

# STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS MODERATION THROUGH ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: THE ROLE OF ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS FOR GENERATION Z

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**Abstract.** Strengthening religious moderation is a national strategic agenda in responding to the reality of religious, cultural, and social identity pluralism in Indonesia. Islamic Religious Education (IRE) plays an important role in internalizing the values of religious moderation, particularly among Generation Z, who grow up in a digital ecosystem characterized by openness and critical thinking, yet remain vulnerable to exclusive and radical religious narratives. This article aims to systematically examine scholarly literature related to strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education, focusing on the concept of religious moderation, the characteristics of Generation Z and their challenges, the strategic role of Islamic Religious Education teachers, as well as concrete forms and strategies for implementing religious moderation in educational environments. This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research method, analyzing accredited national journal articles indexed in SINTA, reputable international journals, as well as relevant books and official policy documents. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques, including data reduction, thematic categorization, synthesis, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that Islamic Religious Education teachers play a strategic role as educators of moderation values, role models (*qudwah hasanah*), facilitators of dialogue across differences, and agents of education-based deradicalization. Effective strengthening of religious moderation requires the integration of teacher exemplarity, value habituation, innovative pedagogical approaches, the wise use of digital technology, and continuous professional capacity development. This article is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to the development of Islamic Religious Education oriented toward the formation of a moderate, tolerant, and civilized Muslim generation..

**Keywords:** Religious Moderation, Islamic Religious Education, IRE Teachers, Generation Z, Moderate Islamic Education

## I. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation of taxation is the use of Religious, cultural, and social identity pluralism is a fundamental reality of the Indonesian nation. Within this context, strengthening religious moderation has become a national strategic agenda explicitly mainstreamed in the policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. Religious moderation is understood as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religiosity that emphasizes justice, balance, tolerance, and the rejection of violence and extremism (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). Islamic Religious Education (IRE) occupies a central position in internalizing the values of religious moderation, particularly among Generation Z—those who were born and raised within a digital ecosystem, social media environment, and massive global information flows. On the one hand, Generation Z is characterized by openness, critical thinking, and adaptability; on the other hand, they are also vulnerable to exclusive, radical, and intolerant religious narratives widely disseminated in digital spaces (Rahman et al., 2022).

Islamic Religious Education teachers no longer function

merely as transmitters of religious knowledge but serve as agents of moderation, value exemplars, and facilitators of inclusive learning that is contextualized to contemporary challenges. Numerous studies indicate that the success of religious moderation education is strongly determined by teachers' capacity to integrate values such as *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balance), and *i'tidal* (justice) into learning processes, personal exemplarity, and school culture (Hayati et al., 2025; Novianto, 2021). Based on this urgency, this article aims to systematically review scholarly literature on strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education, focusing on: (1) the concept of religious moderation, (2) the characteristics of Generation Z and the challenges faced by IRE teachers, (3) the strategic role of IRE teachers, and (4) concrete forms and strategies for implementing religious moderation in educational settings.

Furthermore, socio-religious dynamics in the digital era indicate that formal educational spaces serve as strategic arenas for shaping the religious perspectives of younger generations. Schools function not only as institutions for

knowledge transfer but also as spaces for value internalization, attitude habituation, and the formation of national character. In this context, Islamic Religious Education is expected to present inclusive, moderate, and contextual Islamic narratives aligned with Indonesia's pluralistic reality. Learning processes oriented toward religious moderation are expected to equip students with critical thinking skills, tolerant attitudes, and ethical awareness in responding to differences in religious beliefs and practices within a multicultural society.

Although numerous studies on religious moderation and Islamic education have been conducted, most focus on policy aspects or normative implementation, while relatively few examine the concrete role of IRE teachers in addressing the distinctive characteristics of Generation Z. Differences in generational traits necessitate adaptive and innovative pedagogical approaches, including the utilization of digital technology and participatory learning strategies. Therefore, this literature review is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Islamic Religious Education oriented toward strengthening religious moderation, as well as serving as a reference for teachers, researchers, and policymakers in formulating relevant religious education strategies for contemporary challenges.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. This method was selected because the research aims to examine, analyze, and synthesize various scholarly findings related to strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly regarding the role of IRE teachers in shaping the moderate character of Generation Z. The research data consist of secondary sources obtained from various academic literatures, including accredited national journal articles (SINTA 2 and SINTA 3), reputable international journals indexed in Scopus, academic books, and official documents especially policy documents issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia concerning religious moderation. Relevant proceedings and research reports related to Islamic education, religious moderation, and Generation Z were also included.

The analyzed literature was published within the last five to ten years to ensure the novelty and relevance of the study. Data collection was conducted through systematic literature searches using academic databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, Garuda, SINTA, and Scopus. Keywords used included religious moderation, Islamic religious education, the role of IRE teachers, Generation Z, and religious moderation in education. Each source was selected based on topic relevance, journal reputation, and suitability within the context of Islamic education in Indonesia. Data analysis employed content analysis techniques consisting of data reduction, thematic categorization, synthesis and interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Data validity was ensured through source triangulation by comparing findings from various national and international authors and journals. The use of reputable references (SINTA- and Scopus-indexed sources) further

enhanced the validity and credibility of the study.

## III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### **The Concept of Religious Moderation in the Perspective of Islamic Education**

Religious moderation is rooted in the concept of *ummatan wasathan* (Qur'an, Al-Baqarah: 143), which emphasizes a middle path characterized by justice and balance in religious life. Hayati et al. (2025) assert that religious moderation in Islamic education is not merely a normative discourse but a practical value that must be internalized in students' behavior. The four pillars of religious moderation—national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture—are aligned with the principles of moderate Islam such as *tawassuth*, *tasamuh*, and *tawazun* (Novianto, 2021).

### **Characteristics of Generation Z and Challenges for Islamic Religious Education Teachers**

Generation Z is characterized by high digital literacy, critical thinking patterns, and a preference for visual and interactive learning. However, unfiltered exposure to religious content on social media renders them vulnerable to misinformation, ideological polarization, and identity-based extremism (Rahman et al., 2022). The primary challenge for IRE teachers is to present religious moderation values in a relevant, dialogical, and contextual manner without compromising the substance of Islamic teachings.

### **The Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Strengthening Religious Moderation**

The literature indicates that IRE teachers play roles as educators of moderation values, role models (*qudwah hasanah*), facilitators of dialogue across differences, and agents of education-based deradicalization. Teacher exemplarity has a significant correlation with students' tolerant and inclusive attitudes (Abdullah et al., 2020).

As educators of moderation values, IRE teachers are responsible for transforming the Islamic teachings of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into learning materials, methods, and evaluation processes. Values such as justice, balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity are not merely conveyed cognitively but are internalized through dialogical and reflective pedagogical approaches. Moderation-oriented IRE learning encourages students to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively and contextually rather than textually, thereby fostering inclusive religiosity and national awareness (Novianto, 2021).

Moreover, the role of IRE teachers as facilitators of dialogue across differences and agents of education-based deradicalization has become increasingly relevant amid growing religious polarization in public spaces, particularly among youth. IRE teachers create safe and open learning environments that allow students to discuss, question, and express religious views critically yet respectfully. Through constructive dialogue and moderation-based learning, teachers can prevent the development of exclusive and radical attitudes from an early age while fostering awareness of peaceful coexistence within multicultural societies (Serevinna Dewita, 2023).

### **Concrete Forms and Strategies of the Role of Islamic Religious Education Teachers**

Teacher exemplarity in demonstrating fairness, openness, and respect for diversity is the most effective method in value education (Faqihuddin, 2021). Habituation through inclusive religious activities such as school culture programs, collective prayers, cross-perspective discussions, and socio-religious activities has proven effective in strengthening the internalization of religious moderation (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, 2023). The use of digital technology, moderate Islamic content, and interactive learning platforms can serve as counter-narratives to extremist content on social media (Rahman et al., 2022). Strengthening character and akhlakul karimah based on moderation such as honesty, justice, empathy, and social responsibility represents a concrete manifestation of religious moderation in daily life.

### **Dynamics of Religious Moderation Understanding among Islamic Religious Education Teachers**

Several studies indicate variations in IRE teachers' understanding of religious moderation, influenced by educational background, experience, and access to training. Therefore, continuous professional development through sustained training programs is an urgent necessity (Serevinna Dewita, 2023).

Differences in teachers' understanding of religious moderation are influenced not only by individual factors but also by institutional contexts and educational policies. Teachers with moderate Islamic educational backgrounds and experience in moderation training tend to integrate values of tolerance, justice, and balance more systematically into learning practices. Conversely, limited access to continuous professional development may result in partial and normative understandings of religious moderation, which are not fully implemented in daily pedagogical practices (Novianto, 2021; Wahid, 2024).

Furthermore, the dynamics of religious moderation understanding among IRE teachers are influenced by digital-era challenges that present diverse religious interpretations and narratives in virtual public spaces. IRE teachers are required to possess digital literacy and critical thinking skills to filter and contextualize religious information circulating on social media before conveying it to students. Consequently, teacher capacity-building programs should emphasize not only conceptual aspects of religious moderation but also pedagogical competencies and digital literacy grounded in moderate Islamic values. These efforts are essential to enable IRE teachers to function optimally as agents of religious moderation and mentors for young generations navigating the complexity of religiosity in plural societies (Rahman et al., 2022; Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2022)

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

This literature review confirms that strengthening religious moderation through Islamic Religious Education is largely determined by the strategic role of IRE teachers. IRE teachers function not only as instructors but also as value

exemplars, dialogue facilitators, and agents of moderate character formation for Generation Z. Effective implementation of religious moderation requires the integration of teacher exemplarity, value habituation, innovative pedagogical approaches, and the wise utilization of digital technology. Thus, Islamic Religious Education holds significant potential as both an ideological safeguard and a medium for shaping a moderate, tolerant, and civilized Muslim generation. Furthermore, the success of strengthening religious moderation cannot be separated from the continuous enhancement of IRE teachers' professional capacity. Systematic training programs that are field-based and oriented toward strengthening conceptual understanding, pedagogical competence, and digital literacy are essential prerequisites for enabling IRE teachers to respond adaptively and contextually to the religious dynamics of Generation Z. Institutional policy support and synergy among schools, government, and society also constitute key supporting factors in creating an educational ecosystem conducive to the internalization of religious moderation values.

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