



Implementing the Religious Moderation Curriculum in Islamic Schools for Gen-Z

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Abstract

Education in the era of globalization and digitalization presents Islamic schools with the significant challenge of developing a young generation that is not only academically competent but also moderate in religion. This article aims to analyze the implementation of a religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools as an effort to foster tolerant, inclusive, and critical attitudes in the Gen Z generation. The research approach used a descriptive qualitative method, with literature review and limited interviews with teachers and students at Islamic schools in Indonesia. The results indicate that the integration of religious moderation values into the Islamic school curriculum occurs through several patterns: (1) adapting the syllabus and learning activities to the theme of tolerance and diversity, (2) using digital media and active reflection to capture the technology-oriented character of Gen Z, and (3) developing teachers as facilitators of value change. Obstacles identified include a lack of teacher training, limited learning media relevant to Gen Z, and the inherently conservative nature of school cultures. The conclusion of this study states that the implementation of a religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools has significant potential to strengthen the moderate character of the Gen Z generation.

Keywords: Character Education, Curriculum, Gen Z, Islamic Schools, Religious Moderation.

PRELIMINARY

In the context of Indonesia's highly diverse society, both in terms of religion, ethnicity, language, and culture, education plays a very strategic role in instilling the values of diversity, tolerance, and togetherness among believers. Education not only functions to transfer knowledge, but also as a medium for shaping the character and moral values of the younger generation so that they can live side by side harmoniously amidst a pluralistic society. In this regard, Islamic schools as one of the formal educational institutions have a dual responsibility: first, conveying religious teachings and values in accordance with Islamic principles; and second, shaping the personality of students to have a moderate, open attitude and be able to appreciate the differences that exist around them (Azra, 2019).

A phenomenon that is currently a major challenge for Islamic education is the emergence of a new generation, Generation Z (Gen Z), born between the mid-1990s and the early 2010s. This generation grew up amidst advances in information technology, social media, and rapid and dynamic globalization (Mahmudah, 2021). Characteristics of Gen Z include the ability to think quickly, multitask, and easily access information through various digital platforms. They also tend to be critical of traditional authorities, including teachers or religious institutions. Therefore, the process of religious education, especially regarding the instilling of values of religious moderation, can no longer be carried out using conventional approaches. Methodological innovation and curriculum updates are needed to adapt to the characteristics, learning styles, and spiritual and intellectual needs of this generation (Ma'arif, 2020).

The Indonesian government has responded to this need through various educational policies, such as the Independent Curriculum (Kurikulum Merdeka), which emphasizes the importance of developing a Pancasila-based student profile that is devout, pious, and has noble morals, as well as a

tolerant attitude and respect for diversity (Kemdikbudristek, 2022). In the context of Islamic religious education, religious moderation is a key value that must be internalized in every aspect of learning. A study entitled "Integration of Religious Moderation in the Development of the Independent Learning Curriculum for Islamic Religious Education" shows that integrating the value of moderation into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum can strengthen students' character and foster an inclusive national consciousness (Hidayati, 2023).

However, the implementation of the religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools has not been fully optimized. Various obstacles are encountered, such as limited teacher competence in teaching the values of moderation contextually, a school culture that remains exclusive, and a lack of infrastructure and digital-based learning media appropriate to the characteristics of Gen Z (Zainuddin, 2022). In some cases, religious education materials are still delivered using a dogmatic and textual approach without linking Islamic values to the context of pluralistic and modern social life.

Therefore, this article focuses on two main aspects: first, how the religious moderation curriculum is implemented in Islamic schools, both in terms of design, methods, and learning practices; and second, how the curriculum can reach and influence Generation Z in the context of Islamic education that is adaptive to technological and socio-cultural developments. This research is important because Generation Z are the future leaders of the nation, they will play a key role in determining the direction of social and religious life in Indonesia. If they are equipped with a moderate, inclusive, and tolerant understanding of religion from an early age, the potential for religious conflict, exclusive attitudes, and extremism can be significantly minimized.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design, aiming to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of the religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools and its relevance to the characteristics and mindsets of the Gen Z generation (Moleong, 2021). This approach was chosen because it provides a comprehensive understanding of contextual social and educational phenomena, where the values of religious moderation cannot be measured solely numerically but need to be explored through the meanings, experiences, and perceptions of educational practitioners. Data collection techniques were carried out through several stages. First, a library research study was conducted, which included a review of academic literature, national policy documents related to the Independent Curriculum, and the religious moderation module from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Sugiyono, 2022). Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five respondents, consisting of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers and principals at several Islamic educational institutions. These interviews aimed to explore their understanding of learning practices, strategies for integrating moderation values into the curriculum, and challenges faced in the implementation process. Third, a focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted involving ten Gen Z students as participants, with the aim of finding out their views on the concept of religious moderation and the extent to which the implemented curriculum is able to adapt to the digital learning style and critical thinking that are characteristic of this generation.

The data obtained were analyzed using content analysis, namely by reviewing, categorizing, and interpreting qualitative data to find thematic patterns according to the two main focuses of the research: (1) implementation of the religious moderation curriculum and (2) characteristics of the religiosity of the Gen Z generation. To ensure the validity of the research results, a source triangulation technique was used involving teachers, students, and official curriculum documents. In addition, peer review was carried out by other researchers in the field of Islamic education to assess the consistency and objectivity of the analysis results.

This study has limitations, including the relatively small number of respondents and the focus on Islamic schools in one large city (Bungin, 2020). Therefore, the results are more exploratory than generalizable, but they still provide an important contribution as a conceptual basis for broader and more in-depth follow-up research on the application of religious moderation in Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Finding

The religious moderation curriculum refers to systematic and structured efforts to instill moderate values such as tolerance, inclusivity, openness to differences, and rejection of extremism (Azra, 2019). In the context of Islamic education, religious moderation is not merely interpreted as a theological teaching but also as a pedagogical framework for shaping the character of students capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society (Hadisi, et al., 2024). In Islamic schools, the implementation of the religious moderation curriculum is generally carried out through three main strategies. First, the integration of moderation values into the syllabus and lesson plans (RPP), particularly in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). Second, the use of active project-based learning models, value reflection, and cross-religious dialogue that encourage students to think critically and empathetically. Third, the strengthening of a moderate school culture, such as the habituation of tolerant behavior, cross-religious extracurricular activities, and leadership practices that instill values of justice and togetherness (Shihab, 2020).

As found in a study titled "Insertion of Moderate Islamic Values in the Islamic Education Curriculum in Schools," the implementation of moderation values is carried out through three main aspects: contextual teaching materials, innovative learning methods such as project-based learning and discovery learning, and the creation of a school culture that supports the values of moderation and nationalism. The study shows that the successful implementation of the moderation curriculum is highly dependent on teacher competence and a learning environment conducive to diversity. Furthermore, another study titled "Strengthening Religious Moderation in the Freedom Curriculum in Elementary Schools" confirms that the Freedom Curriculum provides ample space for educational units to instill the values of religious moderation in a systemic, collaborative, and participatory manner (Rahmawati & Fauzan, 2023). The curriculum encourages teachers to act as learning facilitators who foster multicultural awareness, not simply conveyors of religious dogma. Thus, the religious moderation curriculum not only enriches students' cognitive aspects in understanding Islamic teachings, but also builds balanced spiritual, social, and national awareness (Cholid, 2022).

Discussion

Gen Z has fundamentally different characteristics than previous generations, particularly in terms of their use of digital technology, access to global information, and preferences for flexible, visual, and interactive learning. They grew up in an era known as a "hyperconnected world," where the boundaries between physical and digital spaces have become blurred (Turkle, 2011). In this context, their religious identities are shaped not only by formal institutions such as schools and families, but also by global social networks imbued with transnational values. The study "Generation Z in the Treasury of Religious Moderation in Indonesia" revealed that Gen Z has great potential to become pioneers of religious moderation due to their openness to diversity and high digital skills (Rachmawati, 2022). However, this potential is not always accompanied by epistemic depth in understanding the meaning of moderation, especially when faced with black-and-white religious narratives on social media. This indicates a gap between information access and critical literacy skills, a phenomenon also found in global research by the Pew Research Center (2018) on the religious behavior of digital youth.

From the perspective of classical Arabic primary sources, the concept of moderation is actually rooted in the term *wasathiyah* taken from QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 143, "Wa kadhālika ja'alnākum ummatan wasathan", which means "We made you a moderate (just and balanced) nation". Tafsir Al-Ṭabarī explains that *wasath* means "khiyār" (the best and most just), while Ibn 'Āsyūr (1984) interprets moderation as the ability of Muslims to bear witness to other nations because of their just attitude. This shows that *wasathiyah* is not a passive or neutral attitude, but rather an active ethical position in upholding social justice. In the context of modern Western thought, Thomas H. Groome (1980) through his work "Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision" emphasized that religious education for the younger generation in the digital era must be oriented towards dialogue, reflection, and social praxis, not just doctrine. Groome's approach can serve as a critical benchmark for moderate Islamic education in Indonesia: values-based learning and experiential learning are more effective for Gen Z than dogmatic lectures. From a local Javanese cultural perspective, the value of moderation also aligns with the philosophy of "hamemayu hayuning bawana," which refers to the human responsibility to maintain

balance and harmony in the world (Magnis-Suseno, 1997). This philosophy reflects the principle of wasathiyah in the Indonesian cultural context, where spirituality and sociality are not separate but complement each other. This emphasizes that a curriculum for religious moderation must not only be based on normative Islamic sources but also integrate local wisdom as a means of contextualizing moderate values for Gen Z (Suyatno, 2022).

Therefore, implementing a religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools for the Gen Z generation requires an adaptive and transdisciplinary approach. Learning can be packaged through digital media, short videos, gamification of tolerance values, and collaborative learning (peer-based learning). The results of the study "The Application of a Values Approach in Islamic Religious Education Learning to Form Religious Moderation in Generation Z" showed that open discussion methods, case studies, and reflection on personal experiences can build multicultural awareness and prevent exclusive attitudes among students. However, major challenges remain: social media algorithms often display extreme content; teachers' capacity to understand the psychological dynamics of Gen Z is still limited; school cultures tend to be traditional; and there is a lack of digital character-based learning modules. Therefore, periodic evaluation of Gen Z characteristics, digital literacy-based teacher development, and cross-disciplinary collaboration (religion, technology, culture) are imperative (Shihab, 2020). Thus, Gen Z will not only play a role as recipients of religious moderation values, but also active agents capable of producing and disseminating peaceful, inclusive, and contextual religious narratives.

CONCLUSION

The implementation of a religious moderation curriculum in Islamic schools for the Gen Z generation has proven to have great potential in developing tolerant, inclusive, and critical attitudes in students. A curriculum designed with the integration of religious moderation values, using methods and media relevant to Gen Z, including digital technology, can increase student engagement and internalization of values. Major obstacles remain related to teacher preparedness, limited appropriate learning materials and media, and a school culture that is not yet fully supportive. To optimize outcomes, recommendations include: the development of technology-based learning modules and moderation values, teacher and school management training in religious moderation and the Gen Z generation, and ongoing evaluation of students' moderate character. Further research is recommended, including broader quantitative surveys and longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of implementing a religious moderation curriculum.

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