Strategies of Islamic Education (PAI) Teachers in Preventing Digital Radicalism through Religious Moderation

Arif Syahputra[1]✉, Abd Rahman[2]

[1,2]Pendidikan Agama Islam, Universitas Muhammadiyah, Indonesia
Email: syahputra.arief27@gmail.com
DOI: 10.31958/jies.v6i1.16664

Article info	Abstract
	The development of digital media has significantly influenced how students access and understand religious teachings. While digital media expands access to religious literacy, it also poses risks related to the spread of exclusive and radical religious ideologies. This study aims to analyze religious moderation education as a strategy of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers in preventing digital radicalism at Al Manar Private Islamic Senior High School, Medan Johor. This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach using interviews, observations, and documentation. The informants include the principal, PAI teachers, and students. The findings indicate that religious moderation education is implemented through the integration of wasathiyah values in PAI learning, teacher role modeling, strengthening digital religious literacy, and fostering tolerant school culture. Religious moderation education functions as a preventive strategy to develop students' critical, moderate, and inclusive attitudes, thereby minimizing exposure to digital radicalism. The study confirms the strategic role of PAI teachers as agents of moderation in responding to the challenges of radicalism in the digital era.

Keywords: Religious Moderation, Digital Radicalism, Islamic Education.

Abstrak

Perkembangan media digital telah membawa dampak signifikan terhadap cara peserta didik mengakses dan memahami ajaran agama. Di satu sisi, media digital membuka ruang literasi keagamaan yang luas, namun di sisi lain juga menghadirkan potensi penyebaran paham keagamaan yang eksklusif dan radikal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis peran pendidikan moderasi beragama sebagai strategi guru Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) dalam mencegah radikalisme digital di Madrasah Aliyah Swasta Al Manar Medan Johor. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif, melalui teknik wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Informan penelitian terdiri atas kepala madrasah, guru PAI, dan peserta didik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan moderasi beragama diimplementasikan melalui integrasi nilai-nilai wasathiyah dalam pembelajaran PAI, keteladanan guru, penguatan literasi digital keagamaan, serta pembiasaan sikap toleran dalam budaya sekolah. Pendidikan moderasi beragama terbukti berperan sebagai strategi preventif dalam membentuk sikap kritis, moderat, dan inklusif peserta didik, sehingga mampu meminimalisasi potensi paparan radikalisme digital. Penelitian ini menegaskan bahwa guru PAI memiliki peran strategis sebagai agen moderasi dalam menghadapi tantangan radikalisme di era digital.

Kata Kunci: Moderasi Beragama, Radikalisme Digital, Pendidikan Agama Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Moderation in Arabic is known by the terms wasath or wasathiyah, which are equivalent to tawassuth (middle position), i'tidal (justice), and tawazun (balance). In Latin, moderation derives from moderâtio, meaning a state of being moderate neither excessive nor deficient and also referring to self-control (Qorib, 2022; Ahmad, 2021). These conceptual foundations emphasize balance, fairness, and proportionality as essential principles in religious life.

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped patterns of social interaction, including religious engagement. Students are no longer fully dependent on teachers and textbooks as primary sources of religious knowledge; instead, they increasingly access digital platforms such as social media, YouTube, and online religious websites (Ardiano et al., 2022). This condition creates both opportunities and serious challenges for Islamic education. On the one hand, access to religious resources has become more open and diverse; on the other hand, there is growing exposure to narrow, exclusive, and even radical religious interpretations. The internet and social media platforms provide unlimited access to various forms of religious narratives, ranging from in-depth exegetical studies to selectively edited sermon clips. Cyberspace thus functions simultaneously as a learning resource and a discursive arena that directly shapes how adolescents construct their religious understanding (Am & Munir, 2025).

In the context of Indonesia's pluralistic and multicultural society, religious-based radicalism poses a serious threat to social cohesion and national stability. Radicalism develops not only through physical networks but also through digital spaces that are difficult to monitor directly. Therefore, educational institutions, particularly madrasahs, bear a strategic responsibility to equip students with moderate, inclusive, and contextual religious understanding.

The concept of religious moderation, as formulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, emphasizes the importance of justice, balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity in religious life. This principle aligns with Qur'anic guidance in QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143 concerning ummatan wasathan, which positions Muslims as a moderate community serving as an example for others. From the perspective of Islamic education, the values of religious moderation must be internalized through systematic and continuous learning processes (Rahayu, 2025).

Islamic Education (PAI) teachers play a central role in this process, not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral exemplars and spiritual mentors for students. PAI teachers are also required to foster religious digital literacy, defined as students' ability to critically evaluate digital religious information, including online sermons, video content, and textual narratives circulating on social media (Akbar & Supratama, 2025). Through appropriate pedagogical strategies, PAI teachers can guide students to understand Islamic teachings comprehensively and contextually, preventing them from being trapped in extreme interpretations. In this way, religious moderation

education can function as a preventive strategy against digital radicalism (Qodim, 2023).

Several previous studies have examined religious moderation within Islamic educational contexts. Daud (2023) demonstrated that religious moderation content disseminated through social media can strengthen values of tolerance, pluralism, and peace while countering online radical narratives. Creative and persuasive moderation content on social media has the potential to cultivate inclusive attitudes, thereby providing a theoretical foundation for utilizing digital platforms as strategic tools for promoting religious moderation in Islamic education.

However, a research gap remains in the limited number of field-based studies specifically analyzing how PAI teachers integrate religious moderation with digital literacy as a preventive strategy against digital radicalism at the madrasah level. Furthermore, the practical experiences of teachers in identifying and responding to students' tendencies toward digital radicalism have not been extensively documented.

The urgency of this study lies in the increasing influence of digital media on students' religious understanding, which carries the potential to disseminate intolerant and radical ideologies. In Indonesia's plural society, madrasahs and PAI teachers hold a strategic position in cultivating moderate, critical, and contextual religious perspectives among students.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the implementation of religious moderation education as a strategy employed by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in preventing digital radicalism at a private Madrasah Aliyah in Medan Johor. The study focuses on teachers' understanding of religious moderation, forms of instructional implementation, and the strengthening of students' religious digital literacy.

Specifically, this research examines how religious moderation education is implemented by PAI teachers at the madrasah, identifies examples of teacher role modeling in strengthening moderation values, explores how religious digital literacy serves as a preventive foundation against digital radicalism, and analyzes the extent to which these strategies contribute to preventing digital radicalism among students..

METHODS
Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. The qualitative design was selected to enable an in-depth understanding of processes, meanings, and strategies implemented in religious moderation education within the madrasah context. The descriptive method was applied to systematically and accurately portray the role of Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in instilling religious moderation values, the instructional strategies employed, and students' responses to the influence of digital radicalism.

Through this approach, the researcher reconstructed social realities based on participants' perspectives without manipulating research variables, allowing for a naturalistic and contextual interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at a private Madrasah Aliyah located in Medan Johor, Medan City. Participants consisted of the madrasah principal, Islamic Education (PAI) teachers, and selected students. Participants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in teaching and learning activities and in the implementation of religious moderation programs within the school environment. This selection ensured that the data collected were relevant and aligned with the research objectives.

Research Instruments

In qualitative research, the primary instrument is the researcher as the human instrument. To support data collection, several auxiliary instruments were utilized, including interview guidelines, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. These instruments were designed to guide the researcher in systematically gathering and recording relevant information related to religious moderation education and digital radicalism prevention strategies.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through three main techniques: in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis. In-depth interviews were conducted with the madrasah principal, PAI teachers, and students to explore their perspectives on religious moderation education strategies and efforts to prevent digital radicalism. Observations were carried out to examine classroom learning processes, school culture, instructional practices, and institutional policies related to religious moderation. Document analysis involved reviewing teaching materials, school programs, policy documents, and other relevant institutional records supporting the research focus. The data collection process was conducted in stages, beginning with preliminary observations, followed by interviews, and concluding with the collection and review of supporting documents to ensure comprehensive data acquisition.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using an interactive analysis model consisting of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing information relevant to the research themes. Data display was presented in a systematic narrative format to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn gradually and continuously throughout the research process, ensuring consistency between emerging findings and collected data.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the credibility and validity of the findings, source triangulation was applied by comparing information obtained from different participants. Member

checking was also conducted by confirming interpretations and findings with selected participants to ensure accuracy and authenticity. Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants provided informed consent prior to interviews, confidentiality of identities was maintained, and all collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results
Implementation of Religious Moderation Education in Islamic Education (PAI) Learning

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic Education (PAI) teachers integrate the values of religious moderation into instructional content, particularly within themes of Aqidah and Akhlaq, tolerance, *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, and interreligious relations. The concept of *wasathiyah* is delivered not merely in a normative manner but through contextual examples relevant to students' lived experiences (Qodim, 2023).

Based on interviews and classroom observations, religious moderation education is integrated into Aqidah Akhlaq instruction through dialogical learning approaches and interactive pedagogical methods. PAI teachers connect the values of *wasathiyah* with subjects such as Aqidah, Fiqh, and Islam Wasathiyah, especially at the Grade X science stream level.

The integration of moderation values is not confined to doctrinal explanation but is contextualized by linking learning materials to contemporary social and religious phenomena. Teachers utilize current issues circulating in society and digital media as discussion material, enabling students to critically examine and filter religious narratives in relation to real-life contexts.

Discussion-based learning emerges as the primary pedagogical approach. Teachers provide opportunities for students to express opinions, present arguments, and engage in open dialogue (Bayanuddin, 2023). Within this process, teachers emphasize that differences of opinion are natural as long as they are supported by clear evidence and reasoning. The dialogical approach allows students to question, debate, and critically articulate perspectives, aligning with the view that dialogical learning is central to internalizing moderation values (Qodim, 2023).

Teacher Role Modeling as Reinforcement of Religious Moderation

The findings demonstrate that teacher exemplarity serves as a key factor in shaping students' moderate attitudes. Teachers' openness, fairness, and respect for differences in daily interactions function as concrete behavioral models for students. In this framework, PAI teachers act as filters of information and value mentors who guide students not to passively accept religious narratives but to critically examine them in light of Islamic texts and moderation principles. Research on Islamic Education as a Pillar of Religious Moderation in Building Students' Religious Character in the Digital Era supports this finding, indicating that the implementation of moderation values

through PAI learning fosters tolerance, balance, and responsibility in digital contexts (Hasanuddin et al., 2025).

Interview data reveal that PAI teachers possess a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation as a non-extreme, non-exclusive, and inclusive religious stance. Radicalism is recognized not only in interreligious contexts but also within internal Islamic discourse, such as rigid claims regarding fiqh differences or sectarian interpretations. Teachers interpret moderation as positioning Islamic teachings fairly, proportionally, and in accordance with the Qur'anic concept of *ummatan wasathan* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143).

The Qur'anic foundation of moderation is expressed in the following verse:

*"Thus We have made you a justly balanced community (*ummatan wasathan*) so that you may be witnesses over humanity and the Messenger may be a witness over you…" (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143).*

According to Shihab (2002), the middle position signifies justice and balance, enabling Muslims to serve as exemplars without inclining toward extremism. This interpretation becomes a normative foundation for teachers in guiding students toward mature and inclusive religious perspectives.

Religious Digital Literacy as a Preventive Strategy

The madrasah strengthens religious digital literacy by guiding students to critically evaluate religious information sources. Teachers consistently remind students not to accept online religious content without verification (Rahmat & Utomo, 2025). This strategy functions as a preventive measure to minimize exposure to digital radicalism.

Digital transformation has reshaped patterns of religious understanding. Easy access to information through social media and online platforms may expand knowledge but also increases vulnerability to extremist narratives. Strengthening digital literacy requires collaboration among government institutions, educational bodies, religious communities, and digital platforms (Fadli, 2023).

Additional research underscores the importance of digital religious literacy in countering radicalism among youth (Prasetia, 2025). Teachers recognize that students at the Madrasah Aliyah level are in identity formation stages and thus vulnerable to ideological influence. Consequently, critical thinking, selective attitudes, and awareness of legal and social consequences of irresponsible information sharing are emphasized in classroom instruction.

Teachers function as evaluative filters and moral mentors who guide students to critically assess religious narratives rather than accept them passively (Hasanuddin et al., 2025). This strategy strengthens students' resilience against intolerant and radical discourse in digital spaces.

Effectiveness of Religious Moderation Education in Preventing Digital Radicalism

The findings indicate that religious moderation education contributes to fostering critical, inclusive, and tolerant student attitudes. These attitudes serve as protective barriers against digital narratives promoting hatred, intolerance, and violence in the name of religion.

Although no dominant radical tendencies were identified among students, isolated rigid perspectives occasionally emerged during classroom discussions. Teachers addressed these tendencies immediately through dialogical and educational approaches. The emphasis on understanding diversity within Islamic jurisprudence and theological thought enables students to adopt inclusive positions and resist provocation from digital hate narratives. These findings reinforce the Ministry of Religious Affairs' view that religious moderation is essential for maintaining social harmony and preventing extremism (Kemenag RI, 2019). Overall, religious moderation education at the madrasah contributes to forming students who are critical, moderate, and tolerant in the digital era.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings on the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Preventing Digital Radicalism

No	Research Focus	Main Findings	Form of Implementation	Impact on Students
1	PAI teachers' understanding of religious moderation	Moderation understood as justice, balance, and rejection of extremism	Explanation of *wasathiyah* and rejection of exclusive truth claims	Students develop inclusive religious perspectives
2	Urgency of moderation in madrasah	Moderation viewed as essential for harmony and conflict prevention	Instilling tolerance and mutual respect in class	Peaceful and harmonious learning environment
3	Integration in PAI learning	Moderation integrated into Akhlaq, Fiqh, and Islam Wasathiyah	Discussion methods, case studies, linking to current issues	Students think critically and openly
4	Teacher exemplarity	Teachers model moderate and non-discriminatory attitudes	Fair discussion and respect for differing opinions	Students emulate moderate social behavior
5	Influence of digital media	Digital media has strong influence and radical	Digital literacy education and	Students become more selective in

		potential	content filtering	media use
6	Indications of radical tendencies	No dominant radicalism, minor rigid tendencies	Corrective dialogue and educational approach	Early prevention of extremist attitudes
7	Effectiveness of moderation education	Moderation education effective as preventive strategy	Integration of learning, role modeling, digital literacy	Students protected from digital radical exposure
8	Role of PAI teachers	Teachers as agents of moderation	Mentoring, guiding differences, student support	Formation of moderate and tolerant religious character

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the implementation of religious moderation education aligns with the Qur'anic concept of *ummatan wasathan* (QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:143), emphasizing balance, justice, and proportionality in religious practice. This normative foundation strengthens teachers' roles in fostering inclusive and mature religious perspectives among students. The dialogical approach adopted by teachers supports arguments that moderation values are more effectively internalized through open discussion rather than indoctrination. Dialogue-based learning enables students to cultivate critical thinking skills and respect differences of opinion.

Teacher exemplarity (*uswah hasanah*) emerges as a central element in the internalization of moderation values. Teachers' fair and open attitudes reinforce students' character development beyond theoretical instruction. The integration of digital religious literacy reflects the adaptive relevance of Islamic education to contemporary challenges. As digital platforms shape religious understanding, moderation education must incorporate critical digital literacy to prevent radical exposure.

Thus, religious moderation education in the madrasah context functions not only as theological reinforcement but also as a socio-educational strategy for strengthening students' resilience against digital radicalism. These findings reaffirm that religious moderation remains a key instrument in safeguarding social harmony and preventing the spread of extremist ideologies within educational environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious moderation education constitutes an effective strategy implemented by Islamic Education (PAI) teachers in preventing digital

radicalism at the madrasah level. PAI teachers understand religious moderation as a balanced and just religious attitude that rejects all forms of extremism, both in interreligious relations and within internal Islamic discourse. The implementation of religious moderation education is carried out through the integration of wasathiyah values in PAI learning, the application of dialogical and discussion-based methods, teacher role modeling, and the strengthening of religious digital literacy. These strategies contribute to fostering students' critical, inclusive, and tolerant attitudes, enabling them to resist exposure to exclusive and radical religious content in digital spaces. This research underscores the strategic role of PAI teachers as agents of religious moderation in the digital era. Therefore, the reinforcement of religious moderation education should continue to be systematically developed through curriculum design, instructional practices, and madrasah culture as a preventive effort to maintain religious harmony and national cohesion.

REFERENCES

Abidah, A., Hidaayatullaah, H. N., Simamora, R. M., Fehabutar, D., & Mutakinati, L. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 to Indonesian education and its relation to digital learning. *Studies in Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 38–49. https://doi.org/10.46627/silet.v1i1.9

Aini, N., & Suyadi, S. (2021). The implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic education learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(2), 209–222. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i2.14388

Alam, A. (2021). Possibilities and apprehensions in the landscape of artificial intelligence in education. *SN Social Sciences*, 1(4), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00092-y

Alim, N., & Munib, A. (2022). Strengthening students' religious character through Islamic education learning. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 41(3), 745–758. https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v41i3.48520

Alqahtani, A. Y., & Rajkhan, A. A. (2020). E-learning critical success factors during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 25, 5261–5280. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10227-7

Arif, M., & Sa'diyah, H. (2022). Digital literacy in Islamic education learning in the disruption era. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 8(2), 247–260. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v8i2.18923

Arifin, S., & Zaini, M. (2021). Religious moderation in Islamic boarding school education. *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9(1), 123–150. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v9i1.8192

Aziz, A., & Taja, N. (2021). Religious moderation in Indonesian Islamic education. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 12(4), 25–42. https://doi.org/10.17499/jsser.938580

Azra, A. (2020). Religious moderation in Indonesia: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 14(2), 267–283. https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2020.14.2.267-283

Bakar, M. Y. A., & Abdullah, M. (2021). Digital learning and Islamic education during pandemic. *Education and Information Technologies*, 26, 7337–7354. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10539-8

Bali, M. M. E. I., & Fadilah, N. (2021). Internalization of religious moderation values through education. *Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 16(1), 65–81. https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v16i1.4476

Fitriah, A., & Rahmawati, R. (2022). Integration of character education in Islamic education learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 12(2), 231–244. https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v12i2.48234

Fauzi, F., & Muali, C. (2021). Learning innovation in Islamic education during pandemic. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 15(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.11591/edulearn.v15i1.18355

Halim, A., & Siregar, M. (2021). Islamic education and strengthening multicultural values in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 12(3), 91–110. https://doi.org/10.17499/jsser.936123

Hanafi, Y., Murtadho, N., & Ikhsan, M. A. (2021). Student religious moderation: A study in Indonesian universities. *Religions*, 12(6), 420. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060420

Hefner, R. W. (2020). Islam and the idea of religious moderation in Indonesia. *Social Research*, 87(2), 431–453. https://doi.org/10.1353/sor.2020.0027

Huda, M., et al. (2020). Empowering civic responsibility: Insights from service learning. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice*, 15(3), 237–253. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197918799989

Ismail, F., & Yusuf, M. (2022). Religious moderation in Indonesian higher education. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(1), 123–146. https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.1.123-146

Khotimah, K. (2021). Digital literacy and religious moderation among students. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 55–68. https://doi.org/10.15575/jpi.v7i1.12215

Kusuma, A., & Hidayat, N. (2022). Digital transformation in Islamic education learning. *Education and Information Technologies*, 27, 10235–10252. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-022-11000-7

Latip, A. (2020). The role of information technology in distance learning. *Journal of Physics: Conference Series*, 1477, 042030. https://doi.org/10.1088/1742-6596/1477/4/042030

Lubis, M. A., Yunus, M. M., & Embong, R. (2021). Religious moderation in Islamic education curriculum. *Religions*, 12(9), 744. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090744

Mansir, F., & Karim, A. (2020). Islamic education learning strategies in shaping student character. *International Journal of Instruction*, 13(4), 761–774. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2020.13447a

Munawaroh, S. (2022). Character education and religious moderation in schools. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 41(2), 366–379. https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v41i2.48212

Nisa, E. F. (2021). Social media and the birth of Islamic youth movements. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(4), 512–528. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1736018

Pratama, Y. C., & Suyadi. (2021). Integration of character education in online learning. *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 40(3), 712–725. https://doi.org/10.21831/cp.v40i3.41445

Rahman, F. (2021). Islamic education and moderation in plural society. *International Journal of Instruction*, 14(3), 889–904. https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2021.14352a

Rohman, M., & Hairudin, H. (2022). Religious moderation education in Indonesian schools. *Tadris: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 17(2), 237–252. https://doi.org/10.19105/tjpi.v17i2.6245

Sari, M., & Setiawan, A. (2022). Strengthening students' character through religious moderation education. *Journal of Education Research*, 10(3), 345–356. https://doi.org/10.5296/jer.v10i3.19834

Supriatna, N. (2021). Education for sustainable development in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 20(2), 35–50. https://doi.org/10.4119/jsse-3490

Suyadi, S., & Widodo, H. (2021). Millennial Muslim identity in digital era. *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 9(2), 405–430. https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v9i2.9509

Wibowo, A., & Gunawan, G. (2022). Character education through religious values in digital learning. *Jurnal Pendidikan Karakter*, 12(1), 123–136. https://doi.org/10.21831/jpk.v12i1.45567

Yusuf, M., & Sterkens, C. (2020). Analysing the state's law on religious education in post-reform Indonesia. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 42(2), 168–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2018.1493271

Zubaidi, A., & Hasyim, S. (2022). Religious moderation and civic education. *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, 16(2), 357–372. https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2022.16.2.357-372