

# Global Society and Knowledge Review

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## Religious Moderation as a Pillar of Strengthening the Aqidah of Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah among Students of Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe

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## ABSTRACT

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This research examines the role of religious moderation in strengthening the aqidah (creed) of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* among students at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Religious moderation serves as a fundamental pillar in developing balanced Islamic understanding, preventing extremism, and fostering tolerance while maintaining authentic Islamic teachings. The findings reveal that religious moderation significantly contributes to strengthening students' aqidah through balanced interpretation of Islamic texts, promotion of interfaith dialogue, cultivation of critical thinking, and development of contextual understanding of Islamic principles. The implementation of religious moderation in educational settings enhances students' spiritual maturity and prepares them to become agents of peace in diverse societies. This research contributes to the discourse on Islamic education and provides practical insights for educators and policymakers in developing moderate Islamic educational frameworks.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has emerged as a crucial concept in contemporary Islamic discourse, particularly in educational contexts where young minds are shaped and molded. According to Rahman (2021), religious moderation represents a balanced approach to religious understanding that avoids extremes while maintaining core theological principles. This concept is particularly significant in the context of Madrasah education, where students develop their fundamental understanding of Islamic creed and practice. The importance of religious moderation cannot be overstated, especially in an era where religious extremism and radicalization pose significant challenges to global peace and harmony.

The aqidah of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* represents the mainstream Islamic theological tradition that emphasizes balanced interpretation of Quranic teachings and prophetic traditions. As noted by Al-Ghazali (2020), this theological framework provides a middle path between various extremist interpretations while maintaining doctrinal authenticity. The integration of religious moderation within this theological framework creates a robust foundation for Islamic education that is both spiritually enriching and socially responsible. Students who are exposed to this balanced approach develop a comprehensive understanding of Islam that enables them to navigate contemporary challenges while remaining faithful to their religious principles.

Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe, as an Islamic educational institution, plays a vital role in shaping the religious understanding of its students. Hassan (2019) emphasizes that Islamic educational institutions bear the responsibility of nurturing students who are both religiously committed and socially conscious. The institution's commitment to promoting religious moderation reflects its understanding of the contemporary challenges facing Muslim communities worldwide. Through its educational programs and extracurricular activities, the madrasah strives to develop students who embody the principles of religious moderation while maintaining strong adherence to Islamic teachings.

The contemporary global context presents unique challenges that necessitate a moderate approach to religious education. According to Nasution (2022), the rise of religious extremism and sectarian conflicts has highlighted the urgent need for educational institutions to promote balanced religious understanding. Young people, in particular, are vulnerable to radical interpretations of religious texts, making it essential for educational institutions to provide them with the tools for critical analysis and balanced interpretation. Religious moderation serves as an antidote to extremism by promoting dialogue, tolerance, and mutual understanding among diverse religious communities.

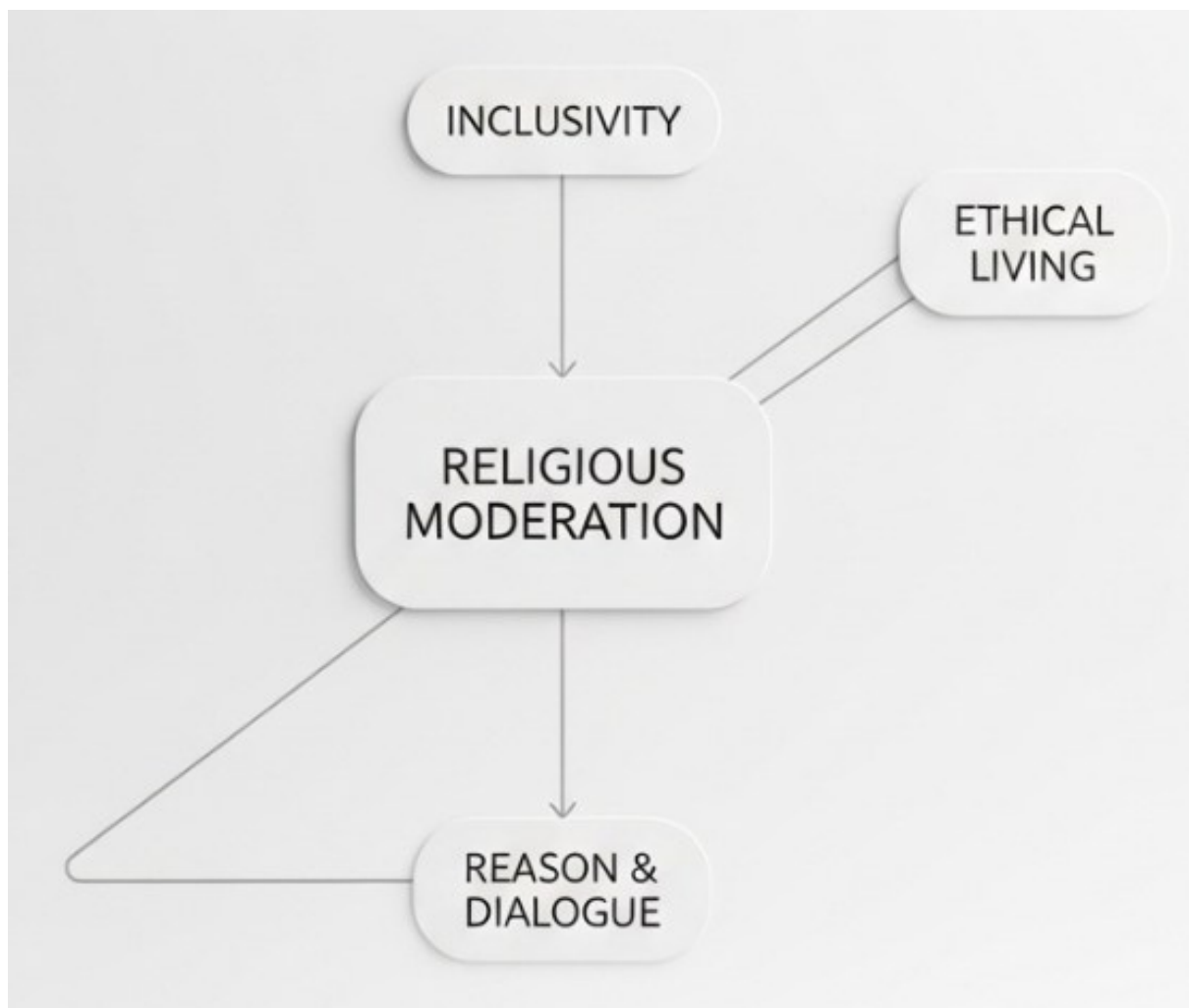
The psychological and social development of adolescent students requires careful attention to their spiritual needs and intellectual growth. Research by Syarifuddin (2021) indicates that students at the senior high school level are particularly susceptible to ideological influences and require guidance in developing mature religious understanding. The implementation of religious moderation in educational curricula and teaching methodologies provides students with a framework for understanding their faith in relation to contemporary social realities. This approach helps students develop resilience against extremist ideologies while strengthening their commitment to authentic Islamic teachings.

The role of teachers and educational administrators in promoting religious moderation cannot be underestimated. According to Mahmud (2020), educators serve as role models and mentors who significantly influence students' religious understanding and worldview. Teachers who embody the principles of religious moderation in their teaching methodologies and personal conduct create an environment conducive to balanced religious learning. Their approach to handling controversial topics, addressing students' questions, and facilitating interfaith dialogue sets the tone for the entire educational experience.

The curriculum design and pedagogical approaches employed in Islamic educational institutions play a crucial role in promoting religious moderation. As highlighted by Ibrahim (2019), the integration of religious moderation principles into various subjects, including Islamic studies, Arabic language, and social sciences, creates a comprehensive educational framework that reinforces moderate Islamic values. The use of interactive teaching methods, case studies, and real-world applications helps students understand the practical implications of religious moderation in their daily lives.

The broader social and political context within which Islamic education operates significantly influences the effectiveness of religious moderation initiatives. Research by Abdullah (2021) demonstrates that educational institutions must navigate complex social dynamics while maintaining their commitment to promoting moderate Islamic values. The support of parents, community leaders, and government agencies is essential for the successful implementation of religious moderation programs in educational settings.

The importance of community service as part of religious moderation aligns with the tri dharma of higher education, which emphasizes education, research, and community service (Muhsyanur, 2024). According to Hakim (2020), religious moderation through community engagement helps students understand the practical applications of their faith in addressing social challenges. When students participate in interfaith dialogue, community development projects, and social welfare initiatives, they develop a deeper appreciation for the social dimensions of Islamic teachings. This engagement strengthens their aqidah by demonstrating the relevance and applicability of Islamic principles in contemporary society.



Religious moderation represents a balanced and nuanced approach to religious practice that seeks to harmonize authentic faith observance with contemporary social realities and civic responsibilities. This concept emphasizes the importance of avoiding extremes in religious interpretation and practice while maintaining the core spiritual essence and moral foundations of religious teachings. Its core, religious moderation is built upon several fundamental principles that guide believers toward a balanced religious life. The concept promotes contextual understanding of religious texts, recognizing that sacred scriptures were revealed in specific historical and cultural contexts that may require thoughtful interpretation when applied to contemporary situations. This approach encourages critical thinking and scholarly discourse while maintaining reverence for religious teachings. Religious moderation also emphasizes the principle of inclusivity and tolerance, advocating for the acceptance and respect of religious diversity within pluralistic societies. This does not mean compromising one's own religious beliefs, but rather acknowledging the legitimacy of others' right to practice their faith freely and contributing to peaceful coexistence among different religious communities.

Furthermore, the integration of religious moderation into community service activities reflects the holistic nature of Islamic education that encompasses both spiritual and social development. As emphasized by Sari (2021), when students engage in community service guided by principles of religious moderation, they learn to apply their religious knowledge in ways that benefit society as a whole. This practical application of religious teachings strengthens their understanding of Islamic social ethics and reinforces their commitment to the balanced approach of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*. The experience of serving diverse communities while maintaining their Islamic identity helps students develop the confidence and skills necessary to be effective ambassadors of moderate Islam in their future careers and community roles.

## **METHOD**

This research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the role of religious moderation in strengthening the aqidah of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* among students at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe. The qualitative methodology was selected due to its appropriateness for exploring complex social phenomena and understanding the subjective experiences of participants. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research allows for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and provides rich, contextual data that quantitative methods might not capture. The descriptive nature of this study focuses on providing a comprehensive understanding of how religious moderation is implemented and its impact on students' religious understanding.

The research design incorporates multiple data collection methods to ensure comprehensive coverage of the research topic. Primary data collection involves semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including students, teachers, administrators, and religious leaders associated with the institution. Stake (2010)

emphasizes that triangulation of data sources enhances the credibility and trustworthiness of qualitative research findings. Additionally, participant observation is conducted during religious education classes, extracurricular activities, and community service programs to observe the practical implementation of religious moderation principles. Document analysis of curriculum materials, lesson plans, and institutional policies provides additional insights into the systematic approach to religious moderation at the institution.

The participant selection process follows purposive sampling techniques to identify individuals who can provide valuable insights into the research topic. The sample includes 25 students from different grade levels, 8 teachers specializing in Islamic studies and related subjects, 3 administrative staff members, and 2 external religious scholars who collaborate with the institution. According to Patton (2015), purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants who possess specific knowledge or experience relevant to the research questions. The diversity of participants ensures multiple perspectives on the implementation and impact of religious moderation in the educational setting.

Data analysis follows a thematic analysis approach, involving systematic identification, analysis, and interpretation of patterns within the collected data. The analysis process includes data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, and final theme definition and naming. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), thematic analysis provides a flexible yet systematic approach to identifying meaningful patterns in qualitative data. The use of NVivo software assists in organizing and analyzing the large volume of textual data generated through interviews and document analysis. Inter-coder reliability is established through collaborative coding sessions involving multiple researchers to ensure consistency and reduce subjective bias.

The research timeline spans twelve months, beginning with literature review and research design development, followed by data collection over a six-month period, and concluding with data analysis and report writing. Ethical considerations include obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and securing institutional approval from Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe. According to Mason (2017), ethical protocols in qualitative research must prioritize participant welfare and data protection. Regular supervision meetings and peer debriefing sessions are conducted to maintain research quality and address any methodological challenges that arise during the research process.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Religious Moderation as a Foundation for Authentic Islamic Understanding**

The implementation of religious moderation at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe serves as a crucial foundation for developing authentic Islamic understanding among students. The research findings indicate that religious moderation provides students with a balanced framework for interpreting Islamic texts and teachings, preventing them from falling into extremist interpretations while maintaining their

commitment to core Islamic principles. Students consistently demonstrate improved ability to distinguish between essential religious obligations and cultural practices, showing mature understanding of the dynamic nature of Islamic jurisprudence. The educational approach emphasizes the importance of contextual interpretation, teaching students to understand the historical circumstances surrounding the revelation of Quranic verses and prophetic traditions.

Teachers at the institution employ various pedagogical strategies to promote balanced religious understanding, including comparative analysis of different scholarly opinions, discussion of contemporary issues through Islamic perspectives, and encouragement of critical questioning within respectful boundaries. The classroom environment fosters intellectual curiosity while maintaining reverence for religious teachings, creating a safe space for students to explore complex theological concepts. Students report increased confidence in their ability to explain Islamic teachings to non-Muslims and engage in interfaith dialogue, indicating the effectiveness of the moderate approach in developing religious literacy and communication skills.

The curriculum integration of religious moderation principles extends beyond traditional Islamic studies classes to include subjects such as social studies, literature, and science, creating a holistic educational experience. This interdisciplinary approach helps students understand the comprehensive nature of Islam and its relevance to all aspects of human life. The institution's emphasis on understanding the spirit of Islamic law rather than mere literal compliance encourages students to develop mature religious consciousness that can adapt to changing circumstances while maintaining core values.

Regular seminars and workshops featuring diverse Islamic scholars provide students with exposure to different perspectives within the mainstream Islamic tradition, reinforcing the concept of unity within diversity that characterizes Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah. These events help students understand that scholarly differences of opinion are natural and acceptable within the Islamic framework, reducing tendencies toward rigid thinking and promoting intellectual humility. The exposure to various scholarly traditions strengthens students' appreciation for the rich intellectual heritage of Islamic scholarship.

The practical application of religious moderation principles in daily school life creates an environment where students experience the positive outcomes of balanced religious practice. Students observe how their teachers and administrators handle conflicts, make decisions, and interact with diverse stakeholders using moderate Islamic principles. This modeling behavior provides concrete examples of how religious moderation translates into practical wisdom and ethical leadership, inspiring students to adopt similar approaches in their own lives.

### **Strengthening Aqidah Through Balanced Theological Education**

The theological education program at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe demonstrates significant success in strengthening students' aqidah through balanced

presentation of Islamic doctrines. The curriculum carefully balances the teaching of fundamental Islamic beliefs with critical thinking skills, enabling students to develop deep conviction based on understanding rather than blind acceptance. Students show remarkable improvement in their ability to articulate core Islamic beliefs and explain the logical foundations of their faith to others, indicating internalization of theological concepts rather than mere memorization.

The institution's approach to teaching controversial theological topics exemplifies the principles of religious moderation by presenting different scholarly perspectives while maintaining clarity about mainstream Sunni positions. This methodology helps students understand the complexity of theological discourse while providing them with solid grounding in orthodox Islamic doctrine. Teachers emphasize the importance of holding firm to essential beliefs while maintaining openness to scholarly discussion and intellectual exploration within appropriate boundaries.

Interactive teaching methods, including debates, case studies, and problem-solving exercises, engage students actively in theological learning and help them develop analytical skills applicable to religious and secular contexts. Students demonstrate increased ability to defend their religious beliefs through logical argumentation while showing respect for different viewpoints, reflecting the balanced approach promoted by religious moderation. The development of these skills prepares students to become effective advocates for their faith in diverse social and academic environments.

The integration of contemporary issues into theological discussions helps students understand the relevance of Islamic doctrine to modern challenges and opportunities. Students learn to apply theological principles to current events, social problems, and personal dilemmas, strengthening their confidence in the practical value of their religious beliefs. This approach prevents the compartmentalization of religious knowledge and promotes holistic integration of faith and reason in students' worldview development.

Regular assessment and reflection activities encourage students to monitor their own spiritual growth and theological understanding, promoting self-awareness and continuous learning. Students maintain spiritual journals, participate in peer mentoring programs, and engage in regular consultation with religious counselors to track their progress in developing mature religious consciousness. These practices foster personal responsibility for spiritual development while providing support systems for addressing doubts or challenges that may arise during the learning process.

### **Promoting Interfaith Understanding and Social Harmony**

The religious moderation program at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe places significant emphasis on developing students' capacity for interfaith understanding and promoting social harmony within diverse communities. Students participate in structured interfaith dialogue programs that expose them to different religious



traditions while strengthening their appreciation for Islamic teachings. These interactions help students develop skills in respectful communication, active listening, and finding common ground with people of different faiths, reflecting the Islamic principles of wisdom and beautiful preaching.

The curriculum includes comparative religion studies that provide students with accurate information about other major world religions, dispelling misconceptions and promoting factual understanding. Students learn to appreciate the diversity of human religious experience while maintaining confidence in their own faith tradition, demonstrating the balance between religious commitment and cultural sensitivity that characterizes mature religious understanding. This knowledge equips students to participate constructively in pluralistic societies and contribute to interfaith cooperation initiatives.

Community service projects involving collaboration with diverse religious and cultural groups provide practical opportunities for students to apply interfaith understanding in real-world contexts. Students report increased empathy and respect for people of different backgrounds, along with enhanced appreciation for the social dimensions of their own Islamic faith. These experiences help students understand that religious diversity can be a source of societal enrichment rather than conflict when approached with proper understanding and mutual respect.

The development of cultural competence through exposure to diverse traditions and practices prepares students to function effectively in globalized environments while maintaining their Islamic identity. Students learn to navigate cultural differences with sensitivity and wisdom, drawing upon Islamic principles of justice, compassion, and respect for human dignity. This preparation is particularly valuable for students who plan to pursue higher education or careers in diverse settings where interfaith cooperation is essential.

The institution's commitment to promoting social harmony extends to addressing contemporary challenges such as religious prejudice, discrimination, and conflict through educational initiatives and community engagement. Students learn to become peacemakers and bridge-builders in their communities, using their understanding of religious moderation to promote dialogue and mutual understanding. This role preparation aligns with the Islamic concept of being witnesses to humanity and contributing positively to global civilization.

### **Developing Critical Thinking and Spiritual Resilience**

The religious moderation approach implemented at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe significantly contributes to developing students' critical thinking abilities while strengthening their spiritual resilience against extremist ideologies. Students learn to analyze religious texts using appropriate hermeneutical principles, considering historical context, linguistic analysis, and scholarly interpretation while avoiding simplistic literalism. This sophisticated approach to textual analysis enhances students' intellectual capacity and protects them from manipulative interpretations that characterize extremist propaganda.

The cultivation of questioning skills within respectful boundaries encourages students to explore their faith deeply while maintaining appropriate reverence for religious authority. Students demonstrate improved ability to distinguish between authentic religious sources and unreliable information, showing critical evaluation skills that protect them from misinformation and ideological manipulation. The development of these discernment abilities is crucial for navigating the complex information environment of contemporary society.

Problem-solving exercises that require application of Islamic principles to contemporary challenges help students develop practical wisdom and ethical reasoning skills. Students learn to balance competing values, consider multiple perspectives, and make decisions that reflect both religious integrity and social responsibility. These skills prepare students for leadership roles in their communities and professional careers, where they will face complex ethical dilemmas requiring mature judgment.

The integration of philosophical inquiry into religious education encourages students to examine fundamental questions about existence, meaning, and purpose while strengthening their faith foundation. Students engage with classical and contemporary Islamic philosophy, developing intellectual sophistication that enhances their ability to defend their beliefs and engage in meaningful dialogue with secular intellectuals. This philosophical grounding provides students with tools for lifelong learning and spiritual growth.

Regular exposure to diverse perspectives within the Islamic tradition helps students develop intellectual humility and appreciation for the complexity of religious knowledge. Students learn that certainty and doubt can coexist productively in the life of faith, and that questioning can strengthen rather than weaken religious commitment when conducted within appropriate frameworks. This mature understanding of the relationship between faith and reason prepares students for the intellectual challenges they will encounter in higher education and professional life.

## **CONCLUSION**

The implementation of religious moderation as a pillar for strengthening the aqidah of *Ahlu Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* among students at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe has demonstrated significant positive outcomes in multiple dimensions of religious education. The balanced approach to theological education successfully combines intellectual rigor with spiritual development, producing students who possess both deep religious conviction and the ability to engage constructively with diverse perspectives. The integration of religious moderation principles throughout the curriculum and institutional culture creates an environment where students develop mature religious understanding that is both authentic to Islamic teachings and relevant to contemporary challenges. The emphasis on critical thinking, interfaith understanding, and practical application of religious principles prepares

students to serve as effective ambassadors of moderate Islam in their future endeavors.

The research findings indicate that religious moderation serves not as a compromise of religious commitment but as a strengthening of authentic Islamic understanding through balanced interpretation and contextual application. Students who experience this educational approach demonstrate enhanced spiritual resilience, improved social skills, and greater confidence in their religious identity while maintaining openness to dialogue and cooperation with diverse communities. The success of this program at Madrasah Aliyah As'adiyah Uloe provides a valuable model for other Islamic educational institutions seeking to promote moderate Islamic values while maintaining theological authenticity. The continued development and refinement of religious moderation programs in Islamic education represents a crucial contribution to global efforts to promote religious harmony and social cohesion in increasingly diverse societies.

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