



## The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Developing Religious Moderation Attitudes in Junior High School Students of Idi Rayeuk

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in influencing religious moderation attitudes among junior high school pupils in Idi Rayeuk, the problems they face, and the tactics utilized to impart these values. A qualitative research methodology was employed, utilizing data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. There were three steps in the data analysis: reducing the data, showing the data, and making conclusions. The findings indicate that IRE teachers serve a strategic function in promoting religious moderation through three primary roles: as educators who nurture tolerance and mutual respect, as role models who exemplify equitable, transparent, and balanced perspectives, and as guides who stress the importance of steering clear of extreme religious conduct. But teachers have a lot of problems to deal with, like the tremendous influence of social media that has intolerant material, conservative social surroundings, students' low digital literacy, and community figures who may support narrow-minded views. To deal with these problems, IRE teachers use systematic methods by making sure that moderation ideals are present in all learning materials and by using personal approaches with students who show intolerant behavior. These tactics help students not only grasp religious moderation on a cognitive level, but also generate positive feelings and behaviors in their daily lives.

### 1. Introduction

One of the biggest challenges is how to transform a religious teaching approach that tends to be normative and dogmatic into one that is more dialogic and contextual (Musyahid, 2023). Islamic Education teachers are often burdened with a dense curriculum, making it difficult for them to deliver the values of religious moderation comprehensively (Musyahid, 2023). In addition, the lack of adequate training and resources also becomes an obstacle in implementing religious moderation in schools (Bahar, 2022).

Furthermore, the students' social environment also plays an important role in improving attitudes of religious moderation (Fasyiransyah et al., 2025). Students who grow up in religiously homogeneous environments tend to develop more exclusive attitudes due to limited interaction with people of different religions or views. Junior high school students are at a crucial developmental stage in which they begin to form their self-identity and are exposed to various influences from family,

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school, and society (Rafi Riyawi et al., 2023). At this age, students are vulnerable to negative influences, including radical ideas that may lead to intolerance (Imamah, 2023). According to research by Rizal, religious education that focuses not only on cognitive aspects but also on affective and psychomotor aspects can help students develop moderate attitudes in practicing religion (Sayekti, 2023).

Idi Rayeuk, as one of the districts in East Aceh Regency, has unique community characteristics. This region has historically and culturally been dominated by a predominantly Muslim population. However, like other areas in Indonesia, diversity is inevitable. The complexity of social interactions in Idi Rayeuk includes variations in educational background, economic status, and even religious perspectives among community members (Mulyana, 2023). Although Acehnese society is known for its implementation of Islamic Sharia, there are still variations in how individuals or groups understand and apply religious teachings, which sometimes lead to social friction (Hanif et al., 2025).

This issue is becoming increasingly relevant in the midst of technological developments that allow access to various religious perspectives that may contradict the principles of religious moderation. The challenges of teaching religious moderation in this area are considerable, especially with the tendency of some groups to interpret religious teachings rigidly and extremely. Therefore, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers must be able to serve as agents of moderation who teach an Islam that is peaceful, inclusive, and aligned with the values of diversity upheld in Indonesia.

Religious moderation, as an approach that emphasizes balance and tolerance, aims to prevent extreme attitudes in religious practice. With the growing flow of information through social media and the internet, junior high school students become an age group vulnerable to external influences, including narrow or even radical religious understandings. Thus, improving religious moderation attitudes among junior high school students is crucial to maintaining social harmony and preparing a generation capable of coexisting within diversity. (Khasanah et al., 2023)

This research will focus on the role of PAI teachers in shaping religious moderation attitudes among students at SMPN 2 Idi, SMPN Terpadu Idi, and SMPN 1 Idi. The researcher is interested in examining in more depth how PAI teachers face challenges in teaching the values of religious moderation, as well as the strategies they use to instill these attitudes in students. In addition, this study will also look at the factors that influence teachers' success in developing religious moderation attitudes, both from internal school aspects—such as curriculum and teaching methods—and external aspects, such as parental and community support (Muhaemin et al., 2023).

The Idi Rayeuk area, located in a coastal region, has a diverse community, including in terms of religious beliefs and practices. The religious diversity also reflected among junior high school students in the area creates unique social dynamics in daily life, both in school and in the community. Differences in worship practices and religious understanding pose both challenges and opportunities to foster respect and tolerance. Therefore, it is important to examine how values of religious moderation are instilled within the school environment as an effort to create harmony in diversity and strengthen students' character in living peacefully together (Chadidjah et al., 2021).

In the school environment, the role of formal education in shaping religious moderation attitudes is crucial (Mala et al., 2023). Schools are responsible not only for academic instruction but also for character-building and the development of students' social values. In this context, SMPN 2 Idi, SMPN Terpadu Idi, and SMPN 1 Idi serve as educational institutions that accommodate students from various social backgrounds who, although predominantly Muslim, still live within diverse perspectives and religious practices. The challenge faced by these schools is how to shape students' attitudes to become tolerant, respectful of differences, and resistant to extreme religious views (Syarif, 2021). The younger generation today is highly vulnerable to global influences, especially

from social media and the internet, which present various types of religious content without adequate filtering (Daheri, 2022).

The attitude of religious moderation in these schools needs serious attention, considering the important role of formal education in shaping students' character and worldview. SMPN 2 Idi, SMPN Terpadu Idi, and SMPN 1 Idi, as educational institutions that accommodate students from diverse social backgrounds, bear a great responsibility in teaching tolerance, openness, and appreciation for differences. The improvement of religious moderation attitudes in these schools is strongly influenced by the teaching methods of teachers, particularly Islamic Education teachers, who play a key role in conveying inclusive and moderate religious values. (Masturin, 2022)

However, various challenges arise in the effort to implement religious moderation in these schools. At SMPN 2 Idi, although most students come from similar backgrounds, their understanding of religious differences still needs to be improved. Limited interaction with individuals from different backgrounds makes them more vulnerable to narrow religious perspectives. Meanwhile, at SMPN Terpadu Idi, which brings together students from various regions, more complex social dynamics require a special approach to managing diversity (Ahmad Ali Shah et al., 2024). At SMPN 1 Idi, the main challenge lies in facilitating dialogue among students from different cultural backgrounds.

Islamic Education teachers play a central role in the process of improving religious moderation attitudes at school (Solahudin et al., 2023). They are not only responsible for teaching religious material but also serve as figures expected to instill moderate and inclusive religious values. At SMPN 2 Idi, SMPN Terpadu Idi, and SMPN 1 Idi, the role of PAI teachers is essential in guiding students to understand the essence of religious teachings that emphasize tolerance, respect for differences, and rejection of extremism. However, in practice, PAI teachers also face various challenges, ranging from limited time to explore material on religious moderation to a lack of resources that support the effective teaching of these values. Additionally, a socially homogeneous environment that sometimes lacks support for interfaith dialogue also becomes an obstacle in efforts to instill religious moderation attitudes among students (Helmawati et al., 2024).

This study aims to analyze religious moderation attitudes among students at SMPN 2 Idi, SMPN Terpadu Idi, and SMPN 1 Idi, as well as to identify the role of PAI teachers in shaping these attitudes. Using a qualitative approach, this research will explore the experiences, views, and perceptions of students and teachers regarding religious moderation. Moreover, the study will assess the effectiveness of the approaches used by PAI teachers in teaching religious moderation and will identify the obstacles and challenges faced in this process, in order to prepare a young generation that is tolerant of differences (Mukhibat et al., 2024).

Through this research, it is expected that a clearer picture will emerge regarding the important role of PAI teachers in shaping a young generation that is moderate, tolerant, and able to live harmoniously within a diverse society. In addition, the findings of this research are expected to provide input for policymakers in the education sector in formulating more effective policies to strengthen religious moderation within the school environment.

## **2. Methodology**

The type of research used is a case study. A case study was chosen because it allows the researcher to focus on a specific context, namely the role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers within the school environments in the Idi Rayeuk area. This research employs a qualitative approach with the main objective of gaining an in-depth understanding of the role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in shaping religious moderation attitudes among junior high school (SMP) students in Idi Rayeuk.

This research was conducted in several junior high schools located in Idi Rayeuk, namely SMP Negeri 2 Idi, SMP Negeri Terpadu Idi, and SMP Negeri 1 Idi. The study involved two main groups of subjects, namely Islamic Education (PAI) teachers. In addition to teachers, the research subjects also included school principals as managerial leaders and junior high school students. The data in this study were collected through three complementary techniques: in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. Data analysis was carried out using a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying, categorizing, and interpreting key themes that emerge from the collected data, whether through interviews, observations, or documentation.

The data validation technique used in this research was technique triangulation. Technique triangulation means verifying the accuracy of the data by comparing information obtained from various sources or data collection methods. In this study, data from interviews, observations, and documentation were compared to ensure consistency and strengthen the validity of the data regarding religious moderation education and its contribution among junior high school students in Idi Rayeuk.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 *The Role of Islamic Education Teachers in Shaping Religious Moderation Attitudes Among Junior High School Students in Idi Rayeuk*

Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in junior high schools across Idi Rayeuk play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes of religious moderation. This role is reflected in three main aspects: (1) instilling values of tolerance and mutual respect, (2) providing examples of moderate behavior, and (3) guiding students to avoid extreme attitudes. The findings of this study align with character education theories and the concept of religious moderation promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia.

PAI teachers in junior high schools throughout Idi Rayeuk function not only as educators who transfer knowledge but also as figures who instill values of tolerance and mutual respect. This is evident in their inclusive learning strategies, the provision of space for dialogue, and the use of discussion methods that encourage students to express their opinions politely.

The values of tolerance instilled by teachers are in line with the principle of Islam as rahmatan lil 'alamin a religion that spreads compassion, respects differences, and rejects discrimination. The emphasis placed by PAI teachers on these values helps students become accustomed to viewing differences as natural and not something to be contested. Islam teaches that diversity is a sunnatullah that cannot be avoided and must be approached with mutual respect, as stated by Allah in Surah Al-Hujurat verse 13:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

Artinya: Wahai manusia! Sesungguhnya Kami telah menciptakan kamu dari seorang laki-laki dan seorang perempuan, dan Kami jadikan kamu berbangsa-bangsa dan bersuku-suku supaya kamu saling mengenal. Sesungguhnya yang paling mulia di antara kamu di sisi Allah ialah orang yang paling bertakwa. (QS. Al-Hujurat ayat 13)

This verse affirms that differences are a means for people to know one another (lita'arafu), not a reason for hostility. Therefore, Islamic Education teachers have an important role in instilling the value of tolerance so that students are able to appreciate diversity while still adhering to correct religious principles.

The exemplary role of PAI teachers has a significant influence. Teachers strive to demonstrate simplicity, openness, fairness, and consistency in interacting with students without discriminating against their backgrounds. These real actions become concrete examples that students can easily follow in their daily lives. In other words, a teacher's example becomes an effective medium for internalizing the values of religious moderation because students not only hear theories but also witness real practices within the school environment. This aligns with Jean D. Grambs' theory that "a teacher is someone who consciously guides the experiences and behavior of individuals so that education can take place.(Albert Bandura. 1977)

PAI teachers also play a role in providing balanced guidance to prevent students from falling into extreme religious understandings. Through proportional teaching, teachers direct students to understand religion fairly, without excessiveness, and with respect for differences. Such guidance is crucial, especially amid social conditions that are vulnerable to provocation or issues of intolerance. Using a moderation-based approach, students are encouraged to develop wisdom so that they can live peacefully within a pluralistic society.

The values of moderation are not only taught in the classroom but also internalized within the school culture. The school's vision, which emphasizes the development of religious, well-mannered, and noble-charactered students, is supported by religious activities, the habituation of polite behavior, cooperation, and mutual assistance. Such a school culture strengthens the learning of moderation, enabling students to practice tolerance and mutual respect in their daily interactions. These findings are consistent with the conceptual theory of religious moderation, which includes promoting peace and compassion at all times and for all people.(Agus Akhmadi. 2019)

The implementation of moderation values by PAI teachers has a positive impact on students. They become more open-minded, respectful, and less easily influenced by issues that may trigger conflict. The school environment also becomes more conducive, as reflected in the atmosphere of togetherness, cooperation without discrimination, and the avoidance of coercive attitudes. Thus, the role of PAI teachers has been proven effective in shaping students' moderate and tolerant character, preparing them to contribute to a harmonious society.

The exemplary conduct of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in junior high schools across Idi Rayeuk serves as an important instrument in shaping students' attitudes of religious moderation. PAI teachers are not only responsible for delivering instructional material but also act as role models through their simplicity, politeness, fairness, and humility in daily interactions. This aligns with character education theory, which emphasizes that value formation cannot rely solely on verbal instruction but requires concrete examples that students can emulate.

In the learning process, PAI teachers consistently emphasize a balance between ritual worship and social ethics. They guide students with gentle language, avoid coercive attitudes, and encourage a rational and compassionate understanding of religion. This approach not only creates an inclusive learning atmosphere but also trains students to understand that religion must be practiced through justice, social concern, and tolerance.

PAI teachers are regarded as role models. They are perceived as patient, open, fair, and non-discriminatory toward students regardless of their backgrounds. From a psychological perspective, the presence of PAI teachers as models of moderate religious behavior fosters positive identification among students, making it easier for them to imitate such behavior. Thus, teacher exemplification serves as an effective means of internalizing moderation values while strengthening a harmonious and religious school culture.

PAI teachers in junior high schools across Idi Rayeuk also play a crucial role in fostering non-extremist attitudes (anti-ghuluw) and teaching appreciation for differences. This is done through a

learning approach that emphasizes balance (wasathiyah), guiding students away from excessive religious interpretations or narrow fanaticism.

PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk emphasize that diversity is a sunnatullah that must be accepted wisely. Through classroom discussions, deliberation, and cooperation-based activities, students are trained to appreciate differing perspectives, listen to others' opinions, and resolve issues peacefully. Observations in the schools also show that PAI teachers consistently reinforce the value of tolerance, both in instructional interactions and during religious social activities.

The statements from the school principals reinforce these findings, indicating that PAI teachers have successfully prevented students from falling into intolerant or extremist attitudes. By cultivating openness, compassion, and problem-solving through dialogue, students become calmer in dealing with differences and are not easily provoked by issues that could cause division. (Abdurrahmansyah. 2024)

Students across Idi Rayeuk are consistently guided not to blame others who hold different opinions and are trained to respond to issues in a proportional manner. As a result, they demonstrate inclusive attitudes, become more open-minded, and are able to coexist with peers from different backgrounds and beliefs.

Thus, the role of PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk in fostering non-extremist attitudes and respect for differences can be understood as a preventive strategy against the growth of intolerance among students. This aligns with the goals of Islamic education, which seek to form individuals who are balanced, just, and harmonious in navigating societal diversity.

### *3.2 Challenges Faced by Islamic Education Teachers in Teaching Religious Moderation to Students*

The rapid flow of digital information is the greatest challenge faced by PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk. Junior high school students in the region are in a psychologically unstable developmental phase and are highly susceptible to influence, making them prone to absorbing social media content such as TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, or Instagram without any verification process.

This phenomenon aligns with studies stating that the younger generation learns more from digital media than from formal sources. Unfortunately, some viral religious content tends to be intolerant, exclusive, or even extreme. This shifts the message of moderation taught by PAI teachers in the classroom.

Field findings also confirm that limited face-to-face time worsens the situation. PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk only have a few hours per week, whereas digital exposure can occur for many hours daily. As a result, the influence of social media becomes more dominant than the teacher's guidance. Teachers must allocate additional time to correct misinformation students bring from the internet, causing the core material to sometimes be delivered less effectively.

Thus, the influence of social media is a serious challenge for PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk. Teachers must take on dual roles not only as religious educators but also as facilitators of digital literacy who equip students with critical thinking skills, the ability to be selective with information, and the capacity to interpret content proportionally.

Apart from social media, family and community factors also present significant challenges. The study found that some parents instill rigid and exclusive religious mindsets for example, prohibiting their children from interacting with different groups or viewing other perspectives as wrong. This creates value conflicts when students receive moderation-based teachings at school.

This phenomenon is consistent with theories identifying the family and social environment as the closest microsystems that greatly influence the formation of a child's attitudes. When families or communities internalize conservative values, schools must work even harder to balance them.

Field findings also show that some community members reject the concept of religious moderation because they misunderstand it as a form of “weakening of faith.” This indicates a gap in understanding, in which moderation is perceived as conflicting with religious identity, even though moderation is actually a core Islamic teaching that promotes balance (*ummatan wasathan*). (Abdurrahmansyah. 2024)

Furthermore, the presence of community figures with conservative or extreme viewpoints intensifies the challenges faced by PAI teachers. Owing to their perceived charisma, the statements of such figures are often trusted by students more than the teacher’s explanations. This requires PAI teachers to develop communication strategies that are wise, contextual, and persuasive, directed both toward students and parents.

Students who grow up in homogeneous environments tend to bring exclusive attitudes into the school setting for instance, rejecting differing views during discussions. PAI teachers must therefore employ rational and dialogic approaches so that students understand that diversity is part of *sunnatullah*.

### *3.3 Strategies of Islamic Education Teachers in Instilling Religious Moderation Attitudes in Students*

PAI teachers in junior high schools across Idi Rayeuk face real challenges in instilling the values of religious moderation, both from the influence of social media and from a still-conservative community environment. However, these challenges are addressed through systematic strategies, namely (a) integrating moderation values into the teaching material and (b) adopting a personal approach toward students who display intolerant attitudes.

These strategies can be analyzed as the implementation of the PAI teacher’s role as an educator, mentor, and agent of value transformation, who not only transfers religious knowledge but also shapes students’ character so that they can live peacefully in a pluralistic society.

The main strategy employed by PAI teachers is to embed moderation values across all religious subjects, rather than treating them as separate material. In this way, students perceive moderation not as an additional topic, but as an integral part of Islamic teachings.

This phenomenon aligns with approaches suggesting that values are not always taught explicitly but are internalized through emphasis, repetition, and contextualization in daily life. For example, in *fiqh*, teachers highlight differences of opinion among scholars as an intellectual richness of Islam. In *akhlaq* (ethics), students are guided to respect peers from different cultural or traditional backgrounds. In Qur’anic and Hadith studies, religious texts are interpreted thematically with contemporary issues, such as the prohibition of extremism, the importance of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), and social media ethics. (Mukhlisin. 2021)

This integration strategy demonstrates a contextual learning approach that connects the material with everyday realities, enabling students not only to understand it cognitively but also to internalize moderation values affectively and psychomotorically.

In addition, PAI teachers use group discussion methods and case studies to foster students’ critical awareness. This aligns with theories emphasizing education as a dialogical process that liberates students from narrow thinking toward reflective consciousness. Thus, the strategy of integrating moderation values into teaching material positions PAI teachers not merely as knowledge transmitters but as facilitators who guide students to adopt moderation as a framework for thinking and a daily way of life.

Beyond classical classroom strategies, PAI teachers also employ a personal approach toward students who show intolerant tendencies. This is important because not all students can change

through general instruction; some require individual attention to avoid feeling blamed or embarrassed.

Teachers use persuasive, empathetic, and non-judgmental communication styles. This aligns with the principle of recognizing students as unique individuals with diverse backgrounds, necessitating a personal and respectful approach. Interestingly, this strategy not only alters students' cognitive mindset but also impacts their affective domain. Some students report that they are more receptive to teacher guidance when mentored personally because they feel valued. Observations also indicate that this strategy can reduce student resistance and open space for self-reflection.

Furthermore, PAI teachers emphasize exemplary behavior (*uswah hasanah*) in daily interactions, such as consistently respecting differences, using wise language, and acting as mediators in minor student conflicts. This corresponds with character education concepts that stress consistency between words and actions. Therefore, the personal approach strategy functions not only as remedial teaching for intolerant students but also as a means of deeper character formation.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Based on the findings of the study regarding the role of PAI teachers in instilling religious moderation attitudes among junior high school students in Idi Rayeuk, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. The role of PAI teachers is highly strategic in shaping religious moderation attitudes among junior high school students in Idi Rayeuk. This role is reflected in three main aspects. First, PAI teachers function as educators who instill values of tolerance and mutual respect. Through classroom learning activities as well as religious activities at school, teachers emphasize the importance of maintaining openness, appreciating diversity, and avoiding discriminatory behavior. These efforts encourage students to recognize that differences are an inevitable reality that must be accepted wisely. Second, the role of PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk is reflected through their exemplary behavior in demonstrating moderate religious attitudes. Teachers not only deliver instructional material but also provide concrete examples in daily life, such as simplicity, fairness, and openness in interactions. This exemplification serves as an effective means of shaping students' character, as teacher behavior can be imitated and internalized as part of a balanced religious attitude. Third, PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk play a role in fostering non-extremist attitudes and teaching the importance of respecting differences.
2. PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk face fairly complex challenges in instilling the values of religious moderation in students. These challenges arise from at least two main aspects. First, the rapid flow of information from social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube has a significant impact on students' thinking patterns and attitudes. Social media often presents religious content that lacks a scientific or educational foundation, and in some cases spreads intolerant or exclusive ideologies. This situation is exacerbated by the limited digital literacy of junior high school students, who are still in a psychologically unstable developmental phase, making them prone to accepting information uncritically. Second, the influence of parents and the surrounding community also constitutes a major challenge. Homogeneous and exclusive social environments often shape conservative views among students, reducing their openness to differences.
3. PAI teachers in Idi Rayeuk implement systematic and layered strategies to instill religious moderation attitudes in students. These strategies encompass two main aspects: the integration of moderation values into the teaching material and a personal approach toward students who exhibit intolerant attitudes. The integration of moderation values into the material is carried out by embedding principles of tolerance, respect for differences, and

balance in every topic of religious instruction. PAI teachers do not teach moderation as a separate subject but make it an integral part of lessons in fiqh, akhlaq, and Qur'anic and Hadith studies.

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