

The Role of Higher Education in Building Religious Tolerance: A Study on the Implementation of Moderation Attitudes among Aceh's State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institution Students

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Higher Education;
Religious Tolerance;
Moderation Attitudes;
PTKIN Aceh;
Student Implementation

Article history:

Received 2024-01-09

Revised 2024-04-27

Accepted 2024-06-24

ABSTRACT

Fostering an attitude of religious moderation among students can be achievable when all stakeholders collaborate to create a cohesive understanding of moderation. This study examines the role of universities in promoting religious moderation among students at State Islamic Religious Higher Education Institution (hereafter, PTKIN) Aceh. Utilizing a qualitative approach, data were collected through interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), and observations. Interviews involved academics focused on religious moderation at PTKIN, while FGDs included students from five state Islamic universities in Aceh, selected purposively to provide insights on students' attitudes and views on religious moderation. Observations were conducted to assess students' attitudes and behaviors. The findings reveal that students exhibit moderate attitudes in daily life, are willing to collaborate socially and respect others' rights and obligations in worship. Challenges in instilling religious moderation values include the need for acceptance of the term within the context of local wisdom and avoiding the perception of moderation as a new religious project. Solutions involve preparing a curriculum based on Islamic tolerance and strengthening the role of religious moderation houses to promote Islamic *washatiyah* values among students, facilitating easier understanding and implementation in daily life.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Understanding religious moderation in today's circles gives rise to pros and cons, the use of the term "moderation" can give rise to polemics in giving various meanings, some consider this term to be new or to modernize religion (Islam), on the other hand the word moderation can also be understood as an effort in killing the critical nature of religious adherents towards sects that destroy religious values. However, on the other hand, religious moderation actually aims to create an attitude among religious people that is *rahmatan lil alamin*. The presence of a religious moderation house at PTKIN through the Circular Letter of the Director General of Education Number B-3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019 is the Ministry of Religion's commitment to realizing knowledge, a basis for thinking and being

moderate in PTKIN circles (Hanum, 2019) including among students, the implementation of this circular is not as easy as turning the palm of your hand, opportunities and challenges are still experienced by every Islamic religious college throughout Indonesia, these challenges could come from the unpreparedness of Islamic universities in formulating concepts implementation of religious moderation which is integrated directly into the Higher Education curriculum, then rejection is also vulnerable to occurring from certain parties who still do not understand the meaning of moderation in detail and the meaning and intent of moderation. (Wulan & Fajrussalam, 2022), this research can be a contribution to thinking about this problem in order to find a solution so that it can foster the values of religious moderation (Muhajarah, 2022; Rosyid, 2022) in a religious college environment.

Setara Institute (2019) found that some Islamic universities in Indonesia, such as UIN Bandung and UIN Jakarta (Murtadlo, 2019), as well as several universities in Lampung Province (Muhajarah, 2022), are exposed to radicalism. This shows that moderation is not fully implemented in higher education. Indonesia, a country that guarantees freedom of religion as stated in the 1945 Constitution (Jufri, 2016), faces challenges due to the widespread influence of the internet. This has led to the rise of puritanical religious views, which are rigid and less dynamic (Munawir, 2017; Saingo & Nani, 2023), and can result in intolerance and a shallow understanding of religion (Wahyudi, 2011).

To foster tolerance and respect in a diverse society, religious universities need to promote moderate values and a mental revolution (Islam, 2020). Sometimes, religious communities are divided into opposing groups, which threatens national unity (Ardhana, 2022; Mahardhani, 2022; Arifianto et al., 2021; Ginting, 2021; Prastyo & Fikra, 2022). Religion can either unite or divide people, depending on how it is understood and practiced (Junaedi, 2019). A fanatical and shallow understanding of religion can be destructive (Iffan et al., 2020; Truna & Zakaria, 2021). Therefore, Islamic universities must focus on teaching comprehensive Islamic values to counter radicalism (Yunas et al., 2024).

Religious moderation in multicultural communities can be promoted in several ways. Educational institutions can act as laboratories for models of religious moderation to address radicalism and intolerance (Sutrisno, 2019). Intense and inclusive religious education is also crucial to counter radicalism in society (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019).

Society needs a comprehensive understanding of religion, not just a partial one. Although Indonesia, predominantly Muslim, is relatively tolerant, serious efforts are still needed to handle religious communities. Promoting religious moderation in PTKIN (Islamic State Universities) is essential because these institutions play a key role in shaping religious attitudes in society. PTKIN graduates return to society and can influence it positively, and universities should improve society through their service programs.

Religious universities must be creative and innovative in developing curricula that emphasize Islamic values of peace and tolerance. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has initiated the establishment of houses of religious moderation at PTKIN. The Minister of Religion, in his speech at the inauguration of the house for religious moderation at IAIN Ponorogo, stated that the aim is to promote moderate Islam and foster tolerance among its citizens (Ponorogo, 2021).

Murtadlo's study on religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools (2019) recommends teaching young people a moderate understanding of religion early on to help them appreciate diversity (Hadiat & Syamsurijal, 2021). With the spread of hate through the internet, the state needs to monitor and prevent the rise of radical beliefs, while parents should model moderation at home (Haryani, 2020). The establishment of houses for religious moderation at PTKIN shows the government's commitment to fostering moderation, but universities' readiness to implement these programs is still in question. This is evident as some PTKI students hold beliefs contrary to moderate Islam. Aceh, with the most PTKIN in Indonesia and its unique implementation of Islamic law, serves as an example. Students often view religion in black and white terms, leading to conflicts when encountering differing religious views.

Another problem in Aceh is its deep-rooted Islamic values and culture. The Syafi'i School, ingrained in its people, acts as a barrier against external influences but also allows peaceful coexistence with other religions (Kumalasari, 2020). Students, being at a stage where they are forming their religious principles, are crucial in fostering moderation (Hadiat & Syamsurijal, 2021). PTKIN plays a significant role in providing a comprehensive understanding of religion, making it essential for educators to deliver quality Islamic education (Zulfatmi, 2023).

This research addresses the gap in understanding how Islamic universities in Aceh contribute to fostering religious moderation among students. It examines students' understanding of religious moderation, the challenges faced by universities, and the measures PTKIN has taken to instill moderate values. The objective is to evaluate the role of PTKIN in promoting religious tolerance and cooperation among students. The research question is: How do Islamic universities in Aceh influence students' attitudes towards religious moderation and interfaith cooperation? This study uses perceptions and attitudes towards different religions to measure the effectiveness of PTKIN's efforts in promoting comprehensive Islamic values.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research approach (Gunawan, 2022; Semiawan, 2010; Sugiyono, 2010) with data collection techniques carried out by means of interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) (Sidiq et al., 2019) among students at state Islamic universities throughout Aceh, namely UIN Ar-Raniry, IAIN Lhoksumawe, IAIN Langsa, IAIN Takengon and STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh. Determining the informants was carried out purposively, where student representatives from several faculties were taken who were considered to be a representation of the whole, data collection was carried out by conveying issues that were relevant to the research objectives until answers were found to all the problem formulations that had been determined. Then, data was also extracted from informants from academic elements who were directly involved in fostering religious moderation houses, and data from these informants could clarify and strengthen the data found in the implementation of the FGD. The data that has been found is carried out in several stages, starting from data reduction to ensure that the existing data is related to the research objectives, sorting the data to facilitate the focus of the discussion and data that is ready to be displayed in the discussion and this becomes part of the discussion that is adapted to the discussion, then analysis is carried out. to express directly how the values of moderation have been internalized among students at PTKIN Aceh. The research was carried out for 4 (four) months at 5 (five) state Islamic universities in Aceh Province, considering the very wide reach and distance and the need for additional data confirmation for accuracy when analyzing research data, while the focus of the study was on values of religious moderation among PTKIN Aceh students.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Meaning and Goals of Religious Moderation

The internalization of good Islamic values among teenagers in Aceh begins when they are children, long before they go to college. So, if you look at the attitude towards carrying out the basic teachings of Islam among Acehnese students, it has been well ingrained, because in general, among them, they have had basic religious education both in the family, in recitation places in people's homes (*rumoh beut/meunasah*) and also in Islamic boarding schools. (*dayah*) where they stay (Hakim et al., 2021; Hasballah, 2020; Kamil, 2022). At this stage they have been taught good Islamic manners and morality before continuing to college, an attitude of respect for each other has been instilled from their ancestors. (Ozzay, 2022; Zikra, 2023) especially in the basic education that they found in the Dayah, but on the other hand obedience has also been fostered since within the family environment so that they show their steadfastness towards the Islamic religion very well. Students in Aceh are identified with students who are always bound by the values of the Islamic religion and the advice of their parents

from generation to generation. The understanding of religion taught by the *teungku* (teachers where they recite the Koran) in the villages has formed good religious character, respecting teachers and maintaining Their religion is an obligation for anyone in Aceh, so when someone violates religious laws, they will receive social sanctions and also sins from Allah SWT, for example if there are cases of adultery, stealing, drunkenness, *mairsir* and other similar things, they will receive criticism and social law. from the environment in which they live, even in customs that have been passed down from generation to generation, it is not only those who commit adultery who are punished by the law, even children who are the result of adultery will be labeled as illegitimate children, and ridiculed by those around them.

Mistakes in understanding the meaning of moderation often occur among those who are new to the term. In Islam, moderation, known as "washatiyah," has been part of the religion since its inception. Moderation in Islam is not about modernizing the religion but emphasizing Islamic values that promote peace and tolerance. One informant explained that religious moderation fosters tolerance and mutual respect, maintaining the integrity of religious traditions and preventing conflicts between different religious communities. Similarly, a leader at UIN Ar-Raniry stated that religious moderation focuses on interactions and relationships between religious adherents, not on core beliefs, aiming to create a strong, diverse nation. Religious moderation helps maintain national integrity by encouraging tolerance and respect for cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious differences, fostering unity and national commitment (Samho, 2022; Syamsuriah & Ardi, 2022).

3.2. Perceptions of Moderation among college students

From the student's perspective, religious moderation is not a big problem that occurs in Aceh, just respecting each other and not blaming existing traditions to the extreme will foster a balanced social life, considering that Aceh is the only region that has had the freedom to implement Islamic law. In principle, nothing in Islamic teachings allows doing unreasonable things towards other people, including those of different beliefs, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad SAW when leading the people, no one is allowed to do injustice even in a different context of understanding, even if they live safely in the world. The leadership of the Prophet Muhammad, even Islam revealed a verse which states "*lakum diinukum waliadin* (for you your religion, for me my religion)", this indicates that Islam itself does not impose a religious will and prohibits Muslims from interfering with the beliefs and worship of other religions in an unjust manner (Hani, 2022; Hotimah, 2022).

Religious moderation aims to preserve existing religious values without causing conflict. Acehese students are open to the concept of moderation, respecting other beliefs as long as they don't disrupt their local customs and Islamic traditions. One student mentioned that moderation doesn't mean accepting different religious practices but respecting them if they don't interfere with Acehese culture and Islamic teachings. Another student noted that religion teaches tolerance well, emphasizing individual worship while maintaining communal harmony.

Acehese students can interact and cooperate with people of different religions, maintaining appropriate boundaries. Some students have friendships with non-Muslims, such as Christians, showing mutual respect. Misunderstandings about moderation often arise from a lack of education on the topic. One student suggested that socialization about religious moderation has not been widespread, leading to confusion. However, once explained, the concept aligns with their daily practices of Islamic values.

For example, a student from IAIN Lhoksumawe mentioned that although the term "moderation" is not widely understood, the principles are practiced in daily life and religious studies. Students are open to working with non-Muslims as long as it doesn't conflict with their faith. They believe in peaceful coexistence, respecting each other's religions without interference. This approach reflects the Islamic teachings of tolerance and differentiation between those who are hostile and those who live peacefully.

This maturity in thinking has led students to accept interactions among diverse people while maintaining their own beliefs. Religious moderation respects established beliefs without causing disruption (Huda, 2023; Rohman, 2021; Usman, 2023). The goal of moderation is to embrace diversity, uphold differences, and avoid blame. According to the Chair of the House of Religious Moderation at PTKIN Aceh, skepticism towards moderation arises from unfamiliarity with the term, which some see as a threat to religious traditions. However, once explained, students understand that moderation reflects the Islamic value of *washatiyah*, demonstrated by the Prophet Muhammad. He showed that religion should inspire love and confidence through peace, harmony, and respect, making these values essential to moderation.

The attitude of religious moderation among students has deep roots. From birth, Acehnese children are immersed in religious values. During pregnancy, parents follow religious guidelines to ensure their children grow up with strong faith, such as avoiding dishonest means of earning. Children are prayed for and given meaningful names, reflecting their religious upbringing. This early instillation of religious character makes Acehnese people naturally resistant to anything that threatens their beliefs (Fauzi, 2023; Yunus & Amiruddin, 2020). However, their tradition of hospitality, known as *tepeumulia jamee*, helps them accept new ideas, especially those benefiting the community.

3.3. Challenges in implementing religious moderation at PTKIN

The emergence of the term religious moderation will certainly be faced with various challenges, because it involves terms that are included in beliefs that have been built up in society. Religious moderation is not new, but it has been exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (Sirajuddin, 2020; Umar, 2021) and it has even become a religious teaching that must be instilled in all generations of Muslims. Religious moderation is not a problem in society, but at least in terms of moderation this is a bit of a problem for religious people, because it can be perceived as new items that did not previously exist which could then damage the purity of the beliefs that have been held. One of the informants said, "Basically, if we talk about the challenges in implementing religious moderation, it is not that worrying, but the understanding of the term moderation among the public or student needs to be improved, because usually if the meaning has not been properly understood, it is very easy to reject it, especially if it is about beliefs, don't playing around, so it is necessary to first increase understanding among the public so that it will be easier to understand."

Introducing religious moderation faces several challenges. First, the term "moderation" can be misunderstood in Aceh, often interpreted as modernizing or altering existing religious practices. This misunderstanding can cause resistance, so it's important to explain moderation using the Arabic term "*washatiyah*," which means balance. Acehnese religious leaders, or *teungku-tengku*, are highly respected for maintaining traditional teachings, and new terms from non-experts may be viewed as disruptive. Second, Acehnese people are deeply religious and will resist anything that threatens their faith. Historical events, such as the resistance against the Dutch when the Grand Baiturrahman Mosque was burned, show that religion unites and motivates them to defend their beliefs (Nisak, 2023; Ar-Rahmany, 2022; Anis, 2022; Siahaan et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the third is the lack of socialization regarding religious moderation, especially in educational institutions, the introduction of moderation or *washatiyah* Islamic values should have started during education, the Islamic *washatiyah* values were actually put into practice by Rasullullah Saw. (Rais, 2020; Zakiah & Nursikin, 2023) The *washatiyah* view of Islam has even become an interesting study in the thought paradigm of one of the Acehnese ulama, Tgk H. Muhammad Yusuf A Wahab or better known as Tu Sop, provides an overview of *washatiyah* Islam through his preaching, in his view, *washatiyah* Islam is oriented towards unity (*wihdat al ummah*), have good morals and maintain a sense of security, balance between the world and nature, be oriented towards advice, wisdom and all that is good and reject all deviations that occur (Zulkhairi, 2023). On the same hand, there is still a lack of instilling the value of moderation among society, which also occurs in *da'wah* material which is more oriented towards issues of *fiqh* or worship so that society is more religiously oriented towards the legal

aspects of the practice of worship such as matters of purification, prayer, fasting, Hajj and some monotheism to Allah SWT.

The rapid development of information technology is changing culture and lifestyle, affecting all levels of society. Social media enables free and widespread interaction, exposing young people to both positive and negative influences. This poses a challenge, especially for those who lack a strong foundation in religious values, as they might struggle to filter out harmful cultural elements. Over time, this could weaken the religious spirit embedded in the community (Annissa & Putra, 2021). To address this, cultivating a strong understanding of religion from an early age is essential. One FGD participant noted that unchecked negative information could harm the nation's integrity, leading to a loss of local culture and wisdom. Therefore, it is crucial for all groups in Aceh to promote a strong religious foundation and cultural awareness to preserve local wisdom amid technological advancements (Aprilia et al., 2020).

By having a strong religious foundation and understanding your cultural values, it will make it easier to filter existing information and in the future you will be better able to utilize information technology in a good direction. (Aprilia et al., 2020), as explained by one of the FGD participants that "the development of information technology is not a worry if the younger generation is equipped with religion, because with religion it will direct what is right and avoid what violates our religious and cultural teachings", the massive development of information is a challenge and opportunity separately in building *washatiyah* Islam, because if you don't have sufficient provisions from an early age, this technology will backfire in maintaining the integrity of religious and national values.

The widespread development of information technology poses challenges to preserving culture and customs. Today's individualistic attitudes contribute to this concern, as people become apathetic and more likely to adopt behaviors contrary to local traditions (Mulasi, 2020). For example, celebrating birthdays by blowing out candles and singing, which was once taboo in Acehese society, has become common. In Aceh, advice is often given through "hadih maja" or proverbs based on Islamic values and social customs, like respecting parents and teachers. One such proverb advises immediate apology and respect for parents and teachers. This practice, instilled over generations, is a unique part of Acehese culture (Muthia, 2021). Schools can help instill these values through cultural activities, fostering a sense of cultural belonging among students (Wathano, 2021).

The instilling of moderation values must involve cultural preservation, because from the perspective of some students in Aceh, religion is a role model for life and culture as a complement to religious values in society. Religion and culture. The emergence of apathy towards culture and religion will certainly have a negative impact on the preservation of local culture, which is actually the subject of moderation studies in Indonesia. To give birth to a generation that cares about religion and culture, PTKIN must be a reinforcement and spearhead in maintaining this sustainability. In Aceh, the figures born by PTKIN will take part directly in the midst of society, for this reason they must be well equipped to be able to become a good pioneer in practicing religious values in society.

3.4. Solution for strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN

Religious universities can play their role in displaying the values of moderation, especially among students, universities which act as educational institutions can develop concepts that are more mature when compared to other institutions, there are several methods that PTKI can use, including:

3.4.1. Reconstruction the term "moderation" to "washatiyah"

There are several activities that can be carried out to internalize the values of religious moderation in society, especially by Islamic religious universities, as the results of focus group discussions conducted at several PTKIN Aceh, the informants stated that "religious moderation" requires massive socialization and training for students "both in the campus environment and in the community through service by Islamic Universities, currently the people of Aceh still consider religious moderation to be a new understanding for certain interests, especially in modernizing and weakening existing Islamic

values, there are still very few who understand it well" meaning "religious moderation, this term is also still considered a certain mission that will change the Muslim generation so that it slowly moves away from its religious values or abandons the religious and cultural values that are ingrained in Aceh, on the other hand, *da'wah* materials that use The topic of religious moderation or *washatiyah* Islamic values is still very minimal in society, especially through service carried out by Islamic campuses. This is different from one of the leading ulama in Aceh, Tu Sop, who has tried to expand the topic of his preaching regarding *washatiyah* Islamic values. (Zulkhairi, 2023), even among Islamic boarding school students in *dayah-dayah* (Islamic boarding schools in Aceh).

As is known, Aceh has a variety of Muslims with different educational backgrounds. Since ancient times, the education of Acehnese people has certainly started through the introduction of religion both from home and traditional traditions that have been established for a long time, the use of Arabic terms will certainly be easy to understand and there will be less rejection as is the case. Washatiyah Islam, Acehnese people do not immediately open themselves to new things, especially religious ones, because they can be seen as threatening existing religious values. This is a concern in providing a good understanding for the public that religious moderation is not something new, and long ago, Islam was taught religion with the values of *wasathiyah* (moderation) long ago when Islam was first permitted by the Prophet Muhammad.

If understanding is not properly refined and supported by a strong religious basis, it will be difficult to accept, especially among the community. Religious moderation in Acehnese society should respect existing local customs and beliefs, such as *khanduri* 7 (a seven-day memorial for the deceased), *peusijek* (a blessing ritual), and celebrations of the Prophet Muhammad's birthday. These traditions are deeply rooted and must be preserved. According to a religious leader, religious moderation should focus on promoting equality and mutual respect, not altering sacred practices. It seeks to find common ground among people, fostering peace and unity within Indonesia's diverse society. This approach helps maintain national integrity and allows different religious communities to live harmoniously. Moderation, or Islam *washatiyah*, promotes harmony and avoids extremes, reflecting the peaceful spirit of Islam. This concept is important for all religions, not just Islam, as Indonesia recognizes the diversity within Christianity and other faiths.

3.4.2. Strengthen the house of religious moderation

One strategy for strengthening structured moderation among students can be done by strengthening the role of religious moderation houses that already exist in universities. This can be done by providing sufficient budget to carry out activities to strengthen religious moderation in the university environment, as has been done. carried out by UIN Ar Raniry Banda Aceh, there are several activities that are of concern to the UIN moderation house, such as making a book, a guide to the implementation of religious moderation and trying to publish works on the theme of moderation from writers, especially academics and students in Aceh, involving academics from other PTKINs in Aceh to discuss the direction of moderation in Aceh, and other activities.

Strengthening the house of religious moderation will have an impact on seriousness and focus in developing and studying moderation values that are connected to local customary and cultural values. In strengthening moderation values, there needs to be support and a comprehensive approach such as prioritizing critical thinking, respecting plurality. and pluralism(Ikhwan et al., 2023). Strengthening the role of religious moderation houses is considered very important, considering that religious universities are strengthening laboratories that can neutralize the flow of information and moderation values(Lazulfa & Faristiana, 2023)in society and among students. Religious moderation houses can coordinate with faculties and departments to equalize perceptions of moderation values that will be implemented in the higher education curriculum, and can also explore moderation values and local culture that exist in society through various joint research. Strengthening the role of the house of religious moderation can provide freedom for them to develop and explore moderation values and also carry out an analysis of the relationship with existing cultural values.

3.4.3. Internalization of moderation values in the PTKI curriculum

Curriculum development in religious universities is essential to meet the changing needs of society. In Indonesia, with its diverse cultures, ethnicities, customs, and religions, PTKIN (Islamic religious universities) must contribute significantly to their graduates' readiness to serve and lead. PTKIN graduates are expected to integrate into society and become respected leaders due to their Islamic knowledge. The PTKIN curriculum based on washatiyah (moderate) Islamic values is crucial in addressing this diversity. Students must understand and apply these values to foster a religiously guided Muslim community as taught by the Prophet Muhammad.

One informant mentioned that a key strategy to strengthen washatiyah values in PTKIN is through a unified curriculum emphasizing tolerance, good morals, and a balanced understanding of Islam. This approach helps train students to become tolerant and gentle religious individuals. Another informant emphasized the need for comprehensive support from PTKIN leadership and stakeholders to internalize religious moderation values. Given the religious conflicts in some Muslim countries and the diversity in Indonesia, PTKIN must act to prevent potential conflicts. Educating people with true religious teachings can help anticipate disputes early. PTKIN can mediate conflicts by cultivating alumni who understand and practice good religious values.

Introducing good religious values early can prevent conflicts, which often arise from each group's truth claims (Asroni, 2020; Lestari, 2020). Developing a curriculum based on washatiyah Islamic values can create students capable of intelligently handling religious conflict and diversity, promoting the valuable Islamic principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin (mercy to all the worlds).

3.4.4. Strengthening religious and cultural foundations in students

As is the reality, every region certainly has its own customary and cultural values, strengthening customary, cultural and religious values is the main task that must be maintained in the implementation of religious moderation, for example the values of religious moderation contained in Malay Islamic civilization in South Sumatra such as compassion, tolerance, multiculturalism (Bujuri et al., 2023) and this is also considered an Islamic value in the area. Maintaining locally based religious and cultural values is the main task in maintaining the integrity of the nation and state and preserving local wisdom which must be included in the aim of moderation to be able to maintain the integrity and harmony of society. (Lede, 2022; Letek & Keban, 2021; Sya'bani et al., 2020).

In line with the above, several informants gave serious messages regarding increasing religious values among today's teenagers. Just as the development of information technology has opened a window to absorb existing information, so too do the culture and behavior of people on display today. A child who is only in his room but has internet facilities can travel around the world by absorbing whatever is available with his eyes, over time he will develop a character and attitude that is different from others. For example, a person who studies religion with access to the preaching of an extreme preacher, introducing extreme religion will eventually form an attitude in himself as seen, and vice versa, through technology it can also provide enlightenment on good Islamic values (Muin, 2024; Muvid, 2023). So for this reason, there is a need for the role of religion in providing a filter for negative things that develop, because religion basically teaches good character, people whose religious basis is minimal will be seen from their religious attitudes (Yuhaniah, 2022). Providing education on strong cultural and religious values will get used to living by existing rules everywhere.

As stated by the informant, "a good religious foundation will make a person prefer peace with anyone because religion has taught that, mutual respect and not disturbing each other is an obligation in religion, so the concept of religious moderation is better maintained in everyday life in the neighborhood." or interacting with anyone, the informant added "as Muslims we are obliged to protect ourselves and our families from the fire of hell, to protect this also in a way that does not become a problem for others in our lives.". Islam has taught us to respect and respect each other and not even bother other people. As the Prophet Muhammad has exemplified as a role model for Muslims, in

leading the state and religion he still gave freedom to followers of other religions even though it was clear that his true religion was not their choice, but the Prophet still looked after them. Another example was also given by one of the FGD participants. "When Salahuddin al-Ayyubi liberated Palestine, all religious adherents were well protected even though they had previously had confrontations with Muslims, meaning that the Acehnese who are strongly Islamic naturally have a peaceful and non-disruptive nature, they can live with anyone and in any environment. The strengthening of strong religious and cultural values in society must be a serious concern so that the integrity of local wisdom values is well maintained, through a strong religion the Islamic values of *rahmatan lil alamin* will be established themselves in the lives of our society.

Washatiyah Islam or Islam that *rahmatan lil alamin* can reconcile all elements of society, because the complexity of Islam in its religious teachings really upholds the values of unity and peace. Religious moderation basically fosters the life of the nation to provide comfort for its people to be able to live side by side within the framework of diversity, through moderation different communities can live side by side to build the nation safely and peacefully and achieve peace together. (Andini, 2023; Arimbawa, 2023; Himmah, nd). Because religious conflicts are more feared than land conflicts or traditional conflicts. For this reason, it is important to pay close attention to strengthening the religious foundations of society, because this foundation will make someone law-abiding. If this can be done well it will give birth to an Indonesian society that is tolerant and respectful of each other.

3.5 Analysis of research results

As stated in the research objectives at the beginning of the discussion, this research aims to look at the understanding of religious moderation among PTKIN Aceh students, where the instruments that are measured are the level of student knowledge (cognitive), affective (attitude) and behavioral (psychomotor) behavior. relating to religious moderation. From the research that has been carried out, it can be analyzed that the understanding of the meaning of religious moderation among students is still very lacking. This can be seen from the lack of socialization among PTKIN circles in Aceh, however, if seen from the understanding of tolerance and togetherness and recognizing existing differences, this has occurred. long before the term moderation was developed and students had applied it in their daily lives both as individuals and in interacting with other groups, this meant that the moderation attitude exemplified by students at PTKIN Aceh had been implemented well, they were more tolerant towards others, even those with different beliefs. them because in terms of their own understanding of the religion, it exemplifies the attitude of the Prophet towards adherents of other religions in the country he led, even towards those who did not agree with the religion he preached.

On the other hand, moderation behavior among PTKIN Aceh students appears to be more tolerant and able to cooperate with all parties, but according to them it is more in a social context and does not touch the realm of faith and beliefs that they already believe in, because beliefs are private and should not be disturbed. This also applies to Acehnese society in general. The approach taken in building a moderate Acehnese society is through the introduction of basic religious values that touch on culture and customs that are believed to have been passed down from generation to generation, the Acehnese people can accept anyone who attends as long as they have good intentions and aims. To further internalize Islamic values more optimally, religious universities in Aceh should become laboratories for comprehensively studying and internalizing religious values among students.

4. CONCLUSION

The study finds that religious moderation among PTKIN Aceh students is progressing well, with no conflicts arising from religious differences or views. Students collaborate effectively in social contexts and for communal benefit, demonstrating a successful implementation of moderation despite limited socialization efforts at the college. Islam's stance on religious freedom, as highlighted in the Qur'an, supports this attitude. However, challenges remain, such as misunderstandings of the term

"moderation" and resistance when introduced by unfamiliar figures. PTKIN has undertaken various activities to enhance religious moderation, including integrating *washatiyah* Islamic values into lectures and organizing seminars. Continuous curriculum development and reinforcement of the concept of *washatiyah* Islam are recommended to further embed contemporary Islamic understanding in students' daily lives.

This research has benefited from the support of various parties, including contributions from campuses that provided excellent facilities. Nevertheless, the study has limitations, including the scope of socialization and the depth of student engagement with the concept of moderation. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of these educational strategies and explore the effectiveness of different methods for promoting religious moderation in diverse educational settings.

Conflicts of Interest: This research was purely conducted with the aim of looking more deeply at the application of values and attitudes of religious moderation among students in Aceh so that it can describe the reality of acceptance or rejection of the values of religious moderation among students at Islamic universities in Aceh.

Acknowledgments: Thank you to the founder of the research provided by the directorate of education and education of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia through DIPA STAIN Teungku Dirundeng Meulaboh for the 2021 fiscal year. In this research, we are aware that all parties have contributed both morally and otherwise so that it can be carried out well. This contribution was also provided by all campuses which provided excellent facilities when we conducted the research. We believe that this research can be a good foundation to continue so that the development of knowledge, especially regarding moderation, can continue to provide updates so that it becomes a reference in the development of Islamic education in the context of religious moderation in Aceh and Indonesia.

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