

RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS A STRATEGY FOR COUNTERING RADICALISATION AND STRENGTHENING CHARACTER: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

Radicalism and intolerance are challenges that must be addressed through a systematic, humanistic and sustainable educational approach. Islamic education plays a strategic role in instilling a balanced understanding of religion whilst shaping the character of learners to be tolerant, fair, inclusive and opposed to violence. This study aims to analyse religious moderation in Islamic education as a strategy for countering radicalisation and as a tool for strengthening pupils' character. The study employs a literature review using a qualitative-descriptive approach. The findings indicate that religious moderation can be implemented through the integration of the values of *wasathiyah*, tolerance, justice, commitment to the nation, respect for local culture, and an anti-violence stance into the curriculum and the learning process. Religious moderation can also be reinforced through dialogic learning, teachers' exemplary behaviour, religious and digital literacy, social conditioning, and an inclusive school culture. Thus, Islamic education based on religious moderation not only serves to prevent the spread of radical ideologies but also contributes to the character development of pupils who are religious, critical, humanistic, responsible, and capable of living harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

Keywords: religious moderation; Islamic education; counter-radicalisation; character education; tolerance; literature review.

Introduction

Indonesia is a country characterised by a highly complex diversity of religions, ethnic groups, languages, cultures and traditions. This diversity constitutes an important social asset for national development, but at the same time can become a source of tension if not managed through an attitude of mutual respect (Aslan, 2026); (Firmansyah et al., 2026). In the context of religious life, differences in interpretation, worship practices, religious views and expressions of social identity are an unavoidable reality. Therefore, society requires a religious perspective capable of upholding personal beliefs whilst respecting the existence of other groups. Religious moderation emerges as an approach that emphasises fairness, balance, tolerance, and the rejection of all forms of violence committed in the name of religion (Research, Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Religious moderation has become increasingly important as developments in information technology have transformed the patterns of dissemination of religious knowledge and discourse. Pupils can access a variety of religious materials via social media, online videos, digital forums and messaging apps without always receiving

guidance from teachers or parents. This situation presents positive opportunities for broadening religious horizons, but also opens the door to the spread of inaccurate information, hate speech, propaganda and exclusive religious narratives (Ramadhan et al., 2024). In such a situation, religious literacy and digital literacy become vital components of the educational process. Learners need to be equipped with the ability to critically analyse religious sources, verify the credibility of information, and distinguish between religious preaching, criticism and extremist propaganda (Khasanah et al., 2023).

Religious radicalism is one of the issues that has the potential to disrupt social life and the continuity of peaceful education. Radicalism is characterised not only by acts of violence, but also by a worldview that rejects pluralism, regards other groups as heretical or enemies, justifies coercion, and rejects the principle of coexistence. If such understandings take root within the educational environment, learners may undergo a process of forming an exclusive identity and find it difficult to engage in dialogue with different groups. Therefore, the prevention of radicalism must be carried out through systematic and sustainable educational strategies, rather than relying solely on security-based approaches. Education must be capable of building students' intellectual, emotional and moral resilience against violent ideologies (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024).

Islamic education holds a strategic position in these efforts because it not only imparts religious knowledge but also shapes the attitudes, morals and behaviour of learners. Ideally, Islamic education should foster an understanding of the relationship between humans and God, the relationship between humans and their fellow human beings, and human responsibility towards their social environment. Thus, Islamic Religious Education should not be limited to the mastery of normative material, the memorisation of religious texts, or the ability to perform rituals; rather, it must guide learners to understand the substantive values of Islamic teachings, such as justice, compassion, the common good, peace, and respect for human dignity. This orientation is in line with the objectives of Islamic education, which places the cultivation of moral character as a vital part of the educational process (Sulastri et al., 2023).

From an Islamic perspective, religious moderation is linked to the concept of *wasathiyah*, which refers to adopting a middle ground, a balanced and proportionate stance. A moderate stance does not mean diminishing one's commitment to religious teachings or equating all beliefs, but rather practising one's faith responsibly—without excess and without belittling others. Moderation also requires the ability to distinguish between fundamental principles of faith and socio-religious issues where differences of opinion are permissible. Therefore, Islamic education needs to introduce the diversity of thought within the Islamic tradition, foster a culture of dialogue, and develop learners' ability to understand religious texts contextually. Such learning can reduce the tendency to interpret religion literally, in a closed-minded manner, and without taking social realities into account (Prasetyaningsih et al., 2025); (Aslan & Putra, 2020).

The urgency of religious moderation in education is also linked to the characteristics of learners as a group in the process of forming their identities. At this stage, learners require an environment that allows them to ask questions, discuss, and test ideas openly. If religious questions do not receive adequate answers from educational

institutions, learners may seek alternative sources that may not necessarily have a strong scientific basis or national orientation. Islamic education needs to serve as a safe academic and moral space for discussing sensitive issues, such as differences between schools of thought, interfaith relations, democracy, human rights, nationalism, and the use of violence. A dialogical approach can help learners understand that differences are not always synonymous with a threat (Suroso et al., 2021).

The implementation of religious moderation in Islamic education can be achieved through the integration of the values of moderation into the curriculum and the learning process. Values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), *tasamuh* (tolerance), and non-violence need to be presented not only as concepts but also as learning experiences. Learning materials can be linked to real-life issues faced by pupils, such as bullying, discrimination, hate speech, social conflict, and the spread of religious hoaxes. Through case studies, group discussions, project-based learning and reflection, pupils can understand the relationship between Islamic values and social responsibility in a pluralistic society (Research, Development and Training Agency, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

The role of teachers is a key factor in the success of education in religious moderation. Teachers of Islamic Religious Education do not merely serve as conveyors of subject matter, but also as role models, facilitators of dialogue, and moral guides for their pupils (Nisa et al., 2021); (Osama et al., 2026); (Astuti et al., 2023). Teachers' attitudes in responding to differing opinions, selecting learning resources, explaining controversial issues, and treating pupils will influence how pupils understand diversity. Teachers who are open-minded, fair, and able to present religious arguments in a contextual manner can help foster an inclusive learning environment. Conversely, teaching delivered in a judgemental, dogmatic manner that leaves no room for questions can reinforce exclusionary attitudes (Hanafie et al., 2024).

Religious moderation is also closely linked to the strengthening of character education. Character is not sufficiently shaped through the mere imparting of advice, but must be developed through habit formation, role modelling, social experiences, and institutional culture. The value of moderation can serve as the foundation for fostering a character that is tolerant, fair, empathetic, responsible, peace-loving, and capable of cooperation. Pupils who are accustomed to engaging in dialogue with people of different backgrounds will possess better social skills in resolving conflicts without resorting to violence. Thus, religious moderation is not merely a strategy to prevent radicalism, but also a tool for building a mature personality capable of participating constructively in community life (Putra et al., 2020).

Character building through religious moderation needs to be implemented across the entire educational ecosystem. Classroom learning must be supported by school culture, extra-curricular activities, institutional policies, interactions amongst pupils, and the relationship between the school and the community. Schools or madrasahs need to ensure that educational practices do not involve discrimination based on religion, denomination, ethnicity, gender, or social background. Social activities, cross-group collaboration, cultural dialogue and humanitarian projects can be used to expose pupils

to the reality of diversity. This process is important because a moderate character is more easily formed when pupils directly experience cooperation and respect for differences (Ihsan, 2026).

Nevertheless, the implementation of religious moderation in Islamic education faces a number of challenges. These challenges include limitations in teachers' competencies, the dominance of rote-learning-oriented teaching methods, a lack of contextual teaching materials, the influence of family and community environments, and exposure to extreme digital content. Furthermore, the concept of religious moderation risks being understood in a purely formal and sloganistic manner if it is not translated into clear indicators of attitude and behaviour. Therefore, there is a need to develop teachers' competencies, develop teaching materials based on diversity, strengthen digital literacy, and conduct evaluations that measure changes in pupils' attitudes. Recent studies indicate that the implementation of religious moderation is more effective when its values are integrated into the curriculum, practised through dialogic pedagogy, and supported by consistent institutional policies (Muis, 2026).

Based on the above, a study on religious moderation in Islamic education is essential to understand its contribution to the counter-radicalisation agenda and character building. A literature review enables researchers to map out concepts, implementation strategies, findings from previous research, and the challenges that arise in the application of religious moderation within educational settings.

Research Method

This study employs a literature review using a qualitative-descriptive approach to analyse the concept of religious moderation in Islamic education as a strategy for counter-radicalisation and character building. Research data were sourced from national and international journal articles, books and other documents relevant to the research theme (Elijah & Aslan, 2025). Literature was collected through searches of academic databases using the keywords '*religious moderation*', '*Islamic education*', '*counter-radicalisation*', '*radicalism*' and '*character education*'. Selected sources had to meet the inclusion criteria, namely being relevant to the research focus, having a clear academic basis, and discussing the relationship between Islamic education, religious moderation, radicalism or character building. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of identification, selection, evaluation, categorisation, interpretation, and synthesis of the literature's content to identify patterns, similarities, differences, and research gaps. The review process was reported transparently in the stages of source identification, literature screening, eligibility assessment, and synthesis of findings (Zed, 2008) .

Results and Discussion

Religious Moderation in Islamic Education as a Counter-Radicalisation Strategy

Religious moderation in Islamic education is a crucial approach to preventing the spread of radical, intolerant and exclusive ideologies amongst students. Religious moderation emphasises understanding and practising religious teachings in a balanced, fair and moderate manner, whilst continuing to respect the existence of other groups. In

the context of Indonesia, with its diversity of religions, ethnic groups, cultures and religious organisations, a moderate stance is necessary to ensure that religious diversity does not become a source of conflict. Moderation does not mean weakening one's beliefs, but rather encouraging religious adherents to practise their faith responsibly within communal life (Research, Development and Training Agency, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Islamic education plays a strategic role in instilling religious moderation, as the educational process is directly linked to the formation of learners' knowledge, attitudes and behaviour. Islamic education serves not only to convey religious doctrine but also to shape moral character, social responsibility and a sense of humanity. Therefore, the teaching of Islamic Religious Education must be directed towards a comprehensive, contextual and public-interest-oriented understanding of religion. Teachings on faith and worship must be linked to the values of justice, peace, compassion, respect for human dignity, and the duty to uphold social life (Wicaksono, 2021); (Aslan & Setiawan, 2019).

Religious radicalism can arise when religious teachings are interpreted in a narrow, literal manner, divorced from their social context. Such interpretations are often characterised by claims of sole truth, a rejection of diversity, a tendency to judge other groups, and the justification of coercion or violence. Within educational settings, radicalism can develop through reading materials, communities, organisations, or digital media that disseminate narratives of hatred. Consequently, counter-radicalisation strategies must address learners' understanding, attitudes, social relationships, and ability to filter religious information (Azra, 2019).

Islamic education can serve as a counter-radicalisation strategy by strengthening an understanding of '*Islam wasathiyah*'. This term refers to a moderate, balanced and proportionate approach to understanding and practising religious teachings. '*Islam wasathiyah*' rejects extremism, whether in the form of religious rigidity or the disregard of religious values. In the classroom, this concept can be introduced through the study of the principles of justice, tolerance, consultation, compassion, and respect for diversity. Learners also need to be guided to understand that differences of opinion within the Islamic tradition are part of an intellectual dynamic that does not necessarily have to lead to hostility (Mulyana, 2023).

Religious moderation in Islamic education can be realised through several key indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and acceptance of local traditions or wisdom. National commitment teaches that religious life cannot be separated from one's responsibilities as a citizen. Tolerance encourages pupils to respect the rights of others to practise their beliefs. Rejection of violence emphasises that differences must not be resolved through intimidation or destructive actions. Meanwhile, acceptance of local traditions demonstrates that religious teachings can engage in positive dialogue with culture provided they do not conflict with the fundamental principles of religion (Khasanah et al., 2023).

The implementation of the value of religious moderation needs to be incorporated substantively into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Such integration is not sufficient if it merely involves adding a single specific theme on religious moderation;

rather, it must be reflected in the learning objectives, content, methods and assessment. Content from the Qur'an and Hadith can be linked to themes of peace, brotherhood, justice and respect for humanity. Islamic history can be used to illustrate experiences of coexistence within diverse societies. Meanwhile, materials on creed and ethics can be directed towards fostering humility, refraining from hastily declaring others as unbelievers, and distinguishing between personal beliefs and socially harmful actions (Anfasa & Ja'far, 2025).

Teaching methods also determine the success of education in religious moderation. Teaching that relies solely on lectures and rote learning risks limiting pupils' opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. Conversely, methods such as discussion, case studies, collaborative learning, academic debate and project-based learning can help pupils understand religious issues in greater depth. Teachers can present cases of intolerance, social conflict, hate speech, or the spread of religious hoaxes for analysis based on Islamic principles and national values. In this way, pupils not only understand the concept of moderation but are also able to apply it when facing differences and conflicts in real life (Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Dialogue is one of the key strategies in building students' resilience against radicalism. Through dialogue, students have the opportunity to listen to differing viewpoints, present arguments politely, and understand the reasons behind these differences. Dialogue need not always take the form of interfaith dialogue; it can also involve dialogue between students, between Islamic organisations, between social groups, or between generations (Afwadzi et al., 2024). Islamic education needs to foster a culture of questioning and discussion so that students do not merely passively receive information. The ability to engage in dialogue helps them realise that differences of opinion do not necessarily indicate error, a threat or hostility (Guna et al., 2024); (Aslan & Arifudin, 2025).

Islamic Religious Education teachers play a central role as role models in the practice of religious moderation. Pupils learn not only from the material presented, but also from the way teachers speak, behave, choose examples, and respond to differences. Teachers who treat all pupils fairly can instil the values of equality and respect. Teachers who are open to questions can prevent the development of closed-minded understandings (Pongpalilu & Aslan, 2025); (Cahyono & Aslan, 2025). Furthermore, teachers need the ability to recognise extremist narratives, provide clarification regarding erroneous religious information, and direct pupils to credible sources of knowledge. Consequently, teachers' professionalism is a key component of counter-radicalisation strategies (Azra, 2019). In addition to formal education, religious moderation must also be fostered through school culture and non-formal educational activities. Schools or madrasahs can organise social activities, humanitarian cooperation initiatives, discussions on national identity, cultural events, and community service programmes. These activities provide pupils with the experience of working together with individuals from different backgrounds. Islamic boarding schools, Islamic student organisations, and religious communities can also serve as spaces for nurturing values of tolerance and social responsibility. Research on the implementation of religious moderation in

madrasahs indicates that programmes carried out actively and in an integrated manner can help reduce the risk of radicalisation among pupils (Muis, 2026).

Digital literacy is an integral part of contemporary counter-radicalisation strategies. Pupils need to be equipped with the ability to verify information sources, recognise provocative headlines, distinguish opinion from fact, and understand the patterns of extremist propaganda dissemination. Islamic education can contribute by teaching media ethics based on the principles of *tabayyun*, responsibility, and the prohibition against spreading slander (Wahyudi et al., 2025). Teachers can also encourage pupils to critically analyse religious content on social media, including the use of verses or hadiths taken out of context. Digital literacy, combined with religious literacy, can build pupils' resilience against radical narratives in the digital sphere (Untari et al., 2025).

Strategies for religious moderation must take into account local wisdom and the social character of Indonesian society. The values of mutual cooperation, deliberation, kinship, respect for parents, and care for others are strongly linked to Islamic principles. Integrating local wisdom into learning can make religious moderation more relevant to learners' experiences. Islamic education need not present moderation as an abstract concept, but can explain it through social practices familiar in everyday life. This contextual approach helps learners understand that Islam has the capacity to engage in dialogue with culture and foster social harmony (Arifinsyah et al., 2020).

However, the implementation of religious moderation still faces various obstacles. Some teachers do not yet have an adequate understanding of religious moderation and the pedagogical strategies required to teach it. The curriculum also sometimes continues to focus religious education on knowledge and rote learning, whilst attitudes are not consistently assessed. Outside school, pupils may be influenced by their families, peer groups, religious communities and social media. Economic conditions and limited facilities can also hinder the development of teaching materials and teacher training. Therefore, religious moderation requires sustained policy support, institutional leadership, professional development for teachers, family involvement and community participation (Kholil et al., 2024).

Thus, religious moderation in Islamic education can be understood as a counter-radicalisation strategy that is preventative, educational and constructive. This strategy not only seeks to prevent pupils from adopting violent ideologies, but also to foster critical thinking skills, a tolerant attitude, dialogue skills and a commitment to maintaining peace. The success of religious moderation depends heavily on consistency between the curriculum, teachers' behaviour, school culture, institutional policies, and the learners' social environment. Through comprehensive integration, Islamic education can become a space for shaping a generation that possesses strong religious convictions whilst being able to appreciate diversity and live peacefully within a pluralistic society.

Religious Moderation as a Tool for Strengthening Pupils' Character

Religious moderation is an approach that places religious teachings within a framework of balanced, fair, tolerant and responsible attitudes. In education, religious moderation relates not only to pupils' ability to understand religious concepts, but also to

their ability to translate religious values into social behaviour. Pupils are guided to hold strong convictions without belittling other groups, to practise their religious teachings consistently without extremism, and to be able to build harmonious relationships within a diverse society (Arifinsyah et al., 2020). Therefore, religious moderation holds an important position as an instrument for character building, particularly in fostering religious, tolerant, humanistic, and peace-loving character traits.

Strengthening pupils' character is a vital necessity in the face of social change, technological developments, and the increasing complexity of life's challenges. It is not enough for pupils to be equipped solely with academic knowledge; they also require moral values that can serve as a guide in decision-making (Rosdiana, 2025). The development of digital media enables pupils to access information rapidly, including diverse religious information that is not always reliable. Without strong character, pupils can easily be influenced by intolerant attitudes, narrow-minded fanaticism, hate speech and discriminatory behaviour. In such circumstances, religious moderation serves as a framework of values that helps learners filter information and develop behaviour consistent with religious principles and national life (Putra & Aslan, 2019); (Liliana et al., 2021).

Character education is essentially a process of shaping moral knowledge, moral feelings and moral actions. Learners need not only to know that tolerance and justice are good values, but also to have the awareness to internalise and practise these values. Religious moderation can strengthen these three aspects by linking religious understanding with social attitudes and actions. Pupils understand the fundamental teachings on respecting others, recognise the importance of coexistence, and then apply this in their relationships with friends, teachers, family and the wider community. Thus, religious moderation makes character education more contextual and ensures it does not stop at the mere presentation of theory or moral advice (Rosidi & Aslan, 2025); (Rahayu & Suwandari, 2026).

In Islamic education, religious moderation can be developed through an understanding of the concept of *wasathiyah*. This concept embodies a middle-of-the-road, proportional, balanced, and non-excessive approach to practising one's faith. The attitude of *wasathiyah* teaches pupils to maintain a balance between individual and social interests, between freedom and responsibility, and between religious steadfastness and respect for differences. Through this understanding, pupils can realise that true religious devotion is not only evident in the performance of worship but also in honesty, compassion, courtesy, justice, and respect for the rights of others (Mulyana, 2023).

The value of tolerance is one of the key character traits that can be strengthened through religious moderation. Tolerance does not mean regarding all beliefs as equal, but rather respecting everyone's right to hold and practise their own beliefs. In an educational setting, tolerance can be demonstrated through an attitude of respecting differing opinions, refraining from mocking others' religious practices, avoiding discrimination, and being willing to cooperate in social activities. Pupils who possess a tolerant character will be better able to build positive relationships with peers of different religions,

ethnicities, cultures, organisations, or social backgrounds. Such an attitude forms the basis for creating a safe and inclusive educational environment (Suroso et al., 2021).

In addition to tolerance, religious moderation also reinforces the character trait of justice. Justice teaches pupils to treat others equally, not to be blindly biased, and not to make decisions based on prejudice. In the learning process, the value of justice can be developed through the proportional distribution of tasks, the provision of equal opportunities, and the resolution of conflicts based on facts and dialogue. Teachers can encourage pupils to listen to all parties before forming an opinion on an issue. This practice will help pupils develop the ability to think objectively and avoid judging specific groups based on their religious or social identity (Research, Development and Training Agency, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019).

Empathy is also a vital component of religious moderation. Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings, experiences and needs of others. Islamic education grounded in moderation does not merely teach the vertical relationship between humans and God, but also the horizontal relationships that require people to be mindful of the circumstances of their fellow human beings. Pupils need to be trained to understand the difficulties faced by others, to help friends experiencing problems, and not to form friendships based solely on shared identity. Social service activities, humanitarian visits, group work, and environmental awareness programmes can serve as means to develop empathy in practice (Syibli & Aslan, 2025).

Religious moderation also contributes to the development of a responsible character. Responsibility in religious life does not merely mean performing ritual obligations, but also minding one's words, respecting others, obeying rules, and considering the consequences of every action. Pupils need to understand that the freedom to express opinions must be balanced with the responsibility not to spread slander, insults or hate speech (Hadiyanto et al., 2025). In the digital context, a sense of responsibility is evident in the ability to use social media ethically, to verify information before sharing it, and to avoid content that could damage social relationships. Education in moderation can link teachings on moral responsibility to pupils' behaviour in both the physical and digital worlds (Fuadi et al., 2024).

Character building through religious moderation cannot be achieved simply by delivering teaching materials in the classroom. These values need to be instilled through consistent practice. Activities such as congregational prayer, reading the Qur'an, communal prayer, religious reflection and social activities can serve as means of character building if carried out with a deep understanding. The practice of these rituals needs to be linked to the values of honesty, discipline, empathy and compassion, so that pupils do not view religious activities as mere formal routines. Research on character education based on moderation indicates that structured religious practices, supported by teacher supervision and family involvement, can foster students' religiosity, empathy, responsibility and discipline (Muhibah & Arnadi, 2025).

Teachers play a vital role in establishing religious moderation as a character trait within the school culture. Teachers are figures whom pupils observe and emulate in their daily lives. When teachers demonstrate fairness, openness, courtesy and non-

discrimination, pupils gain concrete examples of how the values of moderation are put into practice. Teachers also need to create learning environments that allow pupils space to ask questions and express their opinions. Differences in answers or understanding should not be immediately regarded as mistakes, but should instead be used as opportunities to foster academic dialogue. Teachers' exemplary behaviour and pedagogical approach will determine whether religious moderation truly becomes a character trait or remains merely a term that pupils have memorised (Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

The school environment is another factor that determines the success of character building. Schools need to foster an institutional culture that respects diversity and rejects all forms of violence. School policies must be applied fairly to all pupils, without discrimination based on religious background, culture, gender or social status. Extracurricular activities can also be directed towards fostering cooperation, leadership, compassion and problem-solving skills. Research on moderation education in multicultural schools indicates that the integration of the values of *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, *tasamuh* and non-violence into the curriculum, school culture and pupil activities can create a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment (Ihsan, 2026).

Families and the wider community also play an integral role in the process of shaping pupils' character. The values of moderation taught at school will be more easily internalised if supported by patterns of communication and behaviour within the family environment. Parents need to set an example in dealing with differences, resolving conflicts and using social media responsibly. Similarly, the community needs to create social spaces that enable pupils to interact healthily with various groups. A discrepancy between the values taught at school and pupils' experiences at home or in the community can hinder the character-building process. Therefore, strengthening religious moderation requires collaboration between schools, families and the community (Kreeft, 2009).

Religious literacy and digital literacy can serve as supporting tools in shaping a moderate character. Religious literacy helps pupils understand religious teachings through reliable sources, recognise the diversity of interpretations, and avoid superficial understandings. Meanwhile, digital literacy equips pupils with the ability to assess the credibility of information, recognise the manipulation of messages, and avoid the dissemination of provocative content. The integration of these two areas will help students become less susceptible to extreme religious information. Students can also be guided to produce digital content that promotes messages of peace, tolerance and social awareness (Hasan & Juhannis, 2024).

Although it holds great potential, the implementation of religious moderation as a tool for character building faces several challenges. These challenges include limitations in teachers' competencies, a lack of contextual teaching materials, weak synergy between schools and families, and inconsistencies in pupils' behaviour when applying the values of moderation. Furthermore, character building is a long-term process, meaning that the results cannot always be measured immediately. Evaluation must also be conducted comprehensively through observation, reflective journals, self-assessment, peer assessment, interviews, and documentation of activities. Assessment should not merely

measure pupils' ability to explain the concept of moderation, but must also examine changes in their behaviour and their ability to deal with differences (Hanafie et al., 2024).

Thus, religious moderation can be viewed as a strategic instrument in strengthening pupils' character as it integrates spiritual, moral, social and national dimensions. Moderation helps pupils become religious individuals without being exclusive, firm in their beliefs without imposing them on others, and open to differences without losing their identity. Character building through religious moderation must be implemented in a planned manner through the curriculum, teachers' exemplary behaviour, religious practices, school culture, digital literacy, and the involvement of families and the community. If applied consistently, religious moderation will not only produce pupils who understand religious teachings but will also shape a generation that is tolerant, fair, empathetic, responsible, disciplined, and capable of living peacefully in a pluralistic society.

Conclusion

Religious moderation in Islamic education is a key strategy for preventing radicalism and intolerance amongst pupils. Religious moderation promotes a balanced, fair, inclusive and contextual understanding of Islam through the strengthening of national commitment, tolerance, an anti-violence stance, and acceptance of cultural diversity. Its implementation requires the integration of the values of moderation into the curriculum, dialogic learning, the strengthening of religious and digital literacy, teachers setting a good example, and the creation of a school culture that respects differences.

Religious moderation also serves as a tool for strengthening pupils' character. The values of moderation can shape a character that is religious, tolerant, fair, empathetic, responsible, peace-loving, capable of critical thinking, and respectful of diversity. Islamic education is not merely about imparting religious knowledge; it must guide pupils to internalise these values in their daily behaviour, including in social interactions and the use of digital media. Thus, a moderate character is formed through a combination of religious understanding, exemplary behaviour, habit formation, social experience and moral reflection.

The success of religious moderation as a strategy for counter-radicalisation and character building requires the support of all elements of the education system, namely schools, teachers, families, the community, religious institutions, and the government. The implementation of moderation must be carried out in a sustainable and substantive manner, rather than merely serving as a slogan or supplementary material in the learning process. This study concludes that Islamic education based on religious moderation is capable of shaping learners who possess strong religious convictions, are open to differences, reject violence, and are able to live peacefully in a pluralistic society.

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