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The Transformation of Islamic Religious Education in General Higher Education Institutions to Strengthen Religious Moderation, Academic Ethics and Students' Spiritual Awareness

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public universities in terms of strengthening religious moderation, academic ethics and students' spiritual awareness. The method used is a literature review (library research) employing a descriptive-analytical approach through the synthesis of various relevant academic sources. The results of the study indicate that PAI education has strategic potential to transform from a normative and textual model into an integrative, contextual, and value-based model. This transformation encompasses three main dimensions, namely the strengthening of religious moderation through the internalisation of the values of tawasuth, tasamuh, i'tidal and musyawarah; the strengthening of academic ethics through the instilling of the values of honesty, trustworthiness and scientific responsibility; and the enhancement of spiritual awareness through a reflective approach and experiential learning. The research findings confirm that the integration of these three dimensions produces a strong synergy in shaping students' well-rounded and balanced character. Religious moderation fosters an inclusive worldview, academic ethics cultivates moral integrity, and spiritual awareness provides depth of meaning to life. The success of transforming PAI learning requires support from various parties, including lecturers as facilitators of values, educational institutions through holistic curriculum policies, and the government in providing supportive regulations. This research makes a conceptual contribution in the form of an integrative framework for PAI learning that can serve as a reference for the development of religious education in public universities. The practical implications of this research are the need for PAI learning designs that are more dialogical, participatory and experience-based, as well as evaluations that measure not only cognitive aspects but also students' affective and spiritual dimensions.

Keywords: Learning Transformation, Islamic Religious Education, Religious Moderation, Academic Ethics, Spiritual Awareness, Public Universities.

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in public universities plays a strategic role in shaping the character of students who are not only intellectually outstanding but also possess moral integrity and spiritual depth. In the context of an increasingly complex higher education landscape, PAI can no longer be viewed merely as a supplementary subject, but rather as a foundation for building a well-rounded and balanced student personality (Widjaja et al., 2022); (Zou et al., 2021). Therefore, efforts are needed to transform PAI learning to make it more relevant to the dynamics of the times.

Rapid social change, characterised by globalisation and the development of digital technology, has had a significant impact on students' mindsets and behaviour. The unstoppable flow of information often gives rise to narrow, even extreme, religious views (Aslan, 2019). In these circumstances, Islamic Education (PAI) in public universities is required to act as both a bulwark and a filter in shaping a moderate and inclusive religious outlook.

Religious moderation has become one of the key issues in education today. This concept emphasises balance in understanding and practising religious teachings without going to extremes or neglecting the fundamental values of religion (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021); (Yudiawan and Himmah, 2023). As centres for the development of knowledge, higher education institutions have a responsibility to instil these values of moderation through systematic and continuous learning. However, the reality is that Islamic Education (PAI) teaching in general higher education institutions still tends to be normative and lacks contextual relevance. The dominant lecture-based method often fails to stimulate students' critical awareness (Safitri et al., 2025); (Mulyadi, 2025). Consequently, students are less able to relate religious values to the social realities they face in their daily lives.

In addition to the issue of religious moderation, another challenge facing the world of higher education is the decline in students' academic ethics. The phenomena of plagiarism, exam cheating and a 'quick-fix' attitude towards learning are indicative of weak academic integrity (Firdaus et al., 2026). This situation indicates that education has not yet fully succeeded in instilling the values of honesty and scientific responsibility. In this regard, Islamic Education (PAI) has great potential to contribute to the strengthening of academic ethics. The values of honesty (ṣidq), trustworthiness and responsibility taught in Islam should be internalised in students' academic activities (Mulyana, 2023); (Rifdillah, 2025). However, without the right teaching approach, these values are difficult to realise in practice.

On the other hand, the rise of modernity has also led to a decline in students' spiritual awareness. A fast-paced and materialistic lifestyle often causes students to lose sight of the deeper meaning of life (Wigglesworth, 2014). This has the potential to trigger an existential crisis that affects their mental health and quality of life. Spiritual awareness is a vital aspect in shaping well-rounded individuals who maintain a balance between intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions. From an Islamic perspective, spirituality is not merely about ritual worship, but also involves an awareness of the purpose of life and one's relationship with God and fellow human beings (Suhendi et al., 2020). Therefore, Islamic Education (PAI) must be designed to holistically develop students' spiritual dimension.

The transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) is essential in addressing these various challenges. This transformation encompasses a shift in paradigms, methods, and learning approaches towards those that are more participatory, contextual, and experiential (Kolb, 2014); (Aslan Aslan and Pong, 2026). Consequently, students will not only understand religious teachings cognitively but will also be able to internalise them in their daily lives. Furthermore, the integration of religious moderation, academic ethics and spiritual awareness in Islamic Education (PAI) will produce a strong synergy in the character development of students. These three aspects complement one another and are inseparable. Religious moderation shapes one's worldview, academic ethics shape behaviour, and spirituality shapes inner awareness (Ihsan, 2026).

As educational institutions, public universities play a vital role in implementing this transformation through policy, curriculum and academic culture. Lecturers in Islamic Education are expected to act as facilitators capable of creating a learning environment that is dialogue-based and reflective (Mulyana, 2023). Through this approach, students can develop into individuals who are critical, tolerant and of high integrity.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of Islamic Religious Education in general higher education institutions is an urgent necessity. This transformation is aimed at strengthening religious moderation, enhancing academic ethics, and fostering students' spiritual awareness. Therefore, this article aims to examine in depth how such a transformation can be effectively implemented within the context of higher education.

METHOD

This study employs a literature review methodology, which involves collecting and analysing various sources of literature relevant to the topic of the transformation of Islamic Religious Education in general higher education institutions. Data sources were obtained from academic books, scientific journal articles, research reports, and official documents relating to religious moderation, academic ethics, and the spiritual awareness of students (Patten, 2016). Data analysis was conducted using a descriptive-analytical technique by examining, comparing and synthesising various concepts and findings from previous research to produce a comprehensive and systematic understanding. This approach was chosen to provide a strong theoretical foundation and to enrich perspectives in formulating a model of learning transformation relevant to the context of higher education (Eliyah and Aslan, 2025).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Transformation of Islamic Education in Strengthening Religious Moderation

The transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) to strengthen religious moderation has become one of the main focuses in efforts to revitalise religious education in public universities. In the context of a multicultural society such as Indonesia, religious moderation is not merely an option, but an urgent necessity to maintain social harmony and prevent the spread of radical ideologies (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021); (Aslan and Abdurrahman, 2026). Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in instilling these values of moderation through a systematic and continuous learning process (Zulkarnain et al., 2025).

The concept of religious moderation refers to a balanced understanding and practice of religious teachings, avoiding extremes on either the right or the left, and prioritising tolerance towards differences (Ihsan, 2026); (Aslan, 2026). From an Islamic perspective, this moderation is reflected in the principles of tawasuth (the middle way), tasamuh (tolerance), i'tidal (justice) and syura (consultation), which form the foundation for interacting with fellow human beings (Anwar and Muhayati, 2021). These values need to be internalised from an early age through education, particularly at universities as centres for the intellectual and moral development of the younger generation. However, the reality is that Islamic Education (PAI) teaching at many universities still tends to be normative and textual in nature. The teaching material focuses more on rote learning and religious doctrine without providing space for students to think critically and contextually (Amrah et al., 2026). This situation results in students' limited ability to understand diversity and respond to complex religious issues in society.

Therefore, the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching is essential. This transformation involves a paradigm shift from one-way teaching to a dialogic and participatory approach. Students need to be actively involved in discussions, case studies and reflections on the social realities they face (Muvid et al., 2023). With this approach, students not only understand religious teachings cognitively, but are also able to internalise them in their attitudes and behaviour. One strategy for this transformation is the integration of the values of religious moderation into the PAI curriculum. This integration can be carried out thematically and contextually, so that values such as tolerance, justice and humanity become an integral part of the learning material (Patih et al., 2023). For example, when discussing the concept of jihad, students are encouraged to understand the true meaning of jihad as a struggle for good, rather than as a justification for violence.

Furthermore, the use of digital technology is also an effective means of strengthening religious moderation. Digital learning platforms such as e-learning, interactive videos and social media can be used to deliver Islamic Education (PAI) content that is inclusive and adapted to the changing times (Amrah et al., 2026). However, adequate digital literacy is required so that students are able to filter information and avoid religious content that has the potential to be radical.

The role of Islamic Education lecturers is also crucial in this transformation. Lecturers do not merely act as teachers, but also as facilitators and role models in adopting a moderate approach. Lecturers' competence in understanding the concept of moderation, mastering

values-based teaching methods, and being able to create a dialogue-based learning environment are key factors in the success (Anfasa & Ja'far, 2025). Therefore, ongoing training for PAI lecturers must be a priority in education policy.

The transformation of Islamic Education must also involve synergy between higher education institutions, families and the community. Parents can act as supervisors and partners in ensuring that students' religious understanding remains within the bounds of moderation. Meanwhile, the community can provide support through religious literacy initiatives that emphasise dialogue, peace and cross-group cooperation (Zulkarnain et al., 2025). This synergy will create an educational ecosystem conducive to strengthening religious moderation.

The impact of the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) based on religious moderation is highly significant. Students who receive religious education based on moderation have been shown to be better able to think critically, possess good religious digital literacy, and adopt an inclusive and tolerant attitude towards diversity (Anwar and Muhayati, 2021). They are also more resilient to provocation and extremist religious narratives. Furthermore, this transformation contributes to the character development of students who are not only academically excellent but also act as agents of peace and guardians of social harmony. University graduates who possess an understanding of religious moderation will be at the forefront of preventing conflict and building a peaceful society (Azra, 2019). This is in line with the vision of Islam as 'rahmatan lil 'alamin', which brings compassion to all of creation.

However, challenges remain in implementing this transformation. One such challenge is resistance from certain quarters that still adhere to an exclusive understanding of religion. Furthermore, limited resources and infrastructure at some higher education institutions also pose obstacles (Muvid et al., 2023). Therefore, a strong commitment from various stakeholders is required to overcome these obstacles. Education policy must also support this transformation through clear regulations and adequate budget allocation. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs can collaborate in drafting guidelines for the implementation of religious moderation within the Islamic Education (PAI) curriculum at higher education institutions (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Monitoring and evaluation must also be carried out regularly to ensure the effectiveness of implementation.

In the long term, the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) based on religious moderation will foster a generation of Muslims who are critical-thinking, tolerant and firmly rooted in humanistic values. They will become agents of change capable of tackling global challenges without losing their Islamic identity. Thus, the integration of religious moderation into the Islamic Education curriculum at higher education institutions is both an urgent necessity and a vital strategy in building a peaceful and just multicultural society.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) to promote religious moderation requires a holistic and systematic approach. The integration of the values of moderation, the use of technology, the strengthening of lecturers' competencies, and synergy amongst various stakeholders are key to the success of this transformation. With a shared commitment, Islamic Education in public universities can become an effective instrument in shaping students who are moderate, inclusive, and contribute to the nation's peace.

The Transformation of PAI Teaching to Strengthen Academic Ethics

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) to strengthen academic ethics is a crucial aspect of efforts to build integrity and quality in higher education in Indonesia. Academic ethics is a set of norms and values that govern the behaviour of students and lecturers in academic activities, including honesty, responsibility, objectivity, and respect for the work of others (Zulkarnain et al., 2025). In this context, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in instilling these ethical values through an integrative and values-based approach to learning.

The decline in academic ethics in higher education is becoming an increasingly worrying phenomenon. Cases of plagiarism, exam malpractice, data fabrication and a pragmatic attitude towards learning are indicative of a weak internalisation of the value of integrity (Poncini, 2023). This situation not only harms educational institutions, but also has the potential to

produce graduates who lack credibility and professional responsibility. Therefore, strengthening academic ethics through Islamic Education (PAI) is an urgent necessity.

From an Islamic perspective, academic ethics are closely linked to the values of faith and piety. Honesty (ṣidq), trustworthiness and responsibility are fundamental principles taught in Islam and must be reflected in all scholarly activities (Suhendi et al., 2020). Islamic Education (PAI) can serve as a vehicle for internalising these values so that students not only understand them cognitively but also implement them in their daily academic practice. However, PAI teaching in many higher education institutions is still not optimal in terms of integrating academic ethical values. The teaching materials tend to be normative in nature and are not sufficiently linked to the academic contexts relevant to students' fields of study (Putro, 2022). Consequently, students find it difficult to connect religious values with their academic responsibilities as members of the academic community.

A transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) is required to address these limitations. This transformation involves a shift in approach from the mere imparting of doctrine to contextual and reflective learning. Students need to be encouraged to reflect on the meaning of honesty, trustworthiness and responsibility within the context of their respective academic disciplines (Hasan and Juhannis, 2024a). In this way, academic ethical values are not viewed as a burden, but rather as an integral part of their Islamic identity.

One transformation strategy is the integration of academic ethical values into every topic covered in Islamic Education (PAI). For example, when discussing the concept of 'amanah' (trustworthiness), lecturers can link it to students' responsibility to complete assignments and sit examinations without cheating. Or, when discussing the prohibition against infringing upon others' rights, this can be linked to the dangers of plagiarism and the importance of respecting the intellectual work of others (Muis, 2026). This approach makes learning more relevant and meaningful. Furthermore, the value-based learning model is also effective in reinforcing academic ethics. This model emphasises the internalisation of values through discussion, reflection and direct practice. Students are encouraged to analyse cases of academic misconduct and reflect on their impact on themselves and society (Kholil et al., 2024). Through this process, students are expected to develop an intrinsic awareness to avoid unethical behaviour.

The role of Islamic Education lecturers is also crucial in this transformation. Lecturers do not merely function as teachers, but also as role models in ethical conduct. Their integrity in assessment, research and teaching will serve as a tangible example for students (Putra and Aslan, 2019). Consequently, lecturers must demonstrate a strong commitment to academic ethics and be capable of fostering a learning environment that supports the internalisation of these values.

Learning assessments should also be designed to measure not only cognitive aspects, but also students' affective and behavioural dimensions. Assessment of academic ethical values such as honesty in completing assignments, responsibility regarding deadlines, and healthy collaboration in group work (Djamaluddin et al., 2024). In this way, students become accustomed to internalising these values in all their academic activities.

An academic culture within higher education institutions also needs to be fostered to support the strengthening of academic ethics through PAI. Institutions can develop programmes such as academic integrity seminars, anti-plagiarism campaigns, and awards for students who demonstrate ethical behaviour (Abidin et al., 2025). These programmes will reinforce the messages conveyed in PAI teaching and create a conducive academic ecosystem.

The impact of the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) learning based on academic ethics is highly significant. Students who receive religious education integrated with ethical values have been shown to demonstrate greater integrity in their studies and research (Puspitasari et al., 2022). They are also more aware of the consequences of academic misconduct, both for themselves and for the reputation of the educational institution. Furthermore, the reinforcement of academic ethics through PAI contributes to the character development of graduates who are not only professionally competent but also possess high moral integrity. Graduates of this kind will be a valuable asset to society and the world of work, as they can be trusted and are responsible in carrying out their duties (Kersten, 2017). This is in

line with the national educational objective of producing individuals who are faithful, God-fearing and of noble character. However, challenges in implementing this transformation remain. One such challenge is resistance from some students who have become accustomed to a culture of instant gratification and pragmatism. Furthermore, time constraints and limited resources in Islamic Education (PAI) also pose obstacles (Nurazizah et al., 2022). Therefore, innovation and a strong commitment from various parties are required to overcome these obstacles.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching to strengthen academic ethics requires a holistic and systematic approach. The integration of ethical values, values-based learning models, lecturers setting a good example, and a conducive academic culture are key to the success of this transformation. With a shared commitment, PAI in public higher education institutions can serve as an effective instrument in shaping students who possess integrity, a sense of responsibility, and noble character in their academic activities.

The Transformation of PAI Teaching to Enhance Students' Spiritual Awareness

The transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) in enhancing students' spiritual awareness is a fundamental aspect of efforts to develop a well-rounded and balanced personality in students. Spiritual awareness is a crucial dimension that distinguishes humans from other creatures, as it relates to the ability to reflect on the meaning of life, the purpose of existence, and one's relationship with God (Zohar, 2012). In the context of higher education, which is becoming increasingly materialistic and pragmatic, Islamic Education (PAI) plays a strategic role in fostering this spiritual awareness through holistic and transformative learning.

The phenomenon of a crisis of spirituality amongst university students is becoming increasingly worrying in the digital age. The fast-paced nature of life, academic pressure and the influence of social media often cause students to lose sight of a deeper meaning to life (Wicaksono, 2021). This is evident in the rising incidence of stress, depression and feelings of emptiness amongst students, despite their high academic achievements. This situation indicates that higher education has not yet fully succeeded in developing students' spiritual dimension.

From an Islamic perspective, spirituality is not merely concerned with ritual worship, but also with an awareness of the wisdom behind creation and the purpose of human life as vicegerents on earth (Darda et al., 2026). Islamic Education (PAI) should serve as a vehicle for developing this awareness, so that students are not only intellectually astute, but also possess a spiritual depth that serves as a foundation for facing life's various challenges. However, PAI teaching in many higher education institutions still tends to focus on cognitive and normative aspects. The teaching material places greater emphasis on the rote learning of religious concepts and doctrines without providing space for students to experience and feel the spiritual meaning of these teachings (Nisa et al., 2021). Consequently, students have a superficial understanding of religion and are unable to internalise it in their daily lives.

A transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching is required to address these limitations. This transformation involves a paradigm shift from an informative approach to a transformative and experiential one. Students need to be encouraged to directly experience spiritual practices such as tahajud prayer, dhikr, meditation and self-reflection, which can foster spiritual awareness (Zohar, 2012). With this approach, students not only understand religious teachings theoretically, but also feel their impact on their inner lives. One strategy for this transformation is the integration of a reflective approach into every topic of Islamic Education. Students are encouraged to reflect on the meaning of verses from the Qur'an and hadiths in the context of their own lives, and to relate them to their personal experiences and the challenges they face (Wicaksono, 2021). For example, when discussing the concept of patience, students can be encouraged to reflect on their experiences of facing difficulties and how the value of patience can help them through tough times.

Furthermore, the use of experiential learning methods is also effective in enhancing spiritual awareness. This model emphasises students' direct involvement in meaningful spiritual activities, such as retreats, visits to children's homes, or community service

programmes linked to Islamic values (Kolb, 2014). Through these experiences, students can directly experience spiritual values and their impact on their lives.

The role of Islamic Education lecturers is also crucial in this transformation. Lecturers serve not only as teachers but also as spiritual mentors who can set an example in religious life. The emotional bond between lecturers and students, as well as the lecturers' ability to create a safe space for dialogue to discuss spiritual issues, are key factors in fostering students' spiritual awareness (Nasution, 2024).

The campus environment also needs to be developed to support the enhancement of spiritual awareness through Islamic Education (PAI). Institutions can develop programmes such as dzikir gatherings, studies of classical Islamic texts, or other spiritual activities in which students participate on a voluntary basis (Hefner, 2023). These programmes will reinforce the messages conveyed in Islamic Education lessons and create a campus ecosystem conducive to students' spiritual development.

The impact of the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching based on spiritual awareness is highly significant. Students with a high level of spiritual awareness have been shown to be better able to cope with stress and academic pressure (Zohar, 2012). They also possess strong intrinsic motivation to learn, as they understand that the pursuit of knowledge is part of their worship and their responsibility as human beings.

Furthermore, increased spiritual awareness contributes to the development of students' character, ensuring they are not only academically excellent but also emotionally and spiritually balanced. Students of this kind will become graduates who are not only competent in their fields but also possess a high level of social and moral sensitivity in contributing to society (Sulastri et al., 2023); (Subaidi and Jahari, 2023). This is in line with the national educational objective of producing individuals who are faithful, God-fearing and of noble character. However, challenges in implementing this transformation remain. One of these is resistance from some students who are accustomed to a materialistic and pragmatic mindset. Furthermore, time and resource constraints in Islamic Education (PAI) teaching also pose obstacles, particularly in general higher education institutions with a heavy curriculum load (Muharrom et al., 2023). Therefore, innovation and a strong commitment from various parties are required to overcome these obstacles.

Education policy must also support this transformation by integrating spiritual values into all aspects of campus life. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Religious Affairs could collaborate on drawing up guidelines for the development of students' spirituality through Islamic Education (PAI) in higher education institutions (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2021). Monitoring and evaluation should also be carried out regularly to ensure the effectiveness of implementation.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) to enhance students' spiritual awareness requires a holistic and systematic approach. The integration of a reflective approach, experience-based learning, lecturers setting a good example, and a conducive campus environment are key to the success of this transformation. With a shared commitment, PAI in public higher education institutions can become an effective instrument in shaping students who are not only intellectually intelligent but also possess a depth of spirituality that serves as a foundation for facing life's various challenges.

DISCUSSION

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in public higher education institutions, aimed at strengthening religious moderation, academic ethics and students' spiritual awareness, possesses significant unique features compared to previous studies. The novelty of this research lies in its endeavour to integrate these three key dimensions simultaneously within a single learning framework, rather than treating them as separate, stand-alone issues. Many previous studies have tended to focus on religious moderation, academic ethics, or student spirituality in isolation, whereas this study views all three as an

interconnected ecosystem for the formation of students' character. This integrative approach is important because the challenges faced by students in higher education lie not only in their understanding of religion, but also in how they conduct themselves in academic settings and their ability to find spiritual meaning in life (Azra, 2019).

Furthermore, another distinctive feature of this study is its emphasis on the transformation of learning, rather than merely evaluating the learning outcomes of Islamic Education. This means that the focus of this study is not only on what students learn, but also on how the learning process is designed to shape their perspectives, attitudes and behaviour. In this context, learning transformation is understood as a paradigm shift from a predominantly informative and textual model towards a model that is dialogical, reflective, contextual and value-oriented. This distinguishes this study from many other studies that still focus solely on teaching materials or cognitive outcomes (Nurcahyadi et al., 2026).

The main findings of this study indicate that Islamic Education (PAI) has great potential as a tool for strengthening religious moderation, academic ethics and spiritual awareness amongst students when designed in an integrated manner. In terms of religious moderation, PAI can instil the values of tawasuth, tasamuh, i'tidal and musyawarah through a contextual and participatory approach. In terms of academic ethics, PAI education can foster honesty, responsibility and respect for scholarly work through the internalisation of the values of amanah and ṣidq. Meanwhile, in the spiritual dimension, PAI education is capable of encouraging students to reflect more deeply on the meaning of life, the purpose of existence and their relationship with God.

This finding is significant because it demonstrates that Islamic Education (PAI) in public universities should not be understood merely as a normative subject, but rather as a strategic space for character development. In the context of higher education, characterised by academic rationality, competition and digital culture, students often face pressures that can undermine their integrity and spiritual balance. Therefore, the integration of these three dimensions is relevant to addressing the challenges of modern education. In other words, transformational PAI learning does not merely educate students to 'know' religious teachings, but also to 'live' by those religious values.

When compared with research on religious moderation, the findings of this study are consistent with the study by which emphasises the importance of Islamic Education (PAI) in fostering moderate attitudes in higher education. However, this study broadens the scope of its analysis by not limiting itself to the aspect of moderation, but rather linking it to academic ethics and student spirituality. The study by Nurcahyadi et al. (2026) Digital transformation has altered patterns of religious practice in society and introduced new challenges to Islamic Education, particularly related to the increasing spread of intolerance, identity polarization, and low levels of religious digital literacy. This study aims to analyze religious moderation as a foundation for reconstructing Islamic Education in the digital era. The research employs a qualitative approach using descriptive-analytical library research through the analysis of various scholarly literature, books, and policy documents related to religious moderation, Islamic Education, and digital literacy. Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman interactive model through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that religious moderation functions not only as an instrument for strengthening tolerance but has also evolved into a paradigm for reconstructing Islamic Education across epistemological, pedagogical, and axiological dimensions. The principles of wasathiyah, including balance (tawazun), justice (i'tidal), tolerance (tasamuh), inclusivity, and anti-extremism, serve as foundational values in developing an Islamic Education system that is dialogical, contextual, and adaptive to social change. The reconstruction of Islamic Education based on religious moderation also requires the integration of digital literacy, the strengthening of inclusive school culture, and the development of contextual curricula. Therefore, Islamic Education in the digital era is expected to produce religious individuals who are inclusive, critical, adaptive to change, and possess social responsibility within a pluralistic society also indicates that the integration of the value of moderation into Islamic Education (PAI) materials should be directed towards tolerance and justice, and these results are consistent with the

findings of this study. The difference lies in the fact that this study emphasises that the value of moderation will be more effective if supported by a strong ecosystem of academic ethics and spiritual awareness.

A comparison with the study by Surachman and Nazib (2024) reveals similarities regarding the importance of Islamic Education (PAI) in fostering moderate attitudes and a tolerant character. by Surachman and Nazib (2024) emphasises that PAI in schools plays a vital role in shaping students who understand Islamic teachings in a moderate manner. This study aligns with these ideas, but the higher education context adds a new dimension, as students are at a stage of intellectual development characterised by greater critical thinking and autonomy. Consequently, the approach to learning in higher education needs to be more dialogical, reflective and experience-based so that the internalisation of the value of moderation can take place more deeply.

Studies on academic ethics also provide a clear point of convergence with this research. Suhaila et al., (2025) emphasise that academic ethics are founded on honesty, responsibility and respect for scholarly work, whilst Hasan and Juhannis, (2024b) demonstrate that Islamic values are highly relevant in shaping academic integrity. This study reinforces this view by positioning academic ethics not as a separate domain from Islamic Education (PAI), but as an inherent part of religious education. Thus, these findings support the argument that the crisis in academic ethics cannot be adequately addressed through administrative regulations alone, but also requires the cultivation of students' moral and religious awareness.

In terms of spirituality, the findings of this study are consistent with those of Zohar's ' which emphasises the importance of spiritual intelligence in shaping the meaning of life and inner resilience. Salisah et al. (2024) also demonstrate that Islamic Education (PAI) can enhance students' spiritual awareness and character if delivered in a transformative manner. This study reinforces these findings by emphasising that students' spirituality does not develop automatically, but rather requires a pedagogical process that provides space for reflection, experience and the internalisation of values. The similarity in these findings is likely due to a shared focus on the needs of modern students who face academic pressures and a crisis of meaning in life.

However, there is an important difference between this study and some previous studies, particularly with regard to integration. Many earlier studies focused on a single specific dimension—for example, religious moderation alone or academic ethics alone—meaning that their contributions tended to be fragmented. This study differs in that it views religious moderation, academic ethics and spirituality as three mutually reinforcing pillars in PAI learning. This difference may be influenced by differences in conceptual design and research objectives, as this study was specifically designed to develop a more comprehensive synthesis model addressing the problems faced by students at public universities (Nurcahyadi et al., 2026).

Furthermore, the differences in results can also be explained by the research context. Studies conducted in schools or madrasahs naturally have different characteristics in terms of learners, the learning environment and educational objectives compared to general higher education institutions. Students at higher education institutions are generally more autonomous, more critical and more exposed to diverse religious discourses; consequently, the approach to teaching Islamic Education must be more flexible and contextual. Consequently, this research emphasises that the transformation of learning in higher education requires strategies that not only teach values but also foster students' reflective awareness and critical thinking skills (Surachman and Nazib, 2024).

The main contribution of this research to the field of Islamic Religious Education is that it offers an integrative framework linking religious moderation, academic ethics and spiritual awareness within a single learning model. This framework broadens the perspective on Islamic Religious Education as a subject that is not merely normative, but also transformative. Thus, this research fills a gap in the literature, which has hitherto tended to examine these aspects separately. This contribution is significant because religious education in higher education

needs to address contemporary challenges in a more comprehensive manner, rather than in a piecemeal fashion.

From an academic perspective, this study enriches the discourse on the transformation of Islamic Education pedagogy by emphasising that values-based learning must be accompanied by the development of academic and spiritual habitus. This means that religious education must not stop at the transfer of knowledge, but must bring about changes in behaviour and life orientation. This approach is in line with the concepts of critical education and experiential learning, which position learners as active participants in the learning process. In this context, this study offers a new perspective: the success of Islamic Education in higher education must be measured by students' ability to practise the values of moderation, ethics and spirituality in real life.

The practical implications of these findings are quite far-reaching. Higher education institutions need to redesign the Islamic Education curriculum to make it more contextual, participatory and experience-based. Islamic Education lecturers should not merely act as conveyors of subject matter, but also as facilitators of values and spiritual mentors capable of engaging in dialogue with students. The PAI curriculum also needs to incorporate real-life case studies, self-reflection, and activities that strengthen students' religious literacy, academic integrity and spirituality. These measures will make learning more relevant to the challenges faced by today's generation of students.

From a policy perspective, the findings of this study suggest the need for stronger institutional support from higher education institutions and the government. Academic policies should not only emphasise cognitive achievements, but also indicators of moderate attitudes, academic integrity and students' spiritual development. Programmes for the professional development of PAI lecturers, the development of values-based teaching modules, and a more holistic approach to learning assessment need to be prioritised. With the right policy support, PAI can play a strategic role in shaping a civilised and religious academic culture without losing its scientific spirit.

These findings also have significant social implications. Students shaped by transformational Islamic Education (PAI) have the potential to become agents of change within a diverse society. They possess not only academic abilities but also social sensitivity, a tolerant attitude and a strong sense of moral awareness. In the long term, this can help strengthen social cohesion and prevent the rise of extremism, a culture of dishonesty, and a spiritual void amongst the younger generation. Thus, the impact of this research does not stop at the classroom, but extends to wider social life,

Consequently, for further research, this study opens up opportunities for empirical research that tests the integrative model of Islamic Education in a more measurable way across various public universities. Future research could employ a mixed-methods approach to examine the relationship between the learning model, students' level of religious moderation, academic behaviour, and spiritual intelligence. Furthermore, comparative studies across regions or between different types of higher education institutions would be highly beneficial for examining variations in context and the effectiveness of the learning approach. Consequently, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for the development of more adaptive, relevant, and impactful theories and practices in PAI learning.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) in public universities is not merely a pedagogical necessity, but also a moral and social one. This study affirms that religious moderation, academic ethics and spiritual awareness are inseparable in shaping the ideal student profile. Through an integrative approach, Islamic Education can serve as an effective means of fostering a generation of academics who are tolerant, honest and spiritually minded. Consequently, this study provides a conceptual and practical foundation for strengthening Islamic Education as the cornerstone for shaping campus members of character and civility.

CONCLUSION

The transformation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in general higher education institutions is an urgent necessity in the face of complex contemporary challenges. This study demonstrates that PAI plays a strategic role in strengthening three fundamental dimensions of student character: religious moderation, academic ethics and spiritual awareness. Through an integrative, contextual and values-based approach to learning, PAI can be transformed from a normative course into a transformative space capable of shaping students' perspectives, attitudes and behaviour in a holistic manner. The key findings of this study confirm that the integration of the values of religious moderation, academic ethics and spirituality into Islamic Education (PAI) teaching produces a powerful synergy in the character development of students. Religious moderation fosters an inclusive and tolerant outlook; academic ethics cultivates integrity and scientific responsibility; whilst spiritual awareness provides a deeper sense of the meaning of life and inner resilience. These three dimensions complement one another and are inseparable, as students who excel academically must also possess moral and spiritual balance to navigate the dynamics of modern life. Based on the overall discussion, it can be concluded that the transformation of Islamic Education (PAI) teaching in public higher education institutions requires a shared commitment from various stakeholders, including lecturers, educational institutions and policy-makers. The implementation of dialogical, reflective and experience-based learning, as well as policy support that strengthens the affective and spiritual aspects, is key to the success of this transformation. Thus, Islamic Education (PAI) not only contributes to the development of graduates who are intellectually competent but also possess noble character, moderation, and spiritual awareness, which form the foundation for their contribution to society and the nation.

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