




Reconstruction of Islamic Religious Education Curriculum Responsive to Gender and Religious Moderation

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the reconstruction of the Islamic Education Curriculum (PAI) in Indonesia with a focus on gender responsiveness and religious moderation. Amidst increasing identity-based polarization and gender-based discrimination, there is a growing urgency for an inclusive and transformative educational framework. This study uses a qualitative-empirical method using literature studies, curriculum analysis, and interviews with PAI educators. The research findings reveal that the curriculum is still heavily biased towards doctrinal teaching with limited space for gender equality and pluralist discourse. This study proposes a conceptual model that integrates gender-sensitive pedagogy and wasathiyah (moderation) values rooted in the principles of the Qur'an and national education goals. This reconstruction aims to foster critical awareness, tolerance, and social justice values in students. The implications of this study support the revision of the national curriculum content, teacher training modules, and the development of inclusive learning models in PAI.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation as an inclusive perspective for religious communities is very relevant to the conditions of the diverse Indonesian nation. With a moderation framework, religious adherents are no longer hesitant to acknowledge others, be tolerant, respect diverse thoughts (Akhmadi, 2019; Sutrisno, 2019), reduce fanaticism and violent behavior (Santoso et al., 2022), and strengthen national insight (Naj'ma & Bakri, 2021). The values of religious moderation may invite different interpretations among various levels of society. In order to avoid ambiguity, in the context of this research, the researcher borrows the term nine values of religious moderation offered by the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. The nine values of moderation are citizenship/love of the homeland (muwathanah), tolerance (tasamuh), deliberation (shura), middle ground (tawassuth), reform (ishlah), pioneering (qudwah), anti-violence (la 'unf), uprightness (i'tidal), and cultural friendliness (i'tibar al-'urf) (Azis & Anam, 2021).

Religious moderation is an important issue in education, especially in Indonesia, which has a diversity of religions, cultures, and ethnicities (Jayinto, 2023). According to Anwar, higher

education is an effective place to strengthen the value of moderation considering that the conditions of freedom of thought can make them more open to various views, including extreme and immoderate ones in religion (Islam et al., 2021). In the context of this diversity, education plays a strategic role in forming a moderate character that is able to encourage tolerance, respect differences, and maintain social harmony. One effort that can be made is through the integration of religious moderation values into the curriculum. The importance of religious moderation in the world of education lies in efforts to teach and learn religious, social, and cultural values so that they can be applied in the lives of society, nation, and state (Patih et al., 2023). A moderate religious attitude is very relevant to be implemented in Indonesian society which is rich in cultural and religious diversity. (Dwi et al., 2022)

The issues of gender inequality and religious extremism have become significant challenges in the Indonesian education system, including in Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The PAI curriculum, as a tool for transforming Islamic values, must be able to respond to diverse social realities with a fair and moderate approach. However, previous studies have shown that the PAI curriculum is still dominated by a normative-doctrinal approach that is less sensitive to gender and plurality issues (Zarkasyi, 2022; Yulianti, 2021).

Gender perspective in education is not only about women's representation in teaching materials, but also about power relations, social role division, and access to equal learning opportunities. Meanwhile, religious moderation is an important narrative to avoid radicalism that is contrary to the principles of Islam rahmatan lil alamin (Azra, 2019). This study aims to reformulate (reconstruct) the Islamic Religious Education curriculum to be responsive to gender issues and able to form religiously moderate students. By integrating critical education theory (Freire, 1998), gender pedagogy approach (Subhan, 2015), and the concept of wasathiyah (Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah: 143), this study offers a transformative curriculum model that is relevant to contemporary challenges. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a very important role in shaping the character of students who are faithful, pious, and have noble morals. PAI not only teaches aspects of religious rituals, but is also responsible for forming social attitudes that are fair, tolerant, and respectful of differences. In the context of a diverse Indonesia, this is very crucial to encourage social cohesion and harmony between religious communities (Hidayat, 2023). However, the PAI curriculum has so far faced a number of challenges, especially in terms of inclusivity and sensitivity to contemporary social issues such as gender equality and religious radicalism. Many PAI materials are still gender biased and do not accommodate the values of religious moderation, making them less effective in shaping students' open and tolerant personalities (Azizah, 2021).

One of the main shortcomings in the current Islamic Religious Education curriculum is the suboptimal integration of the principle of gender equality in teaching materials. The curriculum, which still tends to be patriarchal, often places women in subordinate positions, both in religious stories and in social roles (Nuraini, 2023). This can reinforce gender stereotypes that are not in accordance with the spirit of justice in Islam. On the other hand, the flow of exclusive and intolerant religious ideologies is getting stronger in various aspects of community life, including in the school environment. A curriculum that does not emphasize the values of religious moderation has the potential to become a gap for the growth of extremism (Fatimah, 2023). Therefore, it is important to redesign the Islamic Religious Education curriculum so that it can instill the values of tolerance and living peacefully in diversity.

Reconstructing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is gender-responsive and moderate in religion is a relevant solution to address these issues. Gender responsive means

that the curriculum not only pays attention to equality between men and women in learning materials and practices but also dismantles social constructions that discriminate against women (Dewi, 2021). Meanwhile, moderation in religion includes a balanced attitude, not being extreme, and being able to appreciate differences in beliefs and worship practices. According to Prasetyo (2022), gender-responsive and moderate education in religion can prevent discrimination and social conflict that stems from differences in interpretation of religious teachings. By prioritizing the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, Islam is taught as a religion that is peaceful, just, and respects the rights of all human beings regardless of gender or religious background. To realize this, the role of teachers is very important in implementing inclusive and moderate values in the learning process. However, many teachers are not yet equipped with adequate gender perspectives and religious moderation. This is a serious obstacle in the implementation of the new curriculum which is expected to be more contextual and adaptive to the social realities of students (Samsudin, 2021). In addition, learning methods also need to be updated to be more participatory and dialogical. The use of digital media and social project-based approaches can encourage students to actively think critically, appreciate differences, and build empathy for marginalized groups (Rahman, 2022). This learning innovation is important to bring Islamic Religious Education values into students' real lives.

Reconstructing the Islamic Religious Education curriculum does not mean obscuring Islamic values, but rather restoring the spirit of Islam that is just, humanistic, and in accordance with the principles of *maqashid sharia*. Contextual religious interpretations that respect human rights need to have a place in formal educational spaces. This is the basis for creating a generation that is spiritually and socially intelligent (Gunawan, 2022). Therefore, this paper aims to examine how the reconstruction of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is gender responsive and moderate in religion can be an alternative solution to improve the quality of Islamic education in Indonesia. By integrating the values of equality and tolerance in the curriculum, it is hoped that Islamic Religious Education will be able to produce a generation that is not only religious but also able to live peacefully in a pluralistic and civilized society.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative-empirical approach with a literature study method, analysis of national curriculum documents (Curriculum 2013 and Merdeka Curriculum), and semi-structured interviews with five PAI teachers in three madrasahs in South Sulawesi. The data analysis technique uses the Miles and Huberman model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validation is carried out by triangulation of sources and member checking.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reconstructing the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is gender-responsive and moderate in religion is a response to the needs of an increasingly complex and pluralistic era. In the context of a diverse Indonesia, religious education must be able to present an inclusive perspective, respect differences, and instill the principles of justice, especially related to gender and moderate attitudes in religion. According to Syarifuddin (2022), the PAI curriculum needs to be changed to better accommodate the values of gender equality and religious moderation, which are important foundations in forming a tolerant and inclusive national character. In a gender-responsive PAI curriculum, the role of women in Islamic teachings must be more dignified, and gender representation in learning must be fair and balanced. Azizah (2021) argues that many PAI curricula have so far focused more on the role of men in Islamic history, while the role of women is often ignored. Therefore, this curriculum reconstruction is important to examine in more depth the contributions of women such as Khadijah, Aisyah, and Fatimah in Islamic preaching and

history.

This curriculum is also expected to be able to overcome discriminatory views against women in social and religious contexts, and provide an understanding that Islam teaches equality between women and men in various aspects of life. The concept of religious moderation is very important in the reconstruction of the PAI curriculum, considering that Indonesia is a country with high religious diversity. Fatimah (2023) emphasized that a moderate PAI curriculum must teach an attitude of tolerance, respect for differences, and avoid all forms of extremism that can divide the nation. Religious moderation not only prioritizes the principle of balance in religious teachings, but also educates students to understand the importance of a harmonious life despite differences in religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, in PAI learning, it is necessary to teach how Islam can coexist peacefully with other religions and how to build peace. Innovation in learning methods is the key to success in implementing a gender-responsive PAI curriculum and religious moderation. Prasetyo (2022) suggests that technology be an effective tool in learning, for example by utilizing digital media such as video, e-learning, or online discussion forums. This method can open up space for students to discuss, share experiences, and better understand gender issues and religious moderation from various perspectives. In addition, collaborative-based projects that involve students in social activities, such as gender equality campaigns or interfaith dialogue, can encourage students to apply the values of moderation and justice in everyday life.

The importance of strengthening the value of religious moderation among students is also a major highlight in this curriculum reconstruction. Rahman (2022) explains that students need to be equipped with an inclusive and open attitude towards the religious diversity around them. In a PAI curriculum that is responsive to religious moderation, values such as peace, tolerance, and mutual respect must be an inseparable part. Strengthening this attitude of religious moderation does not only focus on theory, but more on how students can implement this attitude in their daily lives. Experience-based learning, such as interfaith activities or social projects involving students from various backgrounds, can be an effective method for instilling these values.

In the implementation of a gender-responsive and religiously moderate PAI curriculum, the role of the family and community is very important. Dewi (2021) stated that religious education at home and in the surrounding environment has a major influence in shaping children's attitudes and character. Therefore, the family as the first educational institution must participate in instilling the values of gender equality and religious moderation from an early age. In addition, the community also needs to be given an understanding of the importance of changes in this curriculum, so that they can support a more just and inclusive education policy. The reconstruction of the gender-responsive and religiously moderate PAI curriculum must go through a continuous evaluation and improvement process. Samsudin (2021) stated that periodic evaluation of the PAI curriculum is very important to see to what extent the desired goals can be achieved. This is also important to find out if there are obstacles that hinder the learning process or whether the methods applied are effective. Evaluations involving teachers, students, and the community can provide constructive input for improving the curriculum in the future, so that this curriculum remains relevant and effective in creating a generation that is tolerant, moderate, and respects diversity.

A gender-responsive and moderate religious education curriculum has great potential in building national character. Gunawan (2022) argues that religious education that is oriented towards social justice and moderation can be an important pillar in realizing a harmonious and democratic society. By teaching religious values that prioritize tolerance and equality, this curriculum contributes to the formation of a generation that is able to overcome differences and maintain national unity. Amidst existing social and political challenges, moderate and inclusive religious education can be a force in maintaining the integrity of the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia. The success of the reconstruction of the gender-responsive and moderate religious education curriculum depends not only on changes at the curriculum level, but also on sustainable implementation in the field. Therefore, in addition to strengthening training for teachers, periodic

monitoring and evaluation are also needed to ensure that the values of religious moderation and gender equality are consistently applied in the teaching and learning process.

Samsudin (2021) emphasized that if this change is carried out with full commitment and implemented carefully, a more inclusive and moderate PAI curriculum can be the foundation for forming a more just, peaceful, and diversity-appreciating national character, which will ultimately lead Indonesia to a more harmonious future. Although the reconstruction of the PAI curriculum is urgently needed, major challenges remain. One of them is the resistance from some groups who view this change as a form of "liberalization" of religious teachings. Nuraini (2023) emphasized that strengthening teacher capacity is very important to face this challenge, because without adequate understanding, teachers will not be able to teach the values of religious moderation and gender equality properly. In addition, the misunderstanding of religious and gender moderation among the community is also a major obstacle in the implementation of this curriculum. Therefore, in addition to the curriculum, training-based education for teachers and the community needs to be a priority.

One of the main weaknesses of the current curriculum is the lack of space for students to develop critical thinking skills. In fact, critical thinking is the foundation of a moderate attitude, because it encourages students not to be judgmental, avoid fanaticism, and open themselves to various perspectives. Therefore, the reconstructed curriculum must make thinking skills one of the basic competencies in religious subjects. In Fiqh lessons, for example, teachers can present a comparison between the opinions of various scholars on one issue, then invite students to analyze the social context and the reasons behind the differences. This is not just about increasing insight into schools of thought, but also training children to think rationally and ethically. Likewise, in Akidah Akhlak lessons, students can be invited to evaluate attitudes or decisions based on Islamic moral principles with a case study approach. (Halstead & Pike, 2006) To support this, teachers need to be given training in active learning strategies, such as reflective discussions, guided debates, case studies, and problem-based learning. Modules and textbooks must also be equipped with reflective questions that direct students to think more deeply and diversely.

In the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia, Islamic education has a moral responsibility to foster an attitude of tolerance and respect for differences, both in the internal context of Islam (differences in schools of thought and organizations) and externally (people of other religions). Therefore, the reconstructed curriculum must make tolerance a core value integrated into various subjects. To achieve this, cross-subject thematic themes can be compiled, such as The Beauty of Difference, Getting to Know Other Religious Communities, or Islamic History and Tolerance in the Archipelago. These themes can be discussed in social studies, Indonesian, and Islamic Religious Education lessons collaboratively. This cross-curricular approach is effective in strengthening students' understanding as a whole. In addition, changes are needed in learning indicators, for example students are able to mention examples of tolerant attitudes in everyday life, students demonstrate an attitude of respecting differences in class discussions, students can explain that differences in worship are common in Islam. Strengthening tolerance education is also in line with the policy of the Directorate General of Islamic Education which encourages educational units to apply the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin as a learning vision.

Curriculum reconstruction must also reflect the social context and current challenges faced by students in real life. Islamic material must be able to answer questions from today's young generation about issues such as cultural diversity, social media ethics, radicalism, climate change, and gender equality. Islamic Religious Education lessons can include contemporary themes such as Islam and Social Media, ethics of dealing in the digital era, protecting the earth as a mandate from Allah, the role of women in Islam, Islam rejects violence, namely preaching with compassion by presenting these current issues, students will feel that Islam is not only relevant, but also provides solutions to the problems of the times. Learning becomes more meaningful and contextual. To be effective, each teacher is given a thematic development module based on contemporary issues. The module contains a competency map, learning scenarios, teaching

materials, and an evaluation rubric. The preparation of the module can involve collaboration with universities, institutions and the Ministry of Religion.

Curriculum transformation is not enough without a change in the pedagogical paradigm. The teacher-centered approach that emphasizes memorization and lectures must be replaced with a student-centered approach that builds interaction, collaboration, and reflection. Teachers no longer act as the only source of truth, but as facilitators who guide students to understand religious teachings through the process of thinking and dialogue. Models such as inquiry-based learning and experiential learning are very suitable for developing an understanding of the value of moderation naturally. (Ihwanah & Astuti, 2024) For example, students can be asked to conduct social observations or simple interviews with people from different religious backgrounds. The results of their observations are then discussed in class within the framework of Islamic morals and the principle of mutual respect. This activity not only trains empathy but also forms high social sensitivity.

Another aspect that is a challenge is the absence of clear assessment indicators to measure students' moderate attitudes. In the current assessment system, the cognitive aspect gets the largest portion, while affective and psychomotor assessments, especially those related to moderate values, have not been developed systematically. Teachers admit that they have difficulty in assessing whether students already have a tolerant, open attitude, and respect for differences, because there is no assessment rubric available. This has an impact on the effectiveness of the learning approach that has been carried out cannot be measured. Assessment of values such as tolerance, empathy, and the ability to dialogue should be part of the character education assessment. For this reason, it is necessary to develop appropriate assessment instruments, for example through observation, student reflective journals, or collaborative projects involving intercultural interaction. (Rustono Farady Marta, 2024) The main challenge in assessing students' moderate attitudes lies in the absence of systematic and structured indicators and assessment instruments. The dominance of cognitive assessment in the current system makes the affective and psychomotor aspects, especially those related to moderate values such as tolerance and empathy, receive less attention. Therefore, it is necessary to develop relevant rubrics and assessment instruments, such as observation, reflective journals, and collaborative projects, to ensure that moderate character values can be measured objectively and support the effectiveness of the applied learning approach. This study has significant implications for the development of Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia, especially at the elementary education level. First, the values of religious moderation must be placed as the main foundation of Islamic education, not just as an additional theme or a momentary campaign. This requires a renewal of the national Islamic education vision so that it not only produces students who are ritually pious, but also socially and spiritually mature. Second, curriculum reconstruction needs to be done contextually, adjusting to the local conditions of the school and the surrounding community.

Finally, a major challenge comes from the lack of parental involvement in internalizing the values of moderation. Several teachers stated that the values taught in schools are often not reinforced at home. In some cases, children actually receive conflicting messages from their family environment regarding narrow or intolerant religious views. The lack of synergy between schools and families in shaping students' moderate character is a serious problem. Schools cannot work alone in shaping students' values if they are not supported by their social environment. Therefore, parental involvement programs, such as moderate parenting, need to be designed as part of a curriculum reconstruction strategy. (Bayu Widiyanto & Nurfaizah, 2023) The success of internalizing moderate values is not only determined by the learning approach in schools, but also depends heavily on parental support and involvement. Disharmony between the values taught in schools and those received by students in the family environment can weaken the process of forming moderate character. Therefore, synergy is needed between schools and families through programs that involve parents, such as moderate parenting, as an integral part of a curriculum reconstruction strategy that is oriented towards holistic character education.

CONCLUSION

Reconstructing the PAI curriculum that is gender-responsive and moderates religion is an urgent need to address the challenges of social disintegration and discrimination. The curriculum must be able to instill the values of equality, tolerance, and public civility through a contextual and transformative approach. Future recommendations include teacher training, development of thematic teaching modules, and periodic evaluation of the national curriculum content. Although the challenges faced are quite large, with a strong commitment from various parties, this change can be realized and have a positive impact on building a more harmonious and peaceful national character. Updating the PAI curriculum that is gender-responsive and moderates religion has the potential to change the way the younger generation views important issues in social life, which can be the foundation for forming a more just, peaceful, and diversity-appreciating national character, which will ultimately lead Indonesia to a more harmonious future.

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