules, discrimination reporting mechanisms, collaborative activities, and fair conflict resolution can strengthen learning messages. Schools need to ensure that respect for differences is not just a theme for specific events, but part of daily behavioral standards. These policies and practices should involve teachers, students, educational staff, and parents as needed. Handling intolerant behavior must also be done educationally and proportionally, with attention to protecting the affected parties. A safe environment allows students to learn without fear of being embarrassed due to their identity or views.


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**f. Digital literacy and information management**

The digital space is part of students' social experience; thus, religious moderation education needs to encompass information literacy(Nurhayati et al., 2025). Students need to learn to verify sources, distinguish facts from opinions, recognize generalizations, and assess language that demeans certain groups. Teachers can use hypothetical messages as examples to identify how incomplete information can cause prejudice. Learning can also discuss ethical responsibilities when sharing content related to religion and social identity. Emphasis is placed not only on the prohibition of sharing false information but also on the importance of verification and considering communication impacts. These skills support the formation of tolerant attitudes in both direct and digital interactions.

Digital literacy can be integrated with the learning of the Qur'an, Hadith, and morals (akhlak) through studies on tabayyun (verification), the responsibility of speech, and the prohibition of degrading others(Ade Nurpriatna et al., 2025). Teachers need to help students understand the context of religious sources so these values are not used haphazardly to judge individuals or groups. Learning activities can involve analyzing communication examples, assessing source credibility, and crafting polite responses to differing opinions. Assessments should prioritize students' abilities to explain their reasoning and demonstrate responsible attitudes. Integrating digital literacy expands the practice space for tolerance and makes PAI learning more responsive to contemporary communication challenges.

## 5. Evaluating the Strengthening of Tolerance in PAI Learning

Evaluating the strengthening of tolerance needs to encompass knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors. Knowledge can be assessed through written questions or oral explanations regarding the concepts of religious moderation and multicultural education(Aluf et al., 2024). The attitude dimension can be examined through reflections, responses to cases, and the reasoning provided when students face differences. The behavioral dimension can be observed through group interactions, the way disagreements are expressed, and the willingness to give space for other members to participate. Using diverse sources of evidence helps teachers obtain a more complete picture compared to relying on a single type of test(Achmad & Prastowo, 2022). Assessments need to be conducted continuously so student development can be tracked and followed up with feedback.

Tolerance indicators must be formulated clearly and be observable. Teachers can use a simple rubric that includes listening skills, polite language use, respect for speaking opportunities, peaceful resolution of differences, and fair task distribution. Each indicator needs to be accompanied by behavioral descriptions so assessments are not based solely on the educator's personal impressions. Observations should be conducted across multiple activities and situations, rather than concluded from a single event. Students also need explanations about the assessment's purpose and opportunities to reflect on their development. This approach makes evaluation a part of the learning process, not a tool for permanently labeling someone as tolerant or intolerant.

Attitude evaluations need to consider ethical boundaries. Teachers should not assess the depth of personal belief based on students' willingness to follow certain views(Aziz & Sugeng, 2025). The assessment focus is directed at behaviors relevant to educational goals, such as respect for others' dignity, rejection of violence, and


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responsible communication skills. Observations must also consider context, opportunities for participation, and the possibility of misunderstandings. Feedback is provided using constructive language so students understand the behaviors that need improvement. These principles keep evaluations fair while supporting character formation.

**6. Implementation Challenges and Strengthening Alternatives**

The integration of religious moderation and multicultural education in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) faces several interconnected implementation challenges that require institutional as well as pedagogical responses. First, learning that is predominantly oriented toward content delivery may cause students to perceive tolerance as a concept to be memorized rather than a value to be practiced (Alisah, 2025). To address this challenge, schools need to encourage learning approaches that connect religious concepts with students' everyday experiences, allowing them to reflect on and practice tolerance in social interactions. Second, limited instructional time may restrict teachers' opportunities to address issues of diversity and religious moderation in sufficient depth. Rather than introducing these values as separate topics, teachers can integrate them into existing PAI materials, such as akhlak, justice, brotherhood, and social responsibility, so that moderation becomes part of regular learning activities. Third, variations in teachers' competence in addressing multicultural issues may result in inconsistent implementation(Afifuddin et al., 2025). This challenge requires continuous professional development through workshops, peer discussions, collaborative lesson planning, and the sharing of inclusive teaching practices. Fourth, the absence of adequate instruments for assessing students' attitudes and behavior makes it difficult to evaluate whether the values taught have been internalized. Schools can respond by developing practical assessment instruments, including observation rubrics, reflective journals, and indicators of respectful participation, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Beyond classroom-level responses, sustainable implementation also requires institutional support. (Armayanti & Nasution, 2026) highlight the importance of curriculum integration, educator capacity building, and dialogue among educational stakeholders in strengthening religious moderation. Accordingly, school leaders need to facilitate professional development, establish collaborative evaluation mechanisms, and involve teachers, parents, and the wider school community in supporting inclusive educational practices. These measures demonstrate that strengthening religious moderation and multicultural education requires coordinated efforts to address instructional, professional, assessment-related, and institutional challenges rather than relying solely on individual teachers' initiatives.

Another challenge relates to differing understandings of tolerance(Pratiwi & Sukartono, 2025). Some students might view respect for differences as a demand to agree with all opinions, while others might view differences as a reason to limit social interaction. Teachers need to explain that tolerance is related to respecting the rights and dignity of others, not an obligation to agree with every view. This explanation must be delivered using language appropriate to the students' developmental level and supported by concrete examples. Directed discussions can help students distinguish between firmness of belief, reasonable disagreement, and discriminatory behavior. Conceptual clarity serves as the foundation for avoiding misunderstandings in the application of religious moderation.


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The influence of the social and digital environment also requires attention. Students can receive messages contradicting the values of tolerance through daily conversations or social media(Syifa et al., 2023). School education is not always able to control all these influences, but it can equip students with the ability to assess information and respond to differences responsibly. Cooperation with families and the educational community can help maintain the consistency of the messages students receive. The form of cooperation needs to be tailored to needs, such as through discussions on healthy communication, bullying prevention, or digital media ethics. A collaborative approach provides opportunities for religious moderation education to develop as a shared responsibility.

Strengthening implementation can be achieved through three steps. First, teachers integrate religious moderation values into learning objectives and select strategies that allow students to practice tolerance. Second, schools develop a culture of fair interaction through clear rules, exemplary behavior, and conflict resolution mechanisms. Third, learning evaluations utilize diverse evidence and provide feedback supporting student development. These three steps need to be adapted to the context of the educational institution and student characteristics. Consistent implementation allows moderation values to be learned as knowledge, experienced through interaction, and developed into habits.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicate that integrating religious moderation and multicultural education provides a conceptual and pedagogical framework for strengthening tolerance through Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Religious moderation establishes the normative foundation through values such as justice, balance, tolerance, commitment to non-violence, and respect for diversity. Multicultural education translates these values into learning experiences that promote dialogue, equal participation, appreciation of differences, cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution. Their integration can be implemented through systematic lesson planning, the critical selection of inclusive and contextual teaching materials, reflective discussions, case-based learning, collaborative activities, educators' exemplary behavior, and the assessment of observable student behaviors.

The main contribution of this study lies in its conceptual framework, which connects foundational values, pedagogical processes, educational culture, and the assessment of tolerant behavior. This framework emphasizes that strengthening tolerance requires more than the mastery of conceptual knowledge; it also requires opportunities for students to practice Islamic ethical values in classroom activities and everyday social interactions. Relevant behavioral indicators include listening respectfully to different opinions, expressing disagreement without demeaning others, participating fairly in collaborative activities, and resolving conflicts peacefully. These findings imply that PAI teachers need to align learning objectives, instructional activities, and assessment indicators, while educational institutions should support consistent implementation through teacher development, exemplary practices, and an inclusive school culture.

This study is based on library research using a qualitative-descriptive approach. Therefore, its findings provide a conceptual synthesis rather than empirical evidence of the effectiveness of the proposed framework in actual school settings. The framework and its behavioral indicators require further empirical examination across different educational contexts to assess their applicability and effectiveness in strengthening students' tolerant


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attitudes and behaviors. Future research may also investigate the institutional and pedagogical factors that influence the implementation of religious moderation and multicultural education in PAI learning.

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