



RECONSTRUCTING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AS A FRAMEWORK FOR INCLUSIVE ATTITUDES IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: CONCEPTUAL SYNTHESIS OF WASATIYYAH, PLURALISM, AND PEACEBUILDING



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Abstract

Religious moderation has become an important agenda in national policy and religious education discourse in Indonesia. However, its relationship with the formation of inclusive attitudes remains conceptually unclear, as tolerance, pluralism, peace education, and inclusive education are often used interchangeably. This article reconstructs religious moderation as a framework for fostering inclusive attitudes in religious education. It examines the construction of religious moderation in state policy and selected religious thought, clarifies its attributes and boundaries in relation to adjacent concepts, and synthesizes the interrelationship among these concepts into an educational framework. This study employs a non-empirical qualitative approach using conceptual framework analysis. The primary sources include policy documents and selected works by Nurcholish Madjid, M. Quraish Shihab, Alwi Shihab, and Tabita Kartika Christiani, supported by relevant scholarly literature. The analysis shows that religious moderation is an active, just, balanced, open, and responsible religious orientation, rather than passive neutrality or minimal tolerance. Its normative foundations include human dignity, justice, balance, freedom of religion, moral responsibility, and the rejection of violence. These foundations are translated into educational processes that are dialogical, reflective, participatory, and transformative. The article contributes a layered conceptual framework that positions inclusive attitudes as an educational orientation that still requires empirical testing across diverse educational contexts.

Abstrak

Moderasi beragama telah menjadi agenda penting dalam kebijakan nasional dan diskursus pendidikan agama di Indonesia. Namun, hubungannya dengan pembentukan sikap inklusif masih belum jelas secara konseptual karena toleransi, pluralisme, pendidikan perdamaian, dan pendidikan inklusif sering digunakan secara tumpang tindih. Artikel ini merekonstruksi moderasi beragama sebagai kerangka untuk menumbuhkan sikap inklusif dalam pendidikan agama. Artikel ini mengkaji konstruksi moderasi beragama dalam kebijakan negara dan pemikiran keagamaan terpilih, memperjelas atribut serta batas-batasnya dalam hubungannya dengan konsep-konsep yang berdekatan, dan menyintesis hubungan antarkonsep tersebut ke dalam sebuah kerangka pendidikan. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif nonempiris dengan metode analisis kerangka konseptual. Sumber primer mencakup dokumen kebijakan dan karya terpilih Nurcholish Madjid, M. Quraish Shihab, Alwi Shihab, dan Tabita Kartika Christiani, yang didukung oleh literatur ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa moderasi beragama merupakan orientasi keberagamaan yang aktif, adil, seimbang, terbuka, dan bertanggung jawab, bukan netralitas pasif atau toleransi minimal. Fondasi normatifnya mencakup martabat manusia, keadilan, keseimbangan, kebebasan beragama, tanggung jawab moral, dan penolakan terhadap kekerasan. Fondasi tersebut diterjemahkan ke dalam proses pendidikan yang dialogis, reflektif, partisipatif, dan transformatif. Artikel ini berkontribusi dengan menawarkan kerangka konseptual berlapis yang memosisikan sikap inklusif sebagai orientasi pendidikan yang masih memerlukan pengujian empiris dalam beragam konteks pendidikan.



Background

Religious, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and belief diversity is a historical reality of Indonesian society. Such diversity can enrich social life when it is managed through respect for human dignity, acceptance of difference, and active participation in shared social life. However, identity differences can also be mobilized to reinforce group interests and generate tensions, both interreligious and intrareligious.¹ Religiously labeled conflicts cannot be explained through a single factor, as they are often intertwined with social, political, economic, and authority – related dimensions.² Therefore, interreligious relations require continuous social, policy, and educational management.

This issue becomes more serious when difference is approached through coercion, rejection of others, and the use of violence. Radicalism becomes problematic when a particular view is treated as the only truth that must be imposed on those who are different.³ Although the term radicalism has a broad spectrum of meanings, the distinction between constructive and destructive radicalism needs to be maintained so that social criticism is not carelessly equated with violence.⁴ The justification of violence through religious language also risks expanding stigma against particular religions when the actions of a small number of perpetrators are attributed to all adherents.⁵ Religious education therefore needs to cultivate critical awareness alongside self – restraint, respect for human dignity, and rejection of violence.

In this context, religious moderation has developed as a framework for building a just and peaceful shared life. Religious moderation refers to perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors that are just, balanced, and non – extreme in practicing religious teachings.⁶ This orientation seeks to strengthen tolerance and harmony among individuals and groups with different beliefs.⁷ Moderation is not identical to a neutral or passive middle position. Rather, it requires an ethical commitment to humanity, the common good, respect for difference, and the rejection of violence. Historically, religious practices that provide space for adherents of other religions have existed since the early period of Islam, although the term religious moderation as a policy agenda has developed in the context of contemporary Indonesia.⁸

Religious moderation is not formed automatically through religious identity or religious knowledge. It is a disposition that develops through education, social experience,

¹ Slamet Effendy, *Islam Negara NU* (Yogyakarta: Titian Ilahi Press, 2019); Pusat Kerukunan Umat Beragama (PKUB) Kementerian RI, *Menggapai Kerukunan Umat Beragama* (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2018).

² Alwi Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*, 7th ed. (Jakarta: Mizan, 1999); Tabita Kartika Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani Untuk Perdamaian," *Gema Teologi* 30, no. 2 (2006): 1 – 4.

³ Zuly Qodir, *Sosiologi Agama: Teori Dan Perspektif Keindonesiaan* (Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar, 2018).

⁴ Imran Tahir and Irwan Tahir, "Perkembangan Pemahaman Radikalisme di Indonesia," *Jurnal Ilmiah Administrasi Pemerintahan Daerah* 12, no. 2 (2020): 74 – 75.

⁵ Fahrudin Faiz, *Nalar Keislaman Dan Keilmuan: Cara Berpikir, Merasa Dan Bertindak* (Jakarta: Kompas Gramedia, 2024).

⁶ I Nyoman Sueca, *Pendidikan Multikultural: Diskursus Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Implementasi Virtues Values* (Yogyakarta: Jivaloka, 2024).

⁷ Y.Ichsan et al., "Realizing Islamic Education Based on Religious Moderation with the Wasathiyah Islamic Paradigm from the Perspective of the Qur'an," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 1 (2024): 252 – 253, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i1.9944>.

⁸ Lukmanul Hakim, Aziza Meria, and Sartika Suryadinata, "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Context," *Al-Albab* 12 (2023): 95.

intergroup interaction, and reflection on religious practice.⁹ Religious education occupies a strategic position because it does not merely transmit normative knowledge but also shapes the way students understand difference.¹⁰ Religious education teachers need an adequate conceptual framework regarding diversity, tolerance, pluralism, and the relationship between faith commitment and respect for others.¹¹ At the practical level, the strategies used by religious education teachers play an important role in internalizing the value of tolerance in schools with different religious backgrounds.¹²

Recent studies show that the formation of moderate attitudes requires curriculum integration, character strengthening, and institutional culture. The organization of Islamic education curricula can be directed toward preventing radicalism in higher education if moderation values are not positioned as supplementary material separated from the learning structure.¹³ The transformation of moderate character education also requires the interconnection of religious values, role modeling, habituation, and the educational environment.¹⁴ These findings indicate that moderation education cannot stop at the transfer of knowledge. Learning needs to provide experiences that cultivate openness, reduce prejudice, encourage willingness to engage in dialogue, and foster social responsibility.

In plural societies, religious education can be developed through the models of in the wall, at the wall, and beyond the wall.¹⁵ The in the wall model focuses on learning one's own religion, while the at the wall model opens space for understanding other religions through dialogue. The beyond the wall model moves further by encouraging interfaith collaboration in responding to humanitarian problems, such as violence, poverty, corruption, and injustice. This orientation can be strengthened through culture-based education that instills nationalism, pluralism, *tasamuh*, *tawazun*, and *tawassut* in school

⁹ Muqowim, Sibawaihi, and Naif Daifullah Alsulami, "Developing Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools Through the Implementation of the Values of Islam Wasatiyyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 19, no. 2 (2022): 215–218, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2022.192-03>.

¹⁰ Khairul Amin, Not Only One But Many: How is the Islamic Educational Contest Shaping Indonesian Muslim Profiles? *Muslim Education Review*, 3(2), .404–430. <https://doi.org/10.56529/mer.v3i2.321>

¹¹ Imam Mustofa and Nurul Mahmudah, *Radikalisasi Dan Deradikalisasi Pemahaman Islam*, ed. Tubagus Ali Rachman Puja Kesuma, Cetakan pertama (Yogyakarta: Metrouniv Press bekerja sama dengan Idea Press, 2019).

¹² Ulin Nuha et al., "Religion Teachers' Strategies to Internalize Tolerance Values at Catholic and Islamic Schools in Bajawa Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 18, no. 2 (2021): 295, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2021.182-05>.

¹³ Muhamad Fauzi et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education: Perspectives on Goals, Curriculum Content, and Implementation Strategies," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 22, no. 2 (2025): 414–416, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v22i2.12901>; Abdul Ramae Sulong and Muhamad Taridi, "Religious Moderation as a Model for Character Education in Indonesia: A Case Study of Al-Fattah Islamic Elementary School in Sarolangun, Jambi," *Islam Transformatif: Journal of Islamic Studies* 9, no. 2 (2025): 218–240.

¹⁴ Mardan Umar et al., "Transforming of Moderate Character Education in Islamic Educational Institutions," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 7, no. 1 (2024): 171–172, 177, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v7i1.4168>.

¹⁵ M. Agus Nuryatno, "Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 49, no. 2 (2011): 421–422, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2011.492.411-431>.

life.¹⁶ Studies on pesantren in Muslim minority contexts also show that the sustainability of educational institutions can be linked to the praxis of community harmony.¹⁷

Inclusive attitudes in this article refer to openness to acknowledge, respect, and involve others as legitimate members of shared life, particularly in interreligious and intergroup social relations. Inclusive attitudes do not merely mean passive coexistence but also include respect for the rights of others, openness to dialogue, prejudice reduction, participation, and social cooperation. This understanding is related to the principle of anti-discrimination, but it is not identical to inclusive education in the sense of educational services for students with disabilities. Studies on the formation of inclusive character from an early age show the importance of learning experiences that build respect for groups that experience discrimination.¹⁸

Previous studies have discussed religious moderation from the perspectives of history, multiculturalism, teaching materials, learning, and educators' experiences. Historical studies emphasize the continuity between practices of tolerance in the early period of Islam and contemporary discourses on moderation.¹⁹ Systematic reviews show that the integration of religious moderation and multiculturalism can strengthen interreligious tolerance and civic dialogue.²⁰ In Islamic education, analyses of textbooks, *wasatiyyah* values, and teachers' experiences demonstrate the importance of contextual interpretation, collaborative learning, and educators' capacity to translate moderation into classroom practice.²¹

At the institutional level, mainstreaming moderation needs to move beyond the provision of courses toward cross-curricular integration, the development of institutional culture, the strengthening of educators' capacity, and the evaluation of learning.²² Educational institutions also need to provide spaces for interreligious dialogue and strengthen the role of educators as facilitators of open social relations.²³ The

¹⁶ Sembodo Ardi Widodo, "Cultivating Cultural Education Values of Islam Nusantara in MA (Islamic Senior High School) Ali Maksum Krapyak," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 5, no. 1 (2016): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2016.51.1-20>.

¹⁷ Sabarudin et al., "Navigating Existence and Community Harmony: A Case Study of Pondok Pesantren in Muslim Minority Ende, Nusa Tenggara Timur," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 12, no. 3 (2024): 1335, 1339, 1344–1345, <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v12i3.1152>.

¹⁸ Alan Sigit Fibrianto, Ananda Dwitha Yuniar, and Deny Wahyu Apriadi, "Membangun Karakter Inklusif Sejak Dini (Penanaman Sikap Toleransi Terhadap Perbedaan Bagi Siswa SD)," *Jurnal Praksis dan Dedikasi Sosial* 5, no. 2 (2022): 57–58, <https://doi.org/10.17977/um032v5i2p54-60>.

¹⁹ Hakim, Meria, and Suryadinata, "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Context," 95.

²⁰ Muhammad Syabani Ridwanulloh et al., "Religious Moderation from a Multiculturalism Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review," *Journal Corner of Education, Linguistics, and Literature* 5, no. 001 (2025): 410, <https://doi.org/10.54012/jcell.v5i001.606>.

²¹ R Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education textbook and Implementation in Indonesia," *HTS Theologese Studies / Theological Studies* 79, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4102/HTS.V79I1.8592>; Muqowim, Sibawaihi, and Naif Daifullah Alsulami, "Developing Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools Through the Implementation of the Values of Islam Wasatiyyah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 19, no. 2 (2022): 207–22, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.2022.192-03>; R Darmi et al., "Religious Moderation in Primary Education: Experiences of Teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024): 477–91, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.10009>; Rosidin et al., *Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam*, ed. Zulya Rachma Bahar, Cetakan pertama (Malang: PT. Literasi Nusantara Abadi Grup, 2024), <http://repository.uindatokarama.ac.id/id/eprint/3789/>.

²² Fauzi et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education," 414–416.

²³ Zulkarnain et al., "The Dynamics of Religious Moderation and Interfaith Dialogue in Educational Institutions: Perspectives from Religious Educators in Indonesia and Malaysia,"

implementation of moderation risks stopping at cognitive understanding or formalistic programs if it is not connected to institutional culture and students' social realities.²⁴ The development of this field has expanded the issue of moderation toward character, multiculturalism, curriculum, human rights, and social relations.²⁵

Although previous studies provide an important foundation, they have mostly focused on policy implementation, material integration, learning practices, curriculum development, or particular institutional contexts. The conceptual relationship between religious moderation and inclusive attitudes has not been systematically formulated through an explanation of normative foundations, dispositional attributes, conceptual boundaries, relational processes, and educational mechanisms. As a result, tolerance, pluralism, openness, dialogue, peace education, and inclusive attitudes are often used in close proximity as if they held the same conceptual position. In fact, religious moderation is a religious orientation, inclusive attitude is the disposition to be formed, while peace education serves as a reflective, dialogical, and transformative medium for building just social relations.

Based on this gap, this article analyzes three questions. First, how is the concept of religious moderation constructed in state policy and selected religious thought? Second, what are the attributes, boundaries, and conceptual relationships among religious moderation, tolerance, pluralism, inclusive attitudes, and peace education? Third, how can the relationship among these concepts be synthesized into a conceptual framework for fostering inclusive attitudes in religious education? The novelty of this article lies in the development of a layered conceptual framework that positions religious moderation as a religious orientation, inclusive attitude as an educational disposition, dialogue and critical reflection as relational processes, and peace education as a medium of social transformation. This framework connects normative foundations, dispositional attributes, relational processes, and educational praxis within a coherent analytical structure.

This study is a non—empirical qualitative study using conceptual framework analysis. This method is used because the study does not aim to measure the impact of religious moderation implementation or describe field findings, but to identify, clarify, compare, and integrate concepts related to religious moderation and the formation of inclusive attitudes in religious education. Religious moderation does not stand as a single concept but is connected to *wasatīyyah*, justice, balance, tolerance, pluralism, freedom of religion, openness, interreligious dialogue, human dignity, peace education, and social transformation. Conceptual framework analysis is relevant for examining phenomena that intersect with multiple disciplines and involve networks of interrelated concepts.²⁶ The units of analysis in this study are concepts, attributes, conceptual boundaries, interconceptual relationships, and their implications for religious education.

The substantive corpus of this study consists of 41 sources grouped into three categories. First, three primary policy documents related to the strengthening of religious

International Studies in Catholic Education (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2025.2600994>.

²⁴ Chusnul Chotimah, Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy, and Mirna Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management," *Cogent Education* 12, no. 1 (2025): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2442235>.

²⁵ Edris Zamroni et al., "Mapping Religious Moderation and Its Impact on Islamic Education in Indonesia: A Bibliometric Approach," *Munaddhomah: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam* 6, no. 1 (2025): 65, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v6i1.1487>.

²⁶ Yosef Jabareen, "Building a Conceptual Framework: Philosophy, Definitions, and Procedure," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 4 (2009): 50, 53–54, <https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800406>.

moderation, namely relevant presidential and ministerial regulations. These documents are used to identify the regulatory context, official definitions, principles, and policy orientation of religious moderation in Indonesia. Second, five primary works representing the thought of Nurcholish Madjid, M. Quraish Shihab, Alwi Shihab, and Tabita Kartika Christiani. These works are analyzed to clarify the normative foundations, conceptual attributes, conceptual boundaries, and practical dimensions of religious moderation and peace education. Third, 33 scholarly articles and supporting literature discussing religious moderation, pluralism, tolerance, multiculturalism, interreligious dialogue, inclusive attitudes, religious education, and peace education. In addition to this substantive corpus, two methodological references are used as the procedural foundation of the analysis.

The sources were selected purposively based on four considerations. First, the relevance of the sources to the main concepts and supporting concepts analyzed in the study. Second, the authority of the sources, prioritizing primary policy documents, original works of selected thinkers, and peer-reviewed scholarly articles. Third, the representation of perspectives, particularly policy perspectives, Islamic thought, religious education, interreligious dialogue, and peace education. Fourth, the contribution of the sources to explaining definitions, attributes, boundaries, tensions, and relationships among concepts. The selection of sources is not intended as a systematic literature review that collects all publications on religious moderation, but as a conceptual selection for developing a coherent analytical framework.

The analysis was conducted iteratively through eight stages. First, mapping the selected data sources by grouping policy documents, primary works of selected thinkers, scholarly articles, and supporting literature. Second, conducting intensive reading and source categorization to identify the context, assumptions, orientations, and purposes of each term. Third, identifying and naming the main concepts, such as religious moderation, *wasatiyyah*, justice, balance, tolerance, pluralism, freedom of religion, dialogue, peacebuilding, and inclusive attitudes. Fourth, deconstructing the concepts based on their definitions, attributes, characteristics, assumptions, boundaries, and roles within the framework being developed. Fifth, integrating adjacent concepts to reduce overlap and clarify differences in meaning. Sixth, synthesizing and resynthesizing the relationships among concepts into a framework for fostering inclusive attitudes in religious education. Seventh, examining internal consistency to ensure that each concept has a clear analytical position and function. Eighth, refining the framework based on evaluation and peer review.²⁷

To strengthen analytical rigor, each concept was examined through four dimensions, namely epistemological, pragmatic, linguistic, and logical dimensions.²⁸ The epistemological dimension was used to assess definitional clarity, knowledge foundations, and the assumptions underlying a concept. The pragmatic dimension was used to assess the relevance and function of the concept in fostering inclusive attitudes through religious education. The linguistic dimension was used to examine consistency in term usage and to prevent inappropriate semantic interchange among religious moderation, tolerance, pluralism, inclusive attitudes, and inclusive education. The logical dimension was used to assess the relationships, boundaries, and coherence among concepts. Through this procedure, the study is directed toward developing a conceptual framework that connects

²⁷ Jabareen, "Building a Conceptual Framework," 54 – 55.

²⁸ Stephanie Smith and Evalotte Murelius, "Principle – Based Concept Analysis Methodology Using a Phased Approach with Quality Criteria," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 20 (2021): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069211057995>.

normative foundations, dispositional attributes, relational processes, educational mechanisms, and the orientation of fostering inclusive attitudes.

Regulatory Context of Religious Moderation

Religious moderation has developed into one of the national policy agendas since the period of the 2020–2024 National Medium–Term Development Plan. This development can be traced through Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 86 of 2020 concerning the 2021 Government Work Plan, which positioned the strengthening of religious moderation as part of the national development agenda. This policy direction was further translated through Regulation of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 18 of 2020 concerning the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2020–2024. These two regulations show that religious moderation is positioned not only as a religious discourse, but also as part of the government's strategy to strengthen tolerance, harmony, and social cohesion.²⁹

The position of religious moderation as a national policy agenda was further strengthened through Presidential Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 58 of 2023 concerning the Strengthening of Religious Moderation. This regulation defines religious moderation as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion in shared life by embodying the essence of religious teachings and beliefs that protect human dignity and promote the common good based on the principles of justice, balance, and adherence to Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia as the national consensus.³⁰ The strengthening of religious moderation is directed toward consolidating brotherhood and togetherness among religious communities, strengthening harmony and social cohesion, aligning the relationship between religious and cultural practices, improving the quality of religious life services, and developing the economic capacity of religious communities and religious resources. Its success is measured through four indicators, namely national commitment, tolerance, non–violence, and acceptance of tradition.³¹

This regulatory framework provides an important normative direction because it places justice, balance, human dignity, the common good, and national consensus as the foundations of religious moderation. However, state regulation does not automatically explain how inclusive attitudes are formed through educational processes. Religious moderation risks stopping at the level of an administrative program if its implementation is oriented only toward material delivery, lists of activities, indicator fulfillment, or institutional coordination without addressing students' social experiences. Studies on Islamic education management show that the implementation of religious moderation can become superficial when it is not adequately integrated with institutional culture and educational practice.³² Therefore, state policy needs to be understood as a regulatory context that provides normative direction, not as a completed conceptual framework. Further analysis is required to clarify the relationship among justice, balance, tolerance,

²⁹ Republik Indonesia, *Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 86 Tahun 2020 tentang Rencana Kerja Pemerintah Tahun 2021*, Lampiran RKP 2021; Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, *Peraturan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2020 tentang Rencana Strategis Kementerian Agama Tahun 2020–2024*, Lampiran I.

³⁰ Republik Indonesia, *Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 58 Tahun 2023 tentang Penguatan Moderasi Beragama*, Pasal 1 angka 1.

³¹ Republik Indonesia, *Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 58 Tahun 2023 tentang Penguatan Moderasi Beragama*, Pasal 3 dan Lampiran (indikator penguatan moderasi beragama).

³² Chotimah, Qudsy, and Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management," 1.

openness, dialogue, peace education, and the formation of inclusive attitudes in religious education.

Conceptual Mapping of Religious Moderation

Religious Moderation as Active Balance

Religious moderation is rooted in the concept of *wasatiyyah*, a way of being religious that places balance as its central principle. *Wasatiyyah* does not merely mean occupying a middle position between two opposing poles, but also encompasses the values of justice, truth, virtue, and consistency in practicing religious teachings.³³ In this sense, the middle position is not a compromising attitude that loses its principles, but the ability to take a proportional stance based on religious guidance and the objective conditions being faced.³⁴ This balance includes worldly and otherworldly life and rejects both excessiveness and reduction in religious teachings. Therefore, moderation needs to be understood as active balance that maintains an ethical commitment to truth and justice. This interpretation is consistent with studies showing that the *wasatiyyah* paradigm in Islamic education includes not only balance, but also tolerance, dialogue, justice, and the common good as values that need to be integrated into learning.³⁵

Active balance cannot be separated from the principle of justice. In religious life, justice requires the ability to place each issue proportionally without being trapped in extremes of thought or action. This balance appears in the relationship between spirit and body, this world and the hereafter, religion and the state, the individual and society, ideas and reality, reason and religious texts, as well as tradition and renewal.³⁶ In the educational framework, this principle is related to taking the middle path (*tawassut*), upholding tolerance (*tasamuh*), establishing justice (*'adalalah*), and maintaining balance (*tawazun*).³⁷ These values do not stand separately, but form mutually reinforcing relationships. Studies on the implementation of Islamic *wasatiyyah* values in madrasah show that tolerance, equality, renewal, a dynamic attitude, taking the middle path, balance, and priority setting need to be practiced simultaneously.³⁸ Thus, religious moderation is a continuous process of judgment to determine just action in responding to social change.

The rejection of extremism is a logical consequence of moderation understood as active balance. A moderate attitude does not only prevent someone from excessive actions in religion, but also prevents the simplification of religious teachings that reduces their ethical responsibility. Therefore, religious practice requires adequate understanding, the ability to manage emotions, and prudence in responding to difference. Religious enthusiasm that is not accompanied by mature consideration can turn into a justification for imposing one's will on oneself or on others. Within this framework, *wasatiyyah* places self-restraint and wisdom as conditions that prevent religious commitment from

³³ M Quraish Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, Cet. 3 (Ciputat: Lentera Hati, 2022).

³⁴ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, 43.

³⁵ Ichsan et al., "Realizing Islamic Education Based on Religious Moderation with the Wasathiyah Islamic Paradigm from the Perspective of the Qur'an," 247, 252 – 253.

³⁶ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*.

³⁷ Ichsan et al., "Realizing Islamic Education Based on Religious Moderation with the Wasathiyah Islamic Paradigm from the Perspective of the Qur'an," 252 – 253.

³⁸ Muqowim, Sibawaihi, and Alsulami, "Developing Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools Through the Implementation of the Values of Islam Wasatiyyah," 215 – 218.

developing into extremism.³⁹ This view is consistent with the idea that faith in God should generate justice, a middle attitude, and openness to common-sense reasoning in assessing issues honestly.⁴⁰ Studies on the development of transnational Islamic ideologies also show that the internalization of moderation becomes important when certain religious patterns face challenges in building interreligious tolerance and adapting to local culture.⁴¹

Moderation as active balance also contains moral responsibility. Balance does not stop at the ability to restrain oneself from extreme actions, but needs to be manifested in justice, respect for human dignity, and willingness to take responsibility for religious actions in shared life. The application of *wasatiyyah* requires sustained effort through *jihad* as seriousness in action, *ijtihad* as the cultivation of thought, and *mujāhadah* as self-discipline.⁴² In the educational context, *wasatiyyah* values also need to be enlivened through awareness, independent action, collaboration, and transformation toward better conditions.⁴³ Thus, religious moderation cannot be understood as passive neutrality or a reduction of religious commitment. Moderation is an ethical orientation that connects belief, justice, self-restraint, and social responsibility as the basis for fostering inclusive attitudes.

Religious Moderation as Openness to Plurality

Religious moderation is not only related to the ability to avoid extremism, but also to openness in facing the reality of a plural society. Within this framework, tolerance is not sufficient if it is understood merely as a willingness to coexist peacefully or to maintain comfortable social relations. Tolerance needs to be rooted in religious principles that encourage respect for the existence of others, including when such differences do not always create situations that are easy for every group to accept. Therefore, tolerance is not an empty neutrality that is merely procedural, but an ethical attitude that requires consistency in respecting the rights of others and upholding justice in shared life.⁴⁴ Comparative studies on the jurisprudence of tolerance in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand also show that tolerance is an important issue that needs to be clarified through normative boundaries so that differences do not develop into intergroup conflict.⁴⁵

Openness to plurality also needs to be distinguished from passive recognition of diversity. Pluralism does not stop at the acknowledgment that society consists of different religions, ethnicities, cultures, and social groups, but requires active engagement in understanding similarities and differences among these groups. In this sense, pluralism is not merely coexistence without interaction, nor is it relativism that equates all religious truths, nor syncretism that mixes religious elements into a new form of belief. Instead, pluralism requires openness and respect for others without eliminating one's commitment

³⁹ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*.

⁴⁰ Nurcholish Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan*, Cet. VIII (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2008).

⁴¹ A. Aderus et al., "Religious Moderation and Transnational Islamic Ideology: Phenomena and Implications in Indonesia," *Ulumuna* 28, no. 1 (2024): 485, <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v28i1.969>.

⁴² Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, 185.

⁴³ Muqowim, Sibawaihi, and Alsulami, "Developing Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools Through the Implementation of the Values of Islam Wasatiyyah," 215–218.

⁴⁴ Nurcholish Madjid, *Cendekiawan & Religiusitas Masyarakat*, 2nd ed. (Jakarta: Paramadina, 2009), 71–72.

⁴⁵ K. Muhajarah and M. E. Soebahar, "Fiqh of Tolerance and Religious Moderation: A Study towards Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand," *Cogent Arts & Humanities* 11, no. 1 (2024): 1–3, 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2024.2303817>.

to the religion one embraces.⁴⁶ Findings on pesantren educational practices show that inclusivity can shape an open, wise, moderate, and tolerance – oriented perspective that upholds justice and balance in facing social and cultural plurality.⁴⁷

Freedom of religion is an important element in openness to plurality. This freedom rests on respect for the human capacity to choose, consider, and take conscious responsibility for one's beliefs. The prohibition of religious coercion shows that belief cannot be formed through pressure, but through awareness and personal responsibility. Openness is also related to the awareness that human beings cannot master all knowledge of truth, so humility is needed in interacting with different views. In this context, faith does not produce tyranny, but provides space for common – sense reasoning, honest judgment, and respect for the freedom of others.⁴⁸ Thus, freedom of religion is not merely an individual right, but also an ethical prerequisite for the formation of inclusive social relations.

Openness to plurality ultimately rests on respect for human dignity. Every person has human value that cannot be diminished by differences in religion, identity, or social background. Therefore, interreligious dialogue does not only function as a forum for exchanging information, but also as a process for building mutual understanding, expanding insight, and finding common ground for peaceful life. Dialogue accompanied by tolerance and pluralism enables each group to maintain its religious commitment while engaging in open and responsible social relations.⁴⁹ The position of interreligious dialogue as part of moderation education is also emphasized in studies of religious educators in Indonesia and Malaysia, which place dialogical practices within educational institutions with diverse students.⁵⁰ Thus, religious moderation forms openness to plurality through active tolerance, pluralism, freedom of religion, dialogue, and respect for human dignity.

Religious Moderation as an Orientation for Peace Education

Religious moderation should not be understood merely as a personal attitude that avoids extremism, but needs to be developed as an orientation for peace education. From this perspective, peacebuilding includes preventive, reconciliatory, and curative efforts that connect peace with justice. Conflicts that appear to use religious symbols are not always rooted in religious teachings, but may be intertwined with social, political, economic, cultural, and unequal power relations. Therefore, religious education needs to help students read reality critically, reflect on past experiences, and develop a more peaceful and just way of living together.⁵¹ This perspective expands moderation from self – restraint toward the capacity to understand the roots of social problems and build shared responsibility. Recent studies also show that religious moderation becomes more effective when strengthened through educational frameworks, inclusive policies, civic dialogue, and community empowerment based on local contexts.⁵²

⁴⁶ Madjid, *Cendekiawan & Religiusitas Masyarakat*, 69 – 70; Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*, 41 – 43.

⁴⁷ A. I. Setiawan et al., "Transforming Religious Education Through Inclusivity: How Indonesian Pesantren Cultivate Moderate Islamic Values and Da'wah Practices," *Nazhruna: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 9, no. 1 (2026): 70, 76 – 78, <https://doi.org/10.31538/nzh.v9i1.406>.

⁴⁸ Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan*, 12, 219 – 220.

⁴⁹ Madjid, *Cendekiawan & Religiusitas Masyarakat*, 156; Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*, 41.

⁵⁰ Zulkarnain et al., "The Dynamics of Religious Moderation and Interfaith Dialogue in Educational Institutions," 1.

⁵¹ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani," 3 – 4.

⁵² Ridwanulloh et al., "Religious Moderation from a Multiculturalism Perspective," 415 – 419.

The orientation of peace education also gains a practical dimension through the concept of *diakonia*. In Christiani's thought, *diakonia* does not stop at charitable assistance to poor communities, but includes reformative and transformative service directed toward the realization of justice and peace. Poverty and plurality need to be read together because social inequality can increase the vulnerability of conflict in plural societies.⁵³ Within the framework of religious moderation, *diakonia* shows that respect for difference needs to be manifested in concrete solidarity with vulnerable groups. This orientation is consistent with the idea that religious education needs to connect knowledge and action through interfaith cooperation in addressing shared problems, such as poverty, violence, injustice, ignorance, and corruption.⁵⁴ Thus, social service is not merely an additional activity, but a form of moral responsibility inherent in religious education.

Peace education further requires an orientation toward social transformation. This transformation is directed not only at changes in individual behavior, but also at the formation of persons who become more fully human through commitment to freedom, justice, peace, and groups experiencing injustice. In Christiani's perspective, education has both formative and transformative functions because it helps students read social situations, develop moral sensitivity, and engage in social change.⁵⁵ This interpretation positions moderation as a reflective process that connects knowledge, attitudes, and action. In the context of Islamic education, this process can be developed through the stages of identifying problems, reflecting on their root causes, and acting responsibly. Critical and reflective learning enables students to understand religious teachings more deeply and avoid binary perspectives that can easily generate fanaticism and violence.⁵⁶

The orientation of peace education can be operationalized through the models of behind the wall, at the wall, and beyond the wall. The behind the wall model emphasizes contextual reading of religious teachings by considering the experiences of the poor and victims of violence. The at the wall model opens space for learning about other religions and developing interfaith dialogue. The beyond the wall model moves toward interreligious joint action in building peace and justice, followed by reflection on that action.⁵⁷ In the development of Islamic education, Nuryatno uses the terms in the wall, at the wall, and beyond the wall. The in the wall model focuses on internal religious formation, while the at the wall and beyond the wall models expand learning toward dialogue and interfaith cooperation in responding to humanitarian problems.⁵⁸ These three models should not be treated as mutually exclusive stages, but as a pedagogical sequence that connects faith deepening, dialogical openness, critical reflection, and social transformation. Thus, religious moderation gains practical form through religious education that is reflective, dialogical, and transformative.

Convergences among the Four Thinkers

The selection of the thought of Nurcholish Madjid, M. Quraish Shihab, Alwi Shihab, and Tabita Kartika Christiani is not intended to equate their theological backgrounds, intellectual traditions, or orientations of thought. These four thinkers were selected because they provide different but complementary conceptual tools for explaining the

⁵³ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani," 5 – 6.

⁵⁴ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education," 422, 428.

⁵⁵ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani," 8.

⁵⁶ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education," 427 – 428.

⁵⁷ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani," 7 – 8.

⁵⁸ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education," 421 – 422.

relationship between religious moderation and the formation of inclusive attitudes. Epistemologically, this selection enables the analysis to move beyond a regulatory approach that positions religious moderation merely as a state policy agenda. Religious moderation needs to be examined through its normative foundations, ethical dimensions, conceptual boundaries, and translation into educational praxis. Through this dialogue among perspectives, the framework developed in this article does not only explain what religious moderation means, but also how this religious orientation can shape social relations that are just, open, and responsible.

Table 1. Contributions of the Four Thinkers to the Conceptual Framework

Thinker	Main contribution	Position in the framework
Nurcholish Madjid	Openness, human dignity, pluralism, religious freedom, and epistemic humility	Ethical foundation
M. Quraish Shihab	Wasatiyyah as active balance, justice, wisdom, and self – restraint	Normative foundation
Alwi Shihab	Pluralism, interreligious dialogue, and boundaries between pluralism, relativism, and syncretism	Conceptual clarification
Tabita Kartika Christiani	Peacebuilding, diakonia, critical reflection, social service, and social transformation	Praxis and social transformation

Source: Author's synthesis.

Nurcholish Madjid's thought provides an ethical foundation that openness to plurality does not emerge from empty neutrality, but from respect for human dignity and awareness of the limits of human knowledge in comprehending truth in its entirety.⁵⁹ M. Quraish Shihab's thought strengthens this foundation through the concept of *wasatiyyah* as an active balance that remains committed to justice, truth, and the common good.⁶⁰ Alwi Shihab clarifies that engagement with plurality is not identical to relativism or syncretism because pluralism still allows each religious adherent to maintain their theological commitment.⁶¹ Meanwhile, Tabita Kartika Christiani brings this framework into educational praxis through the ideas of peacebuilding, dialogue, reflection, *diakonia*, and transformative social action.⁶²

The convergence of these four thinkers lies in the view that responsible religiosity cannot stop at strengthening internal identity. Religiosity also needs to be manifested through respect for human dignity, just management of difference, openness to dialogue, self – restraint, and engagement in resolving social problems. This synthesis positions

⁵⁹ Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan*, 8.

⁶⁰ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, 184 – 185.

⁶¹ Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*, 41 – 43.

⁶² Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani Untuk Perdamaian," 6 – 11.

religious moderation as an orientation that moves from values to dispositions, from dispositions to social relations, and from social relations to educational praxis. The position of this paper differs from previous studies that have mostly discussed religious moderation through policy implementation, teaching materials, curriculum, or particular institutional programs. This paper offers a conceptual reconstruction that explains the sequential relationship among normative foundations, dispositional attributes, relational processes, educational mechanisms, and the orientation of fostering inclusive attitudes.

Conceptual Differentiation

Religious Moderation and Tolerance

Religious moderation cannot be equated with tolerance. Tolerance is one of the important attributes of religious moderation because it relates to the willingness to respect the existence and rights of others despite differences in belief. Within this framework, tolerance is not merely used as a procedure for creating comfortable social relations, but needs to be understood as an ethical principle that remains operative when one encounters those who are different or even disliked. Tolerance requires consistency in upholding justice without making difference a reason to reduce respect for others. Therefore, tolerance is not empty neutrality, but an attitude rooted in religious and moral responsibility.⁶³ Studies on the jurisprudence of tolerance in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand also show that tolerance needs to be formulated through a normative framework that enables interreligious relations to develop peacefully without erasing the identity of each group.⁶⁴

Although important, tolerance does not encompass all dimensions of religious moderation. Tolerance may stop at self-restraint so that conflict does not escalate, whereas religious moderation also includes justice, balance, dialogue, rejection of violence, and responsibility in shared life. From the perspective of *wasatiyyah*, a moderate attitude does not mean avoiding problems or choosing a safe position, but striving for balance accompanied by a commitment to human values and justice.⁶⁵ Thus, tolerance is part of religious moderation, but it is not identical to religious moderation. This distinction is important so that moderation is not reduced to passive coexistence without engagement in resolving social problems. Recent studies also show that religious moderation needs to be situated within a multicultural framework that connects tolerance, civic dialogue, and social integration.⁶⁶

Pluralism and Relativism

Pluralism does not merely refer to the fact that society consists of various religions, ethnicities, cultures, and social groups. Pluralism requires sincere acceptance of plurality as a positive reality as well as active engagement in building shared life. Recognition of difference is not sufficient if it only produces coexistence without meaningful interaction. Therefore, pluralism needs to be understood as real engagement with plurality through the exchange of ideas, respect for the rights of others, and the development of civic bonds.⁶⁷ This interpretation is consistent with analyses of Islamic education in plural

⁶³ Madjid, Cendekiawan & Religiuitas Masyarakat, 71 – 72.

⁶⁴ Muhajarah and Soebahar, "Fiqh of Tolerance and Religious Moderation," 1 – 3, 10.

⁶⁵ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, 184 – 185.

⁶⁶ Ridwanulloh et al., "Religious Moderation from a Multiculturalism Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review," 415 – 419.

⁶⁷ Madjid, Cendekiawan & Religiuitas Masyarakat, 69 – 70.

societies, which emphasize that pluralism does not stop at acknowledging the existence of other religions, but also includes active engagement in understanding similarities and differences in order to build social harmony.⁶⁸

Pluralism needs to be distinguished from relativism. Relativism places truth and values as something entirely determined by the framework of thought of individuals or groups. In this sense, there is no universal grounding of truth that can serve as a shared foundation. By contrast, pluralism does not require a person to abandon their belief or to state that all religions have the same doctrines. Openness in pluralism operates alongside strong commitment to one's own religion. A pluralist opens oneself to learning, dialogue, and respect for others without losing religious identity.⁶⁹ This differentiation limits the meaning of inclusivity so that it is not misunderstood as equating all religious teachings. Within a multicultural framework, recognition of group identity can coexist with the strengthening of tolerance, dialogue, and social cohesion.⁷⁰

Pluralism and Syncretism

Pluralism also differs from syncretism. Syncretism refers to the mixing of certain elements from several religions to form a new belief. Meanwhile, pluralism does not seek doctrinal fusion or the erasure of religious identity boundaries. Pluralism places difference as a reality that needs to be acknowledged, respected, and managed responsibly in shared life. Therefore, a pluralist maintains commitment to their belief but does not use that commitment as a basis for denying the rights of other groups.⁷¹ This clarification is important because openness to plurality is often misunderstood as religious mixing or the weakening of faith.

The distinction between pluralism and syncretism shows that interreligious dialogue is not intended to homogenize beliefs. Dialogue instead provides space to understand similarities, acknowledge differences, and develop cooperation on social issues of shared concern. In this context, pluralism does not weaken religious identity, but builds an open and responsible way of living together. Studies on the relationship between religious moderation and multiculturalism show that strengthening moderation requires recognition of cultural and religious identities, inclusive policies, and participatory strategies suited to local contexts.⁷² Thus, pluralism functions as a relational foundation for fostering inclusive attitudes without erasing theological differences.

Inclusive Attitudes and Inclusive Education

Inclusive attitudes refer to openness to accept, respect, and involve others as legitimate members of shared life. This openness is not only related to the willingness to coexist, but also to epistemic humility. The awareness that human beings cannot master all knowledge of truth encourages a person to remain humble and open to different views. Within this framework, openness is not a sign of weak faith, but part of the awareness of human limitation before the absoluteness of God.⁷³ Studies on the transformation of religious education in pesantren show that inclusivity can strengthen openness, tolerance, and da'wah practices that are responsive to social plurality.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society," 425.

⁶⁹ Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*.

⁷⁰ Ridwanulloh et al., "Religious Moderation from a Multiculturalism Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review," 415–419.

⁷¹ Shihab, *Islam Inklusif: Menuju Sikap Terbuka Dalam Beragama*, 43–44.

⁷² Ridwanulloh et al., "Religious Moderation from a Multiculturalism Perspective: A Systematic Literature Review," 415–419.

⁷³ Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan*, 11.

⁷⁴ Setiawan et al., "Transforming Religious Education Through Inclusivity," 76–78.

Inclusive attitudes need to be distinguished from inclusive education. Inclusive education is a process of ensuring that every student can participate fully in learning without experiencing exclusion or discrimination. This framework includes the development of school culture, policies, and educational practices that are responsive to diversity, including the needs of marginalized groups and students with disabilities.⁷⁵ Inclusive attitudes and inclusive education share a common ground in the principle of anti-discrimination, but they cannot be treated as identical concepts. Inclusive attitude is a social and religious disposition, whereas inclusive education is an institutional and pedagogical framework. Studies on the formation of inclusive character from an early age also show the importance of educational experiences that cultivate respect for difference and for groups vulnerable to discrimination.⁷⁶

Religious Moderation and Passive Neutrality

Religious moderation is not identical to passive neutrality. The concept of *wasatiyyah* does not teach avoidance of problems, simplification of religious teachings, or indifference to injustice. The middle position needs to be understood as active balance that considers religious guidance, objective conditions, and moral responsibility. This attitude remains committed to truth, but is expressed wisely without exceeding proper limits. Therefore, moderation requires the ability to balance the relationship between religion and social life, text and reason, tradition and renewal, and individual rights and the common good.⁷⁷ Studies on the *wasatiyyah* paradigm in Islamic education also emphasize that moderation is related to balance, tolerance, dialogue, justice, and the common good, all of which need to be integrated into the educational process.⁷⁸

The distinction between moderation and passive neutrality has important implications for religious education. Moderation learning cannot stop at the delivery of material or the mastery of cognitive knowledge. Students need to gain experiences in reading problems critically, engaging in dialogue, managing differences, and participating in responsible social action. Moderation that is implemented only through formal programs risks producing superficial understanding if it is not integrated with institutional culture and students' social realities.⁷⁹ Thus, religious moderation is an active, just, reflective, and responsible religious orientation. Clarifying the boundaries among these concepts becomes the basis for constructing a framework for fostering inclusive attitudes in religious education.

Reconstruction of the Conceptual Framework and Internal Validation

The reconstruction of the conceptual framework positions religious moderation as a religious orientation that moves through five interrelated layers. The first layer is the normative foundation, which includes human dignity, justice, balance, freedom of religion, moral responsibility, and the rejection of violence. The second layer consists of dispositional attributes, including openness, epistemic humility, tolerance, self-restraint, and respect for difference. The third layer is the relational process, which is manifested through dialogue, critical reflection, participation, intergroup cooperation, and the

⁷⁵ Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow, *Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools* (Bristol: Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 2002), 6, 8–9.

⁷⁶ Fibrianto, Yuniar, and Apriadi, "Membangun Karakter Inklusif Sejak Dini," 57–58.

⁷⁷ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*, 184–185.

⁷⁸ Ichsan et al., "Realizing Islamic Education Based on Religious Moderation with the Wasathiyah Islamic Paradigm from the Perspective of the Qur'an," 247, 260–261.

⁷⁹ Chotimah, Qudsy, and Yusuf, "Superficial Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Educational Management," 1.

rejection of discrimination. The fourth layer is the educational process, which includes contextual learning, introduction to other groups, dialogical experience, social action, and reflection. These processes are directed toward the fifth layer, namely the formation of inclusive attitudes that are open, just, peaceful, and responsible.

The relationship among these layers shows that inclusive attitudes are not formed automatically through the delivery of religious moderation materials. Religious education needs to connect normative understanding with learning experiences that enable students to encounter difference reflectively. In this context, learning cannot stop at the in the wall model, which focuses on strengthening internal religious identity. Religious education needs to move toward the at the wall model, which opens space for dialogue, and the beyond the wall model, which encourages intergroup cooperation in responding to humanitarian problems.⁸⁰ This framework is consistent with peace education, which connects religious reflection, social solidarity, justice, and social transformation.⁸¹

Internal validation of the framework was conducted through epistemological, linguistic, logical, and pragmatic examination. Epistemologically, each concept has a traceable knowledge base and source of thought. Linguistically, the terms religious moderation, tolerance, pluralism, inclusive attitudes, and peace education are used consistently according to their semantic boundaries. Logically, each concept has a distinct analytical function, thereby preventing the interchange of conceptual positions. Religious moderation is positioned as a religious orientation, tolerance as one of its attributes, pluralism as a form of active engagement with plurality, peace education as a medium of praxis, and inclusive attitudes as the final educational orientation. Pragmatically, this framework can be translated into curriculum, learning materials, teacher competency development, dialogical learning, intergroup activities, as well as reflection and social action.⁸²

This framework offers a conceptual contribution because it does not merely inventory the values of religious moderation, but systematically arranges the relationships among concepts. Religious moderation is not treated as a normative slogan, a list of indicators, or a stand-alone administrative program. Moderation is understood as an educational process that connects values, dispositions, social relations, learning experiences, and moral responsibility. Nevertheless, this framework remains conceptual. Empirical testing is required to assess its applicability, boundaries, and relevance in schools, madrasahs, pesantren, higher education institutions, and interreligious communities with different social characteristics.

⁸⁰ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society," 421 – 422.

⁸¹ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani Untuk Perdamaian," 11.

⁸² Jabareen, "Building a Conceptual Framework: Philosophy, Definitions, and Procedure," 54 – 55; Smith and Murelius, "Principle – Based Concept Analysis Methodology Using a Phased Approach with Quality Criteria," 2.

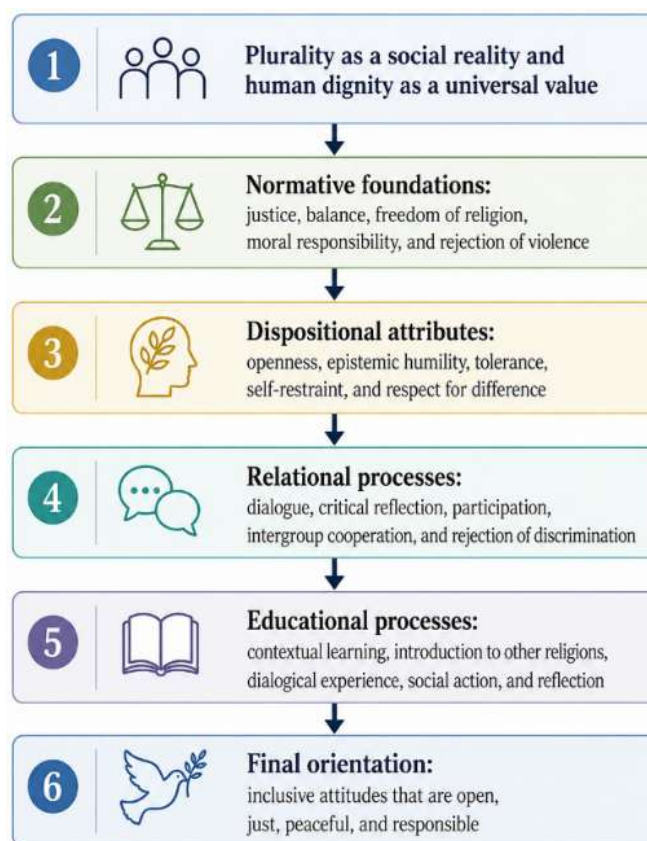


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework for Developing Inclusive Attitudes through Religious Moderation

Source: Author's synthesis based on the works of Nurcholish Madjid, M. Quraish Shihab, Alwi Shihab, and Tabita Kartika Christiani.

Implications for Religious Education

The reconstruction of the conceptual framework of religious moderation has implications for religious education. These implications should not be understood as a list of administrative programs or as a claim that their implementation has automatically produced inclusive attitudes. This framework provides normative and pedagogical direction so that religious education does not stop at the transmission of religious knowledge, but also fosters students' openness, justice, dialogical capacity, and social responsibility. Religious education needs to connect normative foundations, dispositional attributes, relational processes, and learning experiences in a structured way. Thus, religious moderation can be developed as a reflective, dialogical, and transformative educational orientation.

Integrating Religious Moderation into the Curriculum

Religious moderation needs to be integrated comprehensively into the religious education curriculum, rather than being positioned as a stand-alone supplementary topic. This integration includes learning objectives, competency outcomes, materials, methods, assessment, co-curricular activities, and the culture of educational institutions. The curriculum needs to connect the formation of religious identity with the capacity to live justly in a plural society. Strengthening faith does not need to be opposed to respect for difference, because both can be developed as part of religious responsibility. Studies on religious moderation learning in higher education show that teaching limited to a single course is insufficient. Broader integration of objectives, content, learning strategies,

and the culture of educational institutions is therefore required.⁸³ In the madrasah context, Islamic *wasatiyyah* values also need to be developed through collaborative involvement among students, teachers, and parents.⁸⁴

Developing Learning Materials

Learning materials need to be designed so that they do not reproduce binary simplifications that position others as social opponents or inferior groups. Religious education still needs to explain internal beliefs adequately, but its delivery must be accompanied by a contextual approach, respect for human dignity, and awareness of the reality of a plural society. Materials on justice, tolerance, equality, non – violence, freedom of religion, and national responsibility need to be connected to students' concrete experiences. The concept of *wasatiyyah* supports learning that proportionally considers religious guidance and objective conditions, rather than rigid teaching detached from social context.⁸⁵ Studies of Islamic Religious Education textbooks show that the values of non – violence, egalitarianism, justice, tolerance, and moderation in worship can be integrated into learning materials and educational practices in schools.⁸⁶

Strengthening Teacher Competence

Religious education teachers occupy an important position because the success of moderation learning is not determined only by the presence of material in the curriculum. Teachers need conceptual literacy regarding diversity, tolerance, pluralism, extremism, interreligious dialogue, and the boundary between inclusive attitudes and the weakening of religious commitment. Teachers also need pedagogical competence to manage difference, facilitate sensitive conversations, reduce prejudice, and respond to exclusive views argumentatively without humiliating students. Managing plurality in schools requires systematic planning so that the educational environment can foster mutual respect.⁸⁷ Studies on the experiences of elementary school teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia show that the internalization of religious moderation is carried out in diverse ways according to school conditions, but teachers still face limitations in communicating moderation messages effectively. Therefore, strengthening teacher competence needs to become an important part of reinforcing religious education.⁸⁸

Dialogical Learning

Dialogical learning is needed so that students do not merely memorize the definition of tolerance, but also learn to listen, express views, examine prejudice, and understand the limits of their own perspectives. Openness is related to the awareness that human beings cannot master all knowledge of truth. This awareness forms epistemic humility and

⁸³ Fauzi et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Education," 414 – 416; Y. Hanafi et al., "Students' Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 1 (2022), <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v78i1.7638>.

⁸⁴ Muqowim, Sibawaihi, and Alsulami, "Developing Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Schools Through the Implementation of the Values of Islam Wasatiyyah," 215 – 218.

⁸⁵ Shihab, *Wasathiyyah: Wawasan Islam Tentang Moderasi Beragama*.

⁸⁶ Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia," 1, 4 – 5.

⁸⁷ Nuha et al., "Religion Teachers' Strategies to Internalize Tolerance Values at Catholic and Islamic Schools in Bajawa Nusa Tenggara Timur," 295 – 304.

⁸⁸ R. Darmi et al., "Religious Moderation in Primary Education: Experiences of Teachers in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 21, no. 2 (2024): 477, 485 – 487, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v21i2.10009>.

readiness to receive new knowledge without losing commitment to religious belief.⁸⁹ Within the framework of religious education, dialogue does not mean equating all religious teachings, but creating a learning space that enables students to understand difference clearly and responsibly. The at the wall model emphasizes the importance of learning about other religions and building conversations with their adherents, so that learning does not take place only within the internal boundaries of one's own community.⁹⁰ Thus, dialogical learning is a pedagogical mechanism for connecting religious knowledge, openness, and the capacity to live together.

Interreligious and Cross-Group Activities

Religious education needs to provide social experiences that enable students to cooperate with others in addressing humanitarian issues. Interreligious activities do not always have to take the form of formal theological discussions, but can be developed through social projects, cultural activities, environmental care, humanitarian assistance, and service to vulnerable groups. The orientation is not to mix religious beliefs, but to build active engagement with plurality. The beyond the wall model positions interfaith cooperation as an educational process that connects dialogue with concrete action to realize peace and justice.⁹¹ In the development of Islamic education, interfaith cooperation is also needed to respond to shared problems, such as violence, poverty, injustice, ignorance, and corruption.⁹² Studies on interreligious dialogue in educational institutions in Indonesia and Malaysia also show the importance of educators' roles in developing open social relations amid student diversity.⁹³

Reflection and Social Action

Social activities need to be followed by reflection so that they do not stop as ceremonial activities. Reflection helps students connect religious teachings with social reality, assess the impact of actions, and understand issues of injustice more deeply. The peacebuilding perspective positions education as a space for reading reality critically, reflecting on past experiences, and building a more peaceful future. The concept of *diakonia* also shows that service to poor and vulnerable groups is not sufficient if it remains charitable, but needs to move toward reformative and transformative action oriented toward justice.⁹⁴ Social transformation requires an educational process that forms human beings who are increasingly sensitive to freedom, peace, and injustice in shared life. Therefore, religious education needs to connect religious reflection with social action so that religious moderation develops into moral responsibility, not merely conceptual knowledge.

These implications show that religious education has a broader function than the transmission of doctrinal knowledge. Curriculum provides direction, learning materials clarify values, teachers facilitate the process of attitude formation, dialogical learning develops openness, cross-group activities provide social experience, and reflection connects these experiences with moral responsibility. This entire process does not reduce students' religious commitment. On the contrary, religious education is directed toward forming religiosity that is open, just, peaceful, and responsible in shared life.

⁸⁹ Madjid, *Pintu-Pintu Menuju Tuhan*, 8.

⁹⁰ Nuryatno, "Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society," 421 – 422.

⁹¹ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani Untuk Perdamaian," 8.

⁹² Nuryatno, "Islamic Education in a Pluralistic Society," 424.

⁹³ Zulkarnain et al., "The Dynamics of Religious Moderation and Interfaith Dialogue in Educational Institutions: Perspectives from Religious Educators in Indonesia and Malaysia," 1.

⁹⁴ Christiani, "Pendidikan Kristiani Untuk Perdamaian," 6.

Conclusion

Religious moderation cannot be equated with a neutral middle position, passive tolerance, or the reduction of commitment to religious teachings. The conceptual reconstruction shows that religious moderation is an active, just, balanced, and responsible religious orientation in shared life. The concept of *wasatiyyah* provides a normative foundation that balance is always accompanied by ethical commitment to truth, justice, and respect for human dignity. Within this framework, tolerance is one attribute of moderation, while pluralism requires active engagement with plurality without turning into relativism or syncretism. This clarification is important so that religious moderation does not stop as a normative slogan or an administrative program that loses conceptual depth.

The resulting conceptual framework moves gradually from normative foundations to dispositional attributes, relational processes, and educational mechanisms. Its normative foundations include human dignity, justice, balance, freedom of religion, moral responsibility, and rejection of violence. Its dispositional attributes include openness, epistemic humility, tolerance, self – restraint, and respect for difference. These attributes are translated through dialogue, critical reflection, participation, intergroup cooperation, and rejection of discrimination. In religious education, all these elements need to be developed through curriculum, learning materials, teacher competence, dialogical learning, interreligious activities, as well as reflection and social action. Inclusive attitudes are therefore positioned as an educational orientation formed through reflective, dialogical, and transformative processes, not as an automatic result of delivering religious moderation materials.

The main contribution of this article lies in organizing the relationships among concepts by positioning religious moderation as a framework for fostering inclusive attitudes in religious education. This framework brings together the regulatory context, the concept of *wasatiyyah*, openness to plurality, peace education, and pedagogical implications into one coherent conceptual flow. Nevertheless, this article is a non – empirical qualitative study and has not yet tested the application of the framework in educational practice. Further research needs to examine its relevance, applicability, and limitations through empirical studies in schools, madrasahs, pesantren, higher education institutions, or interreligious communities. Such testing is important to assess how curriculum, learning materials, teacher competence, dialogue, reflection, and social action can contribute to the formation of inclusive attitudes in diverse educational contexts.

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