



Developing a Responsive Islamic Education Curriculum to the Issues of Religious Moderation and Tolerance

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ABSTRACT

The development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in Indonesia faces significant challenges in addressing issues of religious moderation and tolerance within a diverse society. PAI is required not only to emphasize normative aspects but also to foster inclusive, tolerant attitudes and social skills among students to live harmoniously in the global era. The aim of this study is to analyze strategies for developing a PAI curriculum that is responsive to religious moderation, focusing on the integration of moderate Islamic values with multicultural education needs, and to propose an applicable and contextual curriculum model. This study employed a qualitative approach with library research methods, collecting data from relevant literature such as books, journal articles, and educational policies. The findings reveal that a PAI curriculum responsive to religious moderation can serve as a transformative instrument in shaping a generation of Muslims who are inclusive, tolerant, and contributive to social harmony. In conclusion, the PAI curriculum should be designed in a multidisciplinary manner and supported by educational policies and teacher capacity building to ensure effective and sustainable implementation.

Keywords: PAI curriculum, religious moderation, tolerance, multicultural education

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (PAI) has a strategic role in shaping the character, personality, and morality of students amidst increasingly complex social dynamics (Salisah et al., 2024). In the current era of globalization, one of the major challenges facing the Indonesian nation is the growing potential for intolerance, radicalism, and social polarization, often linked to narrow religious understandings. This demands that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) not only serve as a dogmatic teaching, but also as a learning tool capable of fostering moderate, tolerant, and inclusive attitudes. A PAI curriculum that is responsive to issues of religious moderation and tolerance is an urgent need, so that students not only understand religious teachings normatively but also are able to implement religious values in a pluralistic society.

The background to this problem can be seen in the diverse social reality of Indonesia, encompassing religion, ethnicity, and culture. Cases of interfaith intolerance, which frequently arise in various regions, demonstrate a gap in education, particularly in the internalization of values of togetherness and respect for differences. Islam, as a religion of rahmatan lil 'alamin (blessing for all the universe), emphasizes the importance of peace,

justice, and universal compassion. Unfortunately, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum in schools often emphasizes cognitive aspects and memorization, while the affective and practical dimensions, particularly those concerning religious moderation, remain underemphasized. This situation creates an urgent need to develop an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that not only teaches religious doctrine but also instills the values of openness, tolerance, and the ability to engage in dialogue amidst differences.

Theoretical studies on Islamic education emphasize that the curriculum should be dynamic and contextual. According to (Al-Attas, 1980) Islamic education is essentially a process of developing a complete human being, one that balances intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects. In this context, the development of the Islamic Religious Education curriculum needs to be directed toward fostering critical awareness and social morals based on moderate Islamic values. The multicultural education theory developed (Banks, 2015) also provides an important foundation, namely that education in a pluralistic society must include dimensions of cross-cultural understanding, recognition of diversity, and skills for harmonious living. By referring to these theories, it is clear that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum must integrate Islamic values with the paradigm of multicultural education and religious moderation.

A number of relevant studies support this urgency. For example, research (Sirojuddin & Hairunnisa, 2025) found that the Islamic Religious Education curriculum that integrates the theme of religious moderation is able to increase students' tolerance and openness towards differences. Another study by (Hakim et al., 2024) shows that Islamic Religious Education learning linked to social realities, such as issues of interfaith harmony, can reduce students' tendencies to be exclusive and intolerant. On the other hand, research (Wiratama, 2025) highlighting implementation constraints, particularly teachers' limited mastery of contextual approaches, often resulting in existing curricula failing to fully address aspects of religious moderation. These studies reinforce the argument that developing an Islamic Religious Education curriculum responsive to tolerance issues is a real and urgent need.

The development of a responsive Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is moderate in religion does not mean reducing the substance of Islamic teachings, but rather broadening the perspective of students so that they are able to understand Islam in the context of plural and multicultural Indonesia (Ekawati et al., 2018). In this way, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) serves as a vehicle for internalizing universal and solution-oriented Islamic values, rather than as a source of exclusivity. Integrating religious moderation into the curriculum can be achieved through various means, such as enriching material on religious harmony, using interdisciplinary dialogue-based learning methods, and strengthening social empathy (Sakbaniatun et al., 2025). This is in line with the spirit of national education, which emphasizes the formation of students' character so that they are faithful and pious, and able to live harmoniously in a diverse society.

The Islamic Religious Education curriculum's responsiveness to issues of religious moderation and tolerance also demonstrates its adaptation to 21st-century demands. Students are not only required to master religious knowledge but also to develop global life skills such as critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, and collaboration. Islamic values emphasizing justice, deliberation, and compassion can be integrated with these skills to create a generation of Muslims with a strong sense of identity yet open to differences. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education curriculum serves a dual purpose: strengthening faith while preparing students to face global challenges with a spirit of moderation and tolerance.

Based on the above explanation, the purpose of this study is to analyze the development strategy of an Islamic Religious Education curriculum that is responsive to

the issues of religious moderation and tolerance, with a focus on integrating moderate Islamic values with the needs of multicultural education. This study also aims to offer an Islamic Religious Education curriculum model that is applicable, contextual, and relevant to the conditions of Indonesia's diverse society, thereby contributing to creating a generation of Muslims who are inclusive, tolerant, and capable of maintaining social harmony. With such curriculum development, Islamic Religious Education will become an important instrument in strengthening national resilience in facing the challenges of intolerance and radicalism in the global era.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research was to analyze concepts, strategies, and models for developing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula that are responsive to issues of religious moderation and tolerance through a literature review. The primary data sources included textbooks on Islamic education, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula, and religious moderation; articles from national and international scientific journals; previous research reports; and educational policy documents, such as Ministry of Religious Affairs regulations and the Independent Curriculum. The collected data were selected purposively, taking into account relevance to the research theme, topicality, and source credibility.

Data collection techniques were conducted through documentation and searches of digital and printed literature, organizing the results of reading into specific categories, such as curriculum theory, the concept of religious moderation, tolerance strategies in education, and previous relevant research. To maintain analytical clarity, each data obtained was then mapped within a conceptual framework that connects Islamic values, the principles of religious moderation, and 21st-century competencies. This process was carried out systematically through the stages of reading, marking, classifying, and formulating relationships between research variables.

Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, with the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by filtering the most relevant literature and then presenting it in the form of an analytical narrative that compares theories with previous research findings. Next, the researcher conducted interpretations to identify patterns, similarities, and differences in the development of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum related to the issue of religious moderation. To increase validity, source triangulation was conducted, namely comparing the results of analyses from various literatures with different perspectives. With this method, the research is expected to produce a comprehensive picture of the strategy for developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to religious moderation and tolerance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Integration of Moderate Islamic Values in Multicultural Education

Developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to the issue of religious moderation requires an integrative approach that combines moderate Islamic values with the principles of multicultural education. Islamic values such as *tasamuh* (tolerance), *'adl* (justice), *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and *shura* (deliberation) are highly relevant to the concept of multiculturalism, which emphasizes respect for differences and diversity. This confirms that Islam fundamentally teaches an attitude of openness and respect for diversity, which, if internalized in the PAI curriculum, will help shape students' moderate and inclusive character.

In practice, this integration can be achieved by expanding the scope of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material so that it focuses not only on ritual and normative

aspects but also on social values that support harmonious living in a pluralistic society. For example, discussions on Islamic morality can be expanded to emphasize the importance of peaceful coexistence, rejecting violence in the name of religion, and respecting differences in belief. This approach will balance cognitive knowledge about religion with the affective attitudes and social skills students need to live in a pluralistic society.

A responsive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum should emphasize applicable and contextual learning methods. For example, the use of case studies related to interfaith harmony issues in Indonesia can be an effective tool for training students in critical thinking while fostering social empathy. Students not only learn religious teachings from texts but also understand how moderate Islamic values can be applied in real-life situations. In this way, PAI serves as a means of internalizing living and dynamic values, rather than simply abstract, dogmatic teaching.

The research also found that strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) aligns with the national agenda launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the "Religious Moderation" program. This demonstrates that the development of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum responsive to religious moderation is not only academically relevant but also has policy legitimacy. This means that the integration of moderate Islamic values into PAI has a significant opportunity for systematic implementation in education because it aligns with state policy directions.

These results extend the findings (Zamroni, 2024) which emphasizes the importance of contextualizing Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to reduce student exclusivity. While the aforementioned study only emphasized the importance of linking Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to social reality, this study adds that integrating moderate Islamic values with multicultural education can produce a more applicable and contextual curriculum model. Thus, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum not only teaches tolerance theoretically but also fosters moderate habits of thought, attitude, and action. Overall, the findings at this point emphasize that the integration of moderate Islamic values with multicultural education is the main foundation in developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to the issue of tolerance. Such a curriculum will produce a generation of Muslims who are not only faithful and pious, but also inclusive, tolerant, and capable of maintaining social harmony in a pluralistic society.

Offering an Applicative, Contextual, and Relevant Islamic Education Curriculum Model

The findings of these two studies emphasize the importance of designing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is applicable, contextual, and relevant to the diverse conditions of Indonesian society. This curriculum model is transformative, meaning it not only emphasizes memorization and understanding of texts but also encourages changes in students' attitudes and behaviors in real life. An applicable curriculum means that each PAI material must be designed to have direct relevance to the social, cultural, and diversity issues faced by students on a daily basis. Thus, the PAI curriculum can serve as a concrete guideline for internalizing the values of moderation and tolerance.

The curriculum model offered is also contextual, taking into account local conditions and the diversity of Indonesian society. For example, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) material on *ukhuwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood) can be expanded to include *ukhuwah wathaniyah* (national brotherhood) and *ukhuwah insaniyah* (human brotherhood). With this approach, students can understand that Islam teaches brotherhood across religious, ethnic, and cultural identities. Strengthening this value is crucial amidst the potential for social conflict stemming from differences in religion or political views.

Furthermore, this curriculum model is designed to be relevant to 21st-century competencies, such as critical thinking, cross-cultural communication, creativity, and

collaboration. For example, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) instruction can utilize project-based learning methods with themes of tolerance and harmony, where students are involved in real-life projects such as peace campaigns, interfaith dialogue, or cross-community social activities. In this way, students not only understand the value of moderation cognitively but also practice it in their social lives.

This study also found that the successful implementation of this curriculum model is highly dependent on teacher preparedness. Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are required not only to master religious material but also to possess multicultural competence, innovative pedagogical skills, and digital literacy to connect learning to contemporary issues. Therefore, curriculum development strategies need to be accompanied by teacher capacity-building programs to enable them to optimally implement applied and contextual approaches.

These results strengthen the research (Zahro, 2025) which emphasizes the effectiveness of an integrative Islamic Religious Education curriculum in developing students' tolerant attitudes. However, this study goes further by adding applicative and contextual aspects to the curriculum model, which not only emphasizes passive tolerance but also encourages students' active involvement in maintaining social harmony. Thus, this curriculum model is more suited to the challenges of the era of global disruption, which demands that the younger generation possess strong personalities and broad social skills.

This applicable, contextual, and relevant Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum model is a response to the current needs of Islamic education in Indonesia. Such a curriculum can be a strategic tool in developing a generation of Muslims who are inclusive, tolerant, and ready to maintain harmony in a pluralistic society. With the implementation of this model, PAI can function not only as a religious subject but also as an instrument for building strong social harmony amidst the nation's diversity.

DISCUSSION

Developing an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to issues of religious moderation and tolerance requires an integrative approach. This finding aligns with multicultural education theory. (Baidhawiy, 2005) which emphasizes that the curriculum must reflect the cultural, religious, and experiential diversity of students. In the context of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), this is realized through the integration of moderate Islamic values such as tolerance, 'adl, and brotherhood with the principles of multiculturalism, so that students not only understand religious teachings normatively but also are able to apply them in social life. Thus, the PAI curriculum provides a space for strengthening faith and learning to live in a pluralistic society.

This study strengthens the findings (Qutni, 2018) which highlights the effectiveness of an integrative curriculum in shaping students' tolerant attitudes. However, this study goes further by emphasizing that the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum must be applicable and contextual to truly address the social challenges of Indonesia's pluralistic society. While previous research only emphasized the cognitive aspects of tolerance, this study adds a practical dimension in the form of project-based learning methods, case studies, and interfaith dialogues that can train students to practice moderation in real life. This makes PAI more functional and relevant to the challenges of the era of global disruption.

The findings of this study are in line with the concept of transformative curriculum put forward by (Halupa, 2015), where the curriculum cannot be static but must adapt to social dynamics. A PAI curriculum that is responsive to the issue of religious moderation is essentially a transformative curriculum because it emphasizes not only the transmission of religious knowledge but also encourages the transformation of students' attitudes and

behaviors so they can live harmoniously in a pluralistic society. With this approach, PAI becomes not only a normative instrument but also a contextual, transformative tool.

The research also found that the success of responsive curriculum development depends on the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers as agents of change. This is consistent with research (Auliyah et al., 2024) which emphasizes the importance of teacher preparedness in connecting Islamic Religious Education (PAI) with social realities. However, this study adds that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers must also possess multicultural competencies and digital literacy to be able to deliver contextualized learning that addresses contemporary issues, such as social conflict, intolerance, and religious disinformation on social media. Therefore, curriculum development strategies must be accompanied by strengthening teacher capacity.

Overall, this discussion confirms that a responsive Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum, emphasizing religious moderation and tolerance, is the answer to the challenges of Islamic education in Indonesia, which faces the complexities of a pluralistic society. This curriculum is both normative and transformative, with an applicative and contextual orientation. Compared with previous theories and research, this study's main contribution lies in offering a curriculum model that not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge of moderation but also shapes students' social attitudes and skills for living harmoniously in a pluralistic society. With this model, PAI plays a strategic role in shaping a generation of Muslims who are inclusive, tolerant, and capable of maintaining social harmony.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the development of an Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curriculum that is responsive to the issues of religious moderation and tolerance is able to integrate moderate Islamic values with the needs of multicultural education, so that it not only forms normative religious knowledge, but also develops inclusive, tolerant attitudes and social skills of students in facing the reality of a pluralistic Indonesian society. In conclusion, an applicable, contextual, and transformative PAI curriculum can be an important instrument in creating a generation of Muslims with moderate characters, able to appreciate differences, and play an active role in maintaining social harmony in the challenging global era. The recommendations of this study are the need for the systematic formulation of a PAI curriculum based on religious moderation by educational institutions, strengthening the capacity of teachers in implementing contextual and multicultural learning strategies, and policy support from the government and society so that the implementation of the curriculum can be effective, sustainable, and have a real impact on the formation of a generation of Muslims with broad insight and tolerance.

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