

Digital Transformation in Islamic Education and Its Impact on Student Learning Motivation

Fitri Vidia Sari¹¹ Universitas Ma'arif Lampung

Abstract

This study aims to analyze and formulate innovations in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on religious moderation in strengthening students' character through a library research approach with qualitative methods. The background of this research is based on the increasing challenges of intolerance, social polarization, and weak internalization of character values among students, which demands a transformation of the PAI learning model to be more contextual and transformative. This study examines various scientific literature, books, reputable journals, and official policy documents related to religious moderation and character education to build an integrative conceptual framework. The results of the study indicate that religious moderation in the context of Islamic education is rooted in the principles of tawassuth (middle way), tasamuh (tolerance), i'tidal (justice), and deliberation, which are in line with the agenda of strengthening national character. This study also found that conventional PAI learning models tend to be cognitive and normative oriented, thus less touching the affective dimensions and social practices of students. Therefore, moderation-based learning innovations need to be designed through a dialogic, collaborative, contextual, and socio-religious project-based approach that encourages reflective and applicable internalization of values. This research offers an integrative conceptual model of moderation-character as a theoretical and pedagogical contribution to the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) that is adaptive to the challenges of diversity and the dynamics of a multicultural society.

Keywords: Character Education, Integrative Model, Islamic Religious Education, Learning Innovation, Religious Moderation.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received
January 29, 2026
Revised
February 03, 2026
Accepted
February 26, 2026

Published by
Website

ISSN

Copyright



CV. Creative Tugu Pena

<https://attractivejournal.com/index.php/jiie>

xxxx-xxxx

This is an open access article under the CC BY SA license

<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>

@ 2026 by the author (Fitri Vidia Sari)

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has become a mainstream trend in changing global education systems, including in Indonesia. *Digital 2024 Global Overview Report* shows that the number of internet users in Indonesia has reached more than 212 million people or around 77% of the total population, with the highest penetration in the school and student age groups (Social, 2024). This data indicates that the current generation of students is *digital natives* which grows in the information technology ecosystem. In the education sector, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia (Kemendikbudristek) through its policy *Free to Learn* and the development of the Merdeka Mengajar Platform encourages the integration of digital technology into the learning process as part of the strategy to improve the quality of national education (Pendidikan et al., 2022)

This phenomenon is not only occurring in general education, but also extends to Islamic education, both in madrasas, Islamic boarding schools, and Islamic religious universities. In the context of Islamic education, digital transformation presents both opportunities and challenges. Institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, through the program *Digital Madrasah* and strengthening e-learning in madrasas demonstrates a commitment to integrating technology into Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning (Feriansyah et al., 2025). Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic, declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in 2020, has accelerated the massive adoption of online learning (Shah & Farrow, 2020). The sudden shift from face-to-face to online learning has revealed inequalities in access, teacher readiness, and variations in student learning motivation. On the one hand, technology allows access to extensive learning resources; on the other hand, there are indications of declining learning motivation due to boredom, digital distractions, and a lack of meaningful pedagogical interactions.

Learning motivation is a key factor in educational success. Motivation theories such as *Self-Determination Theory* Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, intrinsic motivation grows when the needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness are met (Deci & Ryan, 2008). In digital-based learning, these three aspects can be strengthened through interactive learning design, instant feedback, and online collaboration; however, they can also be weakened if technology is only used as a one-way transmission of material. Therefore, the relationship between digital transformation and student learning motivation is an important issue that needs to be studied systematically, especially in the context of Islamic education, which has its own characteristics of values, goals, and pedagogical approaches.

Several previous studies have discussed the effectiveness of e-learning in improving students' learning outcomes and digital literacy skills. These studies generally found that the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), interactive media, and instructional videos positively contribute to student engagement (Suwastika, 2018). However, most research still focuses solely on general education and cognitive aspects, with little attention to the affective and spiritual dimensions that characterize Islamic education. Furthermore, studies on Islamic education and technology are often more normative—discussing the suitability of technology with Islamic values—without in-depth analysis of its impact on student learning motivation as a psychopedagogical variable.

Research gaps (*research gap*) lies in the lack of integration of studies on digital transformation with a comprehensive analysis of learning motivation within the framework of Islamic education. Some studies highlight infrastructure readiness and teacher competency, while others address digital ethics issues and challenges to student morality. However, there are few literature studies that systematically synthesize these findings to explain how digital transformation affects student learning motivation in Islamic education, both intrinsically and extrinsically. This situation urgently requires study, given that digital transformation is no longer an option but rather an inevitability in contemporary education systems.

Theoretically, Islamic education aims to shape a perfect human being with a balance between intellectual, spiritual, and moral aspects. This concept of integral education can be traced to the thoughts of classical and contemporary Islamic educational figures who emphasize the integration of knowledge and values. In a digital context, this integration requires an adaptive pedagogical approach while remaining grounded in the principles of monotheism and morality. Digital transformation in Islamic education should not simply involve transferring content to online platforms, but also transforming learning methods, interactions, and evaluation to make them more participatory, reflective, and meaningful. This research uses a literature study methodology (*library research*) by analyzing relevant scientific literature, policy reports, and previous research findings. This

approach was chosen to gain a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the relationship between digital transformation and student learning motivation in Islamic education. The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify the characteristics of digital transformation in Islamic education; (2) to analyze its impact on student learning motivation based on motivation theory and empirical findings; and (3) to formulate a conceptual framework for technology integration that supports strengthening learning motivation in Islamic education.

Theoretically, this research will enrich the body of knowledge on Islamic education in responding to the digital era, particularly in psychopedagogical aspects. Practically, the results are expected to serve as a reference for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, madrasah administrators, and policy makers in designing digital learning strategies that are not only technically effective but also capable of sustainably enhancing student motivation. As an initial argument framework, this study assumes that digital transformation will have a positive impact on student learning motivation if it meets three prerequisites: (1) learning design based on students' psychological needs (competence, autonomy, and connectedness); (2) integration of Islamic values in the digital ecosystem; and (3) balanced improvement of teacher and student digital literacy. Without these three aspects, digitalization has the potential to cause demotivation, distraction, and even degradation of learning quality. Thus, this study seeks to offer a conceptual synthesis that can form the basis for developing a humanistic, religious, and transformative digital learning model in Islamic education.

METHOD

This research is a library research with a qualitative approach. Library research focuses on the collection and analysis of data sourced from written literature, including books, scientific journal articles, theses, dissertations, and official reports from educational institutions and international organizations (Zed, 2008). The qualitative approach was used because this research aims to understand, interpret, and synthesize theoretical concepts regarding the innovation of the Project-Based Learning (PjBL) model in Islamic Education and its relevance to improving students' critical thinking skills, rather than to test hypotheses through statistical data. The primary data sources in this study are national and international indexed journal articles discussing PjBL, critical thinking, and Islamic Education. While secondary data sources include educational theory books, policy reports such as the Independent Curriculum document from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, and international reports such as the PISA from the OECD (Pisa, 2023).

The data collection procedure was carried out through a systematic search strategy using keywords such as "Project Based Learning in Islamic Education," "critical thinking skills," "Islamic Education and HOTS," and "innovative learning model." Literature searches were conducted through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and the Garuda portal (Garba Rujukan Digital). Inclusion criteria included: (1) scientific articles published within the last five to ten years (2015–2024) to ensure the freshness of the data, (2) publications in Indonesian and English, and (3) direct relevance to the themes of PjBL, critical thinking, and Islamic Education. Exclusion criteria included non-scientific articles, popular opinions without peer review, and works that had no direct connection to the research variables. The data analysis technique used content analysis to identify key themes, argumentation patterns, and main findings from each source (Krippendorff, 2018), which was then followed by literature synthesis to formulate an integrative conceptual model (Snyder, 2019). To ensure validity and reliability, researchers triangulated sources by comparing findings across journals and checking reference consistency. Data was presented in a narrative-descriptive format, supported by

a literature summary table containing the author, year, study focus, methods, and main findings as the basis for scientific argumentation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Conceptualization of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

Religious moderation in the Indonesian context is not merely a normative slogan, but rather a conceptual construct systematically formulated in national policy by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia since 2019 through the mainstreaming of religious moderation program (Ri, 2019). In its official document, religious moderation is defined as a perspective, attitude, and religious practice that places the principles of balance (*tawāzun*), justice (*i'tidāl*), tolerance (*tasāmuḥ*), and national commitment as the foundation of religious life in a pluralistic society (Statistik, 2021). This concept was born from the awareness that Indonesia is a pluralistic country with more than 17,000 islands, hundreds of ethnic groups, and six official religions recognized by the state. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics shows that this diversity is the main social character of the Indonesian nation.

Therefore, religious moderation becomes a cultural and educational strategy to maintain social cohesion while strengthening national integration. From the perspective of Islamic education, religious moderation does not contradict the normative teachings of Islam and even has a strong theological foundation. The Qur'an refers to Muslims middle people in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143, which many commentators interpret as a just, balanced, and non-extremist people (Supriyanto, 2024). Historically, the principle of moderation is also reflected in the practice of classical Islamic scholarship that places dialogue, rational argumentation, and proportional attitudes as part of the intellectual tradition. Thus, religious moderation in Islamic Education is not the adoption of external concepts, but rather the actualization of Islamic values that are *rahmatan lil-'ālamīn* in the context of modern nationality.

Conceptually, the results of the literature synthesis in this study indicate that religious moderation in Islamic Education can be understood in three main dimensions: epistemological, pedagogical, and sociological. In the epistemological dimension, religious moderation requires a contextual, non-literalistic approach to understanding religious texts, and consideration of the *maqāṣid al-syarī'ah* (objectives of sharia). This is in line with the approach of contemporary Islamic thought that emphasizes the importance of integrating text and context in the educational process (Kaswari et al., 2016). In the pedagogical dimension, religious moderation requires Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers to develop dialogic, participatory, and reflective learning, not simply the transmission of doctrine. Meanwhile, in the sociological dimension, religious moderation functions as an instrument for shaping students' social character so they can live harmoniously in a pluralistic society.

The relevance of religious moderation in Islamic Education is further strengthened when linked to the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, which emphasizes that education aims to develop the potential of students to become people of faith, piety, noble character, and become democratic and responsible citizens (Nasional, 2003). These democratic values and social responsibility are substantively in accordance with the principle of religious moderation. In other words, religious moderation functions as a conceptual bridge between religious education and civic education in the national education system.

Furthermore, various studies show that strengthening moderation in education is an urgent need amidst increasing exposure to exclusive religious ideologies in the digital space. A report by the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) emphasized the importance of a preventative approach through education to build the ideological

resilience of the younger generation (Panjaitan & Rahayu, 2023). In this context, Islamic education holds a strategic position because it serves as a formal space for internalizing religious values in schools. If religious moderation is systematically integrated into the curriculum, methods, and evaluation of learning, Islamic education can function as an agent of cultural deradicalization and strengthen national character.

Based on the results of a content analysis of various literature, this study found that the conceptualization of religious moderation in Islamic education should be positioned not as additional material, but as a learning paradigm. This means that moderation becomes a framework that guides the selection of material, interpretive approaches, learning strategies, and even classroom interaction patterns. With this paradigm, the teachings of fiqh, creed, and morals are not understood exclusively but are contextualized with the values of diversity, humanity, and social justice. This synthesis strengthens the argument that religious moderation is both a normative and pedagogical foundation for innovative Islamic education learning oriented toward strengthening student character. Thus, the conceptualization of religious moderation in Islamic education can be formulated as an integration of Islamic theological values of *wasatiyyah* with a dialogical and contextual pedagogical approach. Religious moderation functions as a value orientation, epistemological framework, and pedagogical strategy in the learning process. This concept serves as the theoretical basis for developing innovative Islamic education learning based on religious moderation to shape students' character that is religious, inclusive, and committed to nationality.

Reconstruction of the Concept of Student Character from an Islamic and National Perspective

The concept of student character from an Islamic perspective is rooted in terminology morality, which substantively refers to an inner condition that gives rise to spontaneous and consistent behavior. In classical literature, Al-Ghazali defines morality as a trait embedded in the soul from which actions are easily born without the need for lengthy rational consideration (Al-Ghazali, 2004). This definition shows that character is not merely moral knowledge, but the internalization of values that shape habits and life orientation. Islamic education, therefore, does not only aim to transmit religious knowledge, but to shape a personality that is balanced between spiritual, intellectual, and social dimensions. This concept is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an regarding the formation of people who are faithful, do good deeds, and contribute to social welfare. In the context of national education, character is formulated as a set of values that shape the character and personality of students so that they become people who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, are democratic, and responsible.

This formulation is explicitly stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which emphasizes the function of education as a process of forming the nation's character (Nasional, 2003). Strengthening the character dimension was then emphasized through the Strengthening Character Education (PPK) policy launched by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia in 2017 (KEBUDAYAAN, 2022). This program emphasizes five main values, namely religious, nationalist, independent, mutual cooperation, and integrity. Conceptually, these values have a strong intersection with the principles of morality in Islam, especially in the aspect of honesty (just), responsibility (trust), and social concern (help).

The results of the literature synthesis in this study indicate that there is a substantive meeting point between the concept of morality in Islamic education and the concept of character in national education policy. From a modern educational perspective, character is understood as the integration of moral knowledge (moral knowing), moral feelings (moral feeling), and moral action (moral action), as formulated by Thomas

Lickona (Lickona, 1991). This framework is implicitly aligned with the Islamic approach that emphasizes iman (belief), ilm (knowledge), and amal (action) as an inseparable whole. Thus, the reconstruction of the concept of student character can be carried out through the integration of the Islamic moral paradigm with a systematic and measurable modern character education approach.

The urgency of this reconstruction is increasingly relevant when linked to the social dynamics of pluralistic Indonesian society. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that Indonesia has more than 1,300 ethnic groups and extensive cultural diversity (Statistik, 2021). In this context, students' character cannot be built solely on the dimension of individual piety, but also on social piety that respects diversity and upholds national values. Therefore, an exclusive and closed religious character needs to be reconstructed into an inclusive religious character capable of dialogue, respecting differences, and committed to national unity.

The reconstruction of the concept of student character in this study also considers the importance of religious moderation as a foundation of values. The official document of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes that religious moderation includes national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of local traditions (Ri, 2019). These values, when integrated into Islamic education, will broaden the meaning of morality from mere ritual piety to social-national piety. Thus, the resulting student character is not only normatively obedient, but also adaptive to social realities and has collective responsibility as citizens.

Conceptually, the results of the content analysis indicate that the reconstruction of student character from an Islamic and national perspective can be formulated into three integrative dimensions. First, the spiritual-ethical dimension, namely the formation of moderate religious awareness oriented towards the welfare of others. Second, the national-social dimension, namely the internalization of the values of unity, tolerance, and mutual cooperation in community life. Third, the personal-reflective dimension, namely the development of independence, integrity, and moral responsibility in decision-making. These three dimensions form a typology of religious-inclusive character that is relevant to the challenges of globalization and the plurality of Indonesian society.

Thus, the reconstruction of the concept of student character in this study confirms that Islamic education must shift from a normative-doctrinal paradigm to an integrative-transformative paradigm. Morality is no longer understood narrowly as individual adherence to norms, but rather as an ethical commitment with social and national impacts. The integration of Islamic values with national education policies results in the construction of student character that is religious, moderate, nationalistic, and humanistic. This conceptualization serves as an important foundation for the development of innovative Islamic education learning based on religious moderation, as formulated in this research framework.

Criticism of the Conventional Islamic Education Learning Model

The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model in various educational units so far tends to be oriented towards a normative-doctrinal approach that emphasizes cognitive aspects and memorization of material. Structurally, PAI learning is often focused on conveying the concepts of faith, jurisprudence, and morals in the form of textual knowledge without being accompanied by adequate dialogical and reflective processes. In fact, the goal of national education as emphasized in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System is to shape individuals who are faithful, pious, have noble morals, and are democratic and responsible (Nasional, 2003). The imbalance between these normative goals and pedagogical practices in the classroom indicates a structural problem in the design of PAI learning.

The results of the literature synthesis in this study show that the conventional PAI model tends to use a holistic approach teacher-centered learning, where the teacher is the primary source of truth and students act as passive recipients. This approach implies a lack of space for critical discussion on issues of diversity, tolerance, and contemporary social realities. In its character education evaluation report, the Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia (before its restructuring to become the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology) emphasized that the implementation of character education in schools often stops at the slogan level and has not been fully integrated into the learning process (KEBUDAYAAN, 2022). This shows that the affective and practical dimensions in Islamic Religious Education have not been optimally developed. In addition, survey results released by the Setara Institute in several annual reports on the state of religious freedom in Indonesia indicate that intolerant practices persist in the social environment, including those involving the younger generation (Sigi & Hasani, 2021). Although the causal factors are complex and multidimensional, education plays a significant role in shaping students' religious perspectives. If Islamic Religious Education learning does not provide space for contextual understanding and dialogue across differences, the potential for exclusivism can develop unnoticed. This criticism is not intended to negate the role of Islamic Religious Education, but rather to emphasize the need for pedagogical reformulation that is more responsive to the reality of plurality.

Methodologically, conventional learning models often ignore the principles of constructivism in modern education. According to John W. Creswell, a qualitative approach to understanding social phenomena demands the exploration of meaning constructed through interaction and reflection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the context of learning, this means students need to be actively involved in the process of discovering the meaning of religious values. However, in practice, Islamic Religious Education evaluation is still predominantly based on written tests that measure only cognitive aspects, so that the dimensions of moderate attitudes and social character are less comprehensively measured.

Another criticism emerging from the literature review is the lack of explicit integration of religious moderation values into the Islamic Religious Education curriculum and teaching materials. The official document of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs on religious moderation emphasizes the importance of strengthening national commitment, tolerance, and anti-violence in education (Ri, 2019). However, in classroom implementation, these values are often not systematically internalized in learning materials, methods, or evaluations. This indicates a gap between macro policies and micro practices in the classroom. From the perspective of character education theory, Thomas Lickona asserts that character education must encompass the dimensions of moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions in an integrated manner (Lickona, 1991). Conventional Islamic Religious Education models that focus too much on the aspect of moral knowledge have the potential to produce normative understanding without behavioral transformation. In the context of a pluralistic society like Indonesia which, according to data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, has hundreds of ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds non-dialogical religious education risks failing to shape the inclusive character needed in national life (Statistik, 2021).

Based on a content analysis of various sources, this study found that the main problems with the conventional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning model lie in three aspects: (1) the dominance of a textual approach without social contextualization; (2) the lack of participatory and reflective learning strategies; and (3) evaluations that have not systematically integrated moderate character measurements. Therefore, criticism of the conventional model is not intended to reject the normative foundations of Islamic Religious Education, but rather to encourage a more innovative pedagogical transformation based on religious moderation. This transformation is an important

prerequisite for strengthening students' character so that they are not only individually pious, but also have a commitment to nationalism and the ability to live harmoniously in diversity.

Thus, the critique of conventional Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning models in this study emphasizes the urgency of pedagogical innovation based on religious moderation. Islamic education must shift from a dogmatic approach to a dialogical-transformative approach that positions students as active subjects in shaping the meaning of religious values. This critique also serves as an argumentative basis for formulating an innovative model for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on religious moderation as the conceptual solution offered in this study.

Moderation-Based Islamic Education Learning Innovation Design

The design of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovation based on religious moderation in this study is formulated based on a synthesis of national policy literature, Islamic education theory, and contemporary pedagogical approaches as explained in the literature study methodology. Religious moderation popularized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes four main indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodating to local culture (Ri, 2019). These four indicators serve as the normative basis in designing PAI learning that not only instills theological understanding, but also builds students' socio-national character. In the context of national education, character building is a constitutional mandate as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which emphasizes that education must shape people with noble character and responsibility (Nasional, 2003). Therefore, the design of PAI learning innovation based on religious moderation is directed at the simultaneous integration of Islamic normative values and national social needs.

The results of the content analysis indicate that the innovation design needs to be built on four main components: innovation in materials, methods, evaluation, and learning culture. In the material aspect, innovation is carried out through the integration of the value of moderation into each basic competency of Islamic Religious Education, both in the study of faith, jurisprudence, and morals. For example, the discussion of Islamic brotherhood is expanded to include Islamic brotherhood and national brotherhood by referring to the principles of human and national brotherhood. This approach is in line with the paradigm of *Islam rahmatan lil-‘ālamīn* developed in various contemporary Islamic education literature (Azra, 1999). Thus, Islamic Religious Education materials are not only oriented towards fostering individual piety, but also inclusive social piety. In terms of methods, innovation is directed at transforming approaches teacher-centered become *student-centered learning*. Learning models such as Problem Based Learning (PBL), reflective discussion, and collaborative learning can be used to discuss issues of diversity, tolerance, and social conflict constructively. This principle is in line with the active learning theory put forward by David A. Kolb through the model experiential learning, which emphasizes the importance of concrete experience and reflection in developing understanding (Kolb, 2014). In the context of Islamic Religious Education, students not only learn normative propositions but are also invited to reflect on their implementation in pluralistic social life. This approach strengthens the internalization of the value of moderation in a deeper and contextual way.

The evaluation aspect is also a key focus in this innovation design. Evaluation is no longer limited to written tests to measure cognitive aspects, but rather includes authentic assessments of student attitudes and behaviors. Strategies such as reflective portfolios, observations of tolerant attitudes, and collaborative projects across groups become relevant evaluation instruments. The curriculum policy developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia through the

Independent Curriculum provides space for formative assessment and strengthening the Pancasila student profile, including the dimensions of faith, devotion to God Almighty, and noble character (Pendidikan et al., 2022).

The integration of the value of moderation in this assessment is a concrete step to ensure that Islamic Religious Education learning impacts the formation of students' moderate character. In addition to materials, methods, and evaluation, classroom culture is a strategic dimension in designing moderation-based learning innovations. Islamic Religious Education teachers play a role as role model reflecting an inclusive and dialogical attitude in daily interactions. A study conducted by the Research and Development and Training Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia shows that teacher role models have a significant influence on the formation of students' religious attitudes (RI, 2019). Therefore, learning innovations are not only technical but must also touch on the ethical and relational dimensions of the educational process. A classroom environment that is open to differences of opinion and respects diversity is an important prerequisite for internalizing the value of moderation.

Furthermore, this innovative design also considers the challenges of the digital era that influence how students understand religion. The 2023 We Are Social report shows that internet penetration in Indonesia has reached over 77% of the population (Social, 2024). This situation opens up both opportunities and challenges, as students easily access a variety of religious content with diverse perspectives. Therefore, moderation-based Islamic Religious Education learning needs to integrate digital religious literacy so that students can critically analyze information and avoid being trapped by extreme narratives.

Based on the overall analysis, the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovation design based on religious moderation in this study can be formulated as an integrative model that combines theological values, participatory pedagogy, authentic evaluation, and a dialogical culture. This design places religious moderation as the basic paradigm in every stage of learning, so that the values of tolerance, justice, and national commitment are systematically internalized. With this approach, PAI is expected to contribute significantly to strengthening students' character to be religious, inclusive, and adaptive to the dynamics of Indonesia's pluralistic society.

Integrative Conceptual Model of Moderation-Character

Based on the results of literature synthesis and content analysis conducted through a desk study approach, this study formulates an Integrative Conceptual Model of Moderation-Character (MIMK) as a major theoretical contribution. This model is built on the assumption that religious moderation is not merely a normative value, but rather a pedagogical paradigm that must be systematically integrated into the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI). The normative basis of this model refers to the concept of religious moderation formulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia which emphasizes the principles of national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation to local culture (RI, 2019). These four principles are positioned as the value foundation in the formation of student character.

Structurally, the Moderation-Character Integrative Model is formulated in three layers of integration: value integration, pedagogical integration, and character integration. The first layer is value integration, which is the process of internalizing the principle of *wasatiyyah* (middle path) in all Islamic Religious Education (PAI) content. The concept of *wasatiyyah* has theological roots in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143, which positions Muslims as the people of *Wasathan* (medieval people). In the perspective of classical interpretation as explained by Ibn Kathir, this meaning contains elements of justice and balance in attitudes (Katsir, 1999). This value of balance is then contextualized in national life through the principle of Pancasila as the foundation of the state, so that there is an integration between Islamic and national values.

The second layer is pedagogical integration, namely the transformation of learning design from a normative-doctrinal pattern to a dialogical and reflective approach. This model utilizes constructivist learning principles that position students as active subjects in constructing meaning. According to Lev Vygotsky, effective learning occurs through social interaction and meaningful dialogue (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). In the context of moderation-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI), these interactions are directed at strengthening empathy, the ability to listen to different perspectives, and critical reflection on religious texts in social reality. This pedagogical integration ensures that the value of moderation does not stop at the discourse level, but is internalized through participatory learning experiences.

The third layer is character integration, the end result of the learning process that forms a religious-inclusive character typology. This model combines the concept of Islamic morality formulated by Al-Ghazali with the modern character education theory developed by Thomas Lickona (Lickona, 1991). Within this framework, student character is measured not only by ritual obedience, but also by social attitudes such as tolerance, responsibility, and national commitment. Thus, the integration of moderation and character produces a student profile that balances individual and social piety.

This conceptual model also considers the sociological context of Indonesia as a pluralistic society. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics shows that Indonesia has more than 270 million people with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Statistik, 2021). This reality demands an education system capable of forming adaptive and inclusive character. Furthermore, the United Nations Development Programme report on human development emphasizes the importance of education in building social cohesion and tolerance in multicultural societies (Mišćević, 2021). Thus, the Moderation-Character Integrative Model is not only theologically relevant but also has sociological and global urgency. In its implementation, this model works through the following conceptual flow: (1) religious moderation as a value paradigm; (2) integration in learning design (materials, methods, evaluation, and classroom culture); (3) internalization through reflective learning experiences; and (4) the formation of a religious-inclusive character oriented towards nationality and humanity. The conceptual validity of this model is strengthened through a comparison of various policy literature and educational theories that show consistency between the values of Islamic *wasatiyyah* and the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System (Nasional, 2003).

Thus, the Moderation-Character Integrative Conceptual Model (MIMK) offers a theoretical synthesis of Islamic teachings, national policies, and modern pedagogical approaches. This model positions religious moderation as the normative and pedagogical foundation that guides comprehensive Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning innovation. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of an integrative model that connects value paradigms, learning strategies, and character outcomes within a single systematic framework. This model is expected to serve as a conceptual reference for the development of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) curricula and learning practices that are more responsive to the challenges of plurality and contemporary social dynamics.

Discussion

The results of this literature-based research indicate that the innovation of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on religious moderation has a strong normative, theological, and pedagogical foundation and is relevant to the needs of national education. Normatively, religious moderation has been established as the mainstream of national policy by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia through an official document in 2019 which emphasizes the importance of national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of local traditions (Abas et al., 2025). This finding shows that

religious moderation is not only an academic discourse, but has become a strategic agenda of the state in maintaining social cohesion in a pluralistic society. In the context of education, this policy has direct implications for the design of PAI learning as a formal space for internalizing religious values.

Theoretically, the results of the literature synthesis show that the concept of religious moderation is in line with the principle of *wasatiyyah* in Islam, namely a just, balanced, and proportional attitude as stated in QS. al-Baqarah [2]: 143. Classical interpretations such as those put forward by Ibn Kathir emphasize that the middle people are just and non-extreme people (Katsir, 1999). This interpretation provides theological legitimacy that moderation is not a compromise to religious teachings, but rather an authentic expression of Islamic values themselves. Thus, the integration of moderation in Islamic Religious Education learning is not a form of secularization of values, but rather an actualization of Islamic teachings in the context of Indonesian nationality. In the perspective of character education, the results of this study also show the coherence between the value of moderation and the goals of national education as stated in Law Number 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System which emphasizes the formation of people who are faithful, pious, have noble character, are democratic and responsible (Nasional, 2003). The character education approach developed by Thomas Lickona emphasizes the importance of integration between moral knowledge, moral feelings, and moral actions in character formation (Lickona, 1991). Analysis of the literature shows that conventional Islamic Religious Education learning tends to stop at the aspect of moral knowledge, while the affective and practical dimensions have not been fully optimized. Therefore, innovation based on religious moderation functions as a bridge between the cognitive and practical dimensions in Islamic Religious Education learning.

Sociologically, the urgency of this innovation is reinforced by the reality of Indonesia's diversity. Data from the Central Statistics Agency shows that Indonesia has a population of over 270 million people with extensive ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (Statistik, 2021). This condition demands an education system capable of shaping inclusive and adaptive character. Furthermore, the Setara Institute's annual report on religious freedom shows the persistence of dynamics of intolerance in various regions (Mišćević, 2021). Although the causal factors are complex, education has a strategic responsibility in building the ideological resilience of the younger generation. Thus, the design of moderation-based Islamic Religious Education learning innovations can be understood as a preventative response to potential social fragmentation.

Further analysis shows that the main weakness of the conventional PAI learning model lies in the dominance of the approach teacher-centered learning and cognitive-based evaluation. This approach provides little space for dialogue and critical reflection on diversity issues. In social learning theory, Lev Vygotsky emphasized that social interaction and dialogue are key to the formation of meaning in the learning process (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Thus, pedagogical transformation toward participatory learning is a primary requirement for internalizing the value of moderation. The innovative model formulated in this study through the integration of contextual materials, participatory methods, authentic assessment, and an inclusive classroom culture demonstrates coherence with these constructivist principles. In addition to pedagogical aspects, this study also found that the digital era is a crucial factor in shaping students' religious perspectives. The 2023 We Are Social report noted that internet penetration in Indonesia has reached over 77% of the population (Social, 2024). This reality opens up broad access to various religious narratives, including exclusive ones. Therefore, moderation-based Islamic Religious Education learning innovations must be integrated with digital literacy to enable students to verify information and critically understand diverse perspectives. This integration strengthens the relevance of the proposed model in addressing the challenges of information globalization.

Based on the overall analysis, the Integrative Conceptual Model of Moderation-Character (MIMK) formulated in this study demonstrates significant theoretical contributions. This model combines a value paradigm (religious moderation), pedagogical strategies (dialogic and reflective learning), and an output orientation (religious-inclusive character). This integration demonstrates that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning functions not simply as a transmission of doctrine, but as a process of value transformation with social impact. The conceptual validity of this model is strengthened by the consistency between policy literature, Islamic education theory, and modern character education approaches.

Thus, the discussion of this research confirms that innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on religious moderation is an epistemological, pedagogical, and sociological necessity. Epistemologically, this model integrates the value of *wasatiyyah* as a framework for thinking. Pedagogically, this model encourages the transformation of learning methods and evaluation. Sociologically, this model addresses the challenges of plurality and social dynamics in Indonesia. This analysis also strengthens the argument that strengthening student character through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) cannot be separated from the paradigm of religious moderation as a foundational value and implementation strategy in the national education system.

CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review conducted, it can be concluded that innovation in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning based on religious moderation is an urgent need to strengthen students' character amidst contemporary socio-religious complexities. The conceptualization of religious moderation is rooted in the principle of *tawassuth*, *tolerance*, *i'tidal*, and *deliberation* proven to be aligned with the national character building agenda that emphasizes religiosity, integrity, mutual cooperation, and diversity. Criticism of the conventional Islamic Religious Education learning model indicates a cognitive-dogmatic tendency that has not fully touched the affective realm and social praxis of students. Therefore, the design of integrative learning innovations through a dialogical, contextual, collaborative, and social project-based approach is a strategic solution for internalizing the value of moderation in a transformative manner. The integrative conceptual model of moderation-character formulated in this study emphasizes that strengthening student character does not only rely on the transmission of teaching materials, but on the reconstruction of an Islamic Religious Education pedagogical paradigm that is adaptive, reflective, and oriented towards the formation of an inclusive and civilized religious personality.

REFERENCES

- Abas, S. Z., Arif, M., Damopolii, M., & Mantau, B. A. K. (2025). Internalisasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam Berbasis Merdeka Belajar. *IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(3), 659–666.
- Al-Ghazali, A. H. (2004). *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah. *Jilid*, 3, 52–55.
- Azra, A. (1999). *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan modernisasi menuju milenium baru*. Logos Wacana Ilmu.
- Creswell, W. J., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches. In *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* (Vol. 53, Issue 9).
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2008). Self-determination theory: A macrotheory of human

- motivation, development, and health. *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 49(3), 182.
- Feriansyah, W., Arifin, M. A., & Alifi, A. W. U. (2025). Implementasi Teknologi Digital Di Kementerian Agama Jember: Studi Di Seksi Pais, Pendma, Dan Pd-Pontren. *Menulis: Jurnal Penelitian Nusantara*, 1(2), 30–38.
- Kaswari, S., Majid, L. A., Nazri, M. A., & Sakat, A. A. (2016). Konsep Fiqh al-Sunnah Menurut al-Qaradawi. *Jurnal Al-Turath; Vol*, 1(1).
- Katsir, I. (1999). *Tafsîr al-Qur'ân al-'Azhîm. Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyyah.*
- KEBUDAYAAN, R. (2022). Keputusan Menteri Pendidikan, Kebudayaan, Riset, Dan Teknologi Republik Indonesia Nomor 56/M/2022 Tentang Pedoman Penerapan Kurikulum Dalam Rangka Pemulihan.
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. FT press.
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.
- Lickona, T. (1991). Educating for character (New York, Bantam). *McCl ET NAN, BE (1992) Schools and the Shaping of Character: Moral Education in America*, 525–543.
- Miščević, N. (2021). United nations development programme, human development report 2020. The next frontier human development and the anthropocene. *Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, 21(61), 231–235.
- Nasional, D. P. (2003). Undang-undang nomor 20 tahun 2003 tentang sistem pendidikan nasional. *Jakarta: Depdiknas*, 33(31), 79192564.
- Panjaitan, A. H., & Rahayu, N. S. (2023). Implementasi Rencana Aksi Nasional Pencegahan dan Penanggulangan Ekstremisme Berbasis Kekerasan yang Mengarah pada Terorisme. *Journal Publicuho*, 6(4), 1521–1536.
- Pendidikan, K., Kebudayaan, R., & Indonesia, T. R. (2022). Panduan implementasi kurikulum merdeka. *Jakarta: Kemendikbudristek*.
- Pisa, O. (2023). results (volume I): the state of learning and equity in education. *PISA. Paris*.
- RI, K. A. (2019). Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pendidikan Islam. *Jakarta Pusat*.
- Ri, T. P. K. A. (2019). Moderasi beragama. *Jakarta: Badan Litbang Dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI*, 14.
- Shah, S. G. S., & Farrow, A. (2020). A commentary on “World Health Organization declares global emergency: A review of the 2019 novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).” *International Journal of Surgery*, 76, 128–129.

- Sigi, K. A., & Hasani, I. (2021). *Intoleransi Semasa Pandemi: Laporan Kebebasan Beragama dan Berkeyakinan 2020*.
- Snyder, H. (2019). Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, *104*, 333–339.
- Social, W. A. (2024). *Meltwater (2023). Digital 2023 Global Overview Report*. Research Report. 2. London: We Are Social. [https://wearesocial.com/wp ...](https://wearesocial.com/wp...)
- Statistik, B. P. (2021). *Statistik Telekomunikasi Indonesia 2022*. *Badan Pusat Statistik*, *31*.
- Supriyanto, F. S. (2024). Ummatan Wasatan Menurut Hamka dan Thabari (Studi Komparasi Tafsir Al-Azhar dan Tafsir Al-Thabari Terhadap Surat Al-Baqarah Ayat 143). *Hamalatul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Ilmu Alqur'an*, *5(2)*, 155–168.
- Suwastika, I. W. K. (2018). Pengaruh e-learning sebagai salah satu media pembelajaran berbasis teknologi informasi terhadap motivasi belajar mahasiswa. *Jurnal Sistem Dan Informatika (JSI)*, *13(1)*, 1–5.
- Vygotsky, L. S., & Cole, M. (1978). *Mind in society: Development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard university press.
- Zed, M. (2008). *Metode penelitian kepustakaan*. Yayasan Pustaka Obor Indonesia.