Cultural Diversity Education in "Islam and Religious Moderation" Courses: Case Study in Islamic Higher Education

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Abstrak
Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis model penerapan pendidikan keberagaman budaya pada mata kuliah Islam dan moderasi beragama di perguruan tinggi Islam. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan naratif inkuiri, data dikumpulkan melalui diskusi dan wawancara. Data yang terkumpul dianalisis dengan menggunakan model Jean Clandinin melalui tahapan penyaringan data naratif, pengelompokan dan verifikasi data naratif. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa model implementasi ini melibatkan beberapa tahapan. Pertama, memberikan pemahaman mendalam mengenai konsep dan indikator moderasi beragama di berbagai negara. Kedua, menghubungkan konsep-konsep yang dipelajari dengan situasi praktis. Ketiga, mengintegrasikan perilaku moderat ke dalam kehidupan masyarakat melalui metode pembelajaran berbasis proyek. Selain itu, budaya toleransi pendidikan juga diperkuat melalui metode pembelajaran yang mendorong kemampuan berpikir kritis, yang dilaksanakan melalui diskusi terbimbing, analisis teks, dan studi kasus kontemporer. Dengan fokus pada pemahaman ajaran agama moderat, penelitian ini dapat membantu mahasiswa dan dosen mengembangkan cara pandang agama yang inklusif dan toleran, sehingga dapat mendorong terbentuknya masyarakat harmonis dan saling menghormati di kampus maupun masyarakat luas.
Kata Kunci: Budaya, Moderasi Beragama, Pendidikan Tinggi Islam

Abstract
This research aims to analyze the model for implementing cultural diversity education in Islamic and religious moderation courses at Islamic universities. Using qualitative methods. This research uses a narrative inquiry approach where data is collected through discussions and interviews. The collected data was analyzed using the Jean Clandinin model through filtering, grouping, and verifying narrative data. The findings of this research show that this implementation model involves several stages. *First,* provide an in-depth understanding of the concept and indicators of religious moderation in various

countries. *Second,* connecting the concepts studied with practical situations. *Third,* integrating moderate behavior into community life through project-based learning methods. The culture of educational tolerance is also strengthened through learning methods that encourage critical thinking skills, which are implemented through guided discussions, text analysis, and contemporary case studies. By focusing on understanding moderate religious teachings, this research can help students and lecturers develop an inclusive and tolerant perspective on religion so that it can encourage the formation of a harmonious and mutually respectful society on campus and in broader society.
Keywords: Cultural Diversity, Moderation Courses, Islamic Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, the intensity of conflict rooted in cultural differences in the campus environment has become increasingly widely discussed (Jordan et al., 2022). This issue is particularly concerning for immigrant students who are expected to adapt quickly to their new environment (Aulia, M., Fitrisia, D., & Haqqu, 2023). At least three distressing incidents were recorded due to students' inability to adapt to a new culture. The first incident involved Papuan students and residents at the Papuan Student Dormitory, Kamasan I Kusumanegara, Yogyakarta, who experienced a siege by several community organizations and police officers (Detik.com, 2020). A year later, a similar incident occurred in Surabaya, where Papuan students were again involved in conflict with the local community (Kompas.com, 2021). At its peak, in mid-2023, the Indonesian public was shocked by riots between the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII) and the Islamic Student Association (HMI) on the Muhammadiyah University (Unim) Bone campus, South Sulawesi (Datik.com, 2023). Trijono's analysis shows that this conflict arose due to students' inability to accept differences in cultural and religious views (Sabirjanovna, 2023). As a solution, it is necessary to reinforce the understanding of moderation among those living in diverse environments (Goncing, 2018), which includes courses on religious moderation to students.

Contrary to the cultural-focused approach, contemporary religious moderation studies prioritize three less interrelated domains. Firstly, existing research tends to be limited to the theoretical literature proposed by Hamid et al. (2023). Secondly, research on moderation in the contemporary context is linked to the development of anti-radical character and its impact on understanding society's ideology (Murad, A. N., & Rizki, 2023), as expressed by Efendi et al. Third, studies on religious moderation are often related to political aspects and their role in dealing with certain aspects of Islam (Jeron Goening, 2023), or only focus on the implementation of religious moderation education in the

school environment (Musthofa, M., & Zabidi, 2023). Even though various research methods encourage religious moderation, space for positivistic research that uses data measurement as a basis for evaluation still needs to be completed (Haris et al., 2023).

This study aims to bridge by analyzing cultural diversity education programs in Islamic courses and religious moderation. The study will examine how Islamic courses and religious moderation can form moderate students. With a narrative inquiry approach, this study was conducted at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang for its Islamic courses, religious moderation, diverse student body. This study is intended to seek the moderation homework program at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang has been able to answer the challenges of cultural differences (Syuliswati, 2019). Thus, this study poses two questions: how the implementation of the religious moderation program fosters a culture-respecting attitude in Islamic and Religious Moderation courses, and the ssecond is what challenges arise in encouraging cultural tolerance through Islamic and Religious Moderation courses. In addition to these two research focuses; this study will also look at the factors that influence the success of strengthening religious moderation in shaping attitudes to accept diversity for Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang students.

This study is based on the assumption that students' perceptions and attitudes toward accepting diversity can be strengthened through various religious moderation programs on campus (Nazil Mumtaz et al., 2022). This is aligned with the idea that the supporting elements of religious moderation embody values consistent with eliminating intolerance, fostering cooperation, and adapting to local culture (Arif, 2019). However, the impact of implementing religious moderation lectures on students' perceptions and attitudes towards cultural differences remains unclear. This research aims to contribute to the intellectual discourse on efforts to reinforce religious moderation values, with a particular focus on evaluating the success of spiritual moderation courses at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the narrative inquiry research method by taking a solid approach to exploring the in-depth understanding of cultural differences and religious moderation (Barrett, 2009). This study's primary data sources were lecturers and students with knowledge and experience about spiritual and cultural moderation. As experts in their fields, lecturers can provide an in-depth view of developments and changes in religious and cultural practices (Yatno, 2022), while students, as community members, also have valuable insights. Narrative inquiry data is collected through in-depth interviews with lecturers and students (Wells, 2011). This interview allows participants to share their stories, experiences, and personal views on religious and cultural moderation (Connelly, F. Michael, 2012). In addition, data collection can also involve document analysis, such as papers, writings, or lecture notes, which can provide further descriptions of views and developments in thinking related to this theme (Clandinin, 2006).

Data analysis in the narrative inquiry method involves the process of searching for story and thematic patterns that emerge from interviews and documents that have been collected. Researchers will find out how these narratives relate to religious and cultural moderation and how these stories reveal a more profound meaning about the phenomenon. This analysis can involve mapping records, identifying motives, and in-depth interpretation to reveal the layers of importance in the participants' stories (Yatno, 2022). Data verification in narrative inquiry is vital to ensure the validity and reliability of findings (Kramp, 2004). This can be done by providing opportunities for informants to give feedback on the analysis results or comparing findings with related literature and research (Savin-Baden,Maggi,2007). By ensuring that the data collected and the conclusions found to approach the actual views and experiences of participants, the narrative inquiry method can produce a rich and deep understanding of religious and cultural moderation (Bell, 2002).

This research involved three lecturers as primary informants, including informants D1, D2, and D3. Informant D1 is a 45-year-old academic who has earned a master's degree in Islamic Religious Education. He is a Lecturer in Islam and Religious Moderation at the Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty with 10 years of teaching experience. With a rich educational background and experience in religious moderation research, informant D1 brings deep insight into discussions of cultural, religious, racial and ethnic differences. Informant D2, a 51-year-old graduate, has completed his education up to the doctoral level in Islamic Studies. As a Lecturer in Islam and Religious Moderation at the Faculty of

Ushuluddin and Humanities, he has served himself in the academic world for 20 years. With several international publications regarding research on religious moderation and experiences as a speaker, informant D2 makes a valuable contribution in reflecting on the complex issues surrounding religious moderation and inter-group harmony.

The research, conducted using a narrative inquiry approach, involved three students from diverse backgrounds. Informant M1 is an 18-year-old male studying for a bachelor's degree in Islamic Religious Education. A native of Papua, he spent four years living in an Islamic boarding school. M1 is also actively involved in various organizational activities on campus, demonstrating strong social engagement. His experience with cultural conflict adds a unique dimension to the narratives produced in this study.

Meanwhile, Informant M2, a 20-year-old female from East Nusa Tenggara, is a student of the Al-Qur'an and Tafsir Studies Program. Having spent three years living in an Islamic boarding school, her participation in the research offers insights into experiences and religious perspectives from various regions. Informant M3, a 21-year-old female student from Central Java, is pursuing a bachelor's degree in Islamic Family Law. Although she lacks experience living in an Islamic boarding school, M3 provides a valuable perspective on Islamic family law. Her involvement in campus organizational activities adds a social component to this research.

The three students met at a campus forum discussing religious moderation, where they became well acquainted. Despite their diverse tribal backgrounds, this gathering offers an intriguing perspective on how cultural and background differences can shape each individual's views and narratives. (Arif, Mohammad, 2018). The interactions and relationships between the three can also open the door to telling more in-depth and complex stories in this narrative inquiry research (Fauzi., 2017).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Religious Moderation Program in Forming Tolerant Character Against Other Cultures

The results of this study indicate that tolerance education in forming an attitude of respect for other cultures has been implemented in various moderation programs at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang, Indonesia. This is indicated by policies that intersect with strengthening the values of diversity in Islamic subjects and moderation of religion, which can be seen from the content elements of lecture material and Islamic

learning methods and moderation of religion, prioritizing critical thinking patterns. The explanation has been described in the following section.

1. **Cultural Tolerance Education in Islamic Lecture Material Content and Religious Moderation**

Informant D1 explained that the religious moderation course contains material that encourages students to moderate understanding, psychomotor, and affective. To achieve this goal, several steps were taken by dividing the material on religious moderation into three stages, including 1) understanding various concepts of religious moderation in various countries, 2) connecting the learned concepts with practice, and 3) the last stage is implementing moderate behavior into social life through project-based learning. Informant D1 explained,

> "*We are collaborating with the moderation house to produce the Semester RPP for the course Islam and religious moderation. Several steps were taken, starting with understanding various concepts of religious moderation applied in various countries to link the concepts studied with practical situations in everyday life.*" (Informant D1, personal communication, June 2023).

Informant D2 provided details that in Stage 1, the course was emphasized to give the students an understanding of religious moderation, including the parameters and indicators. This material is provided at meetings 1 to 3, aiming to introduce and strengthen students' knowledge of the theories of moderation of religion globally. D2 explains,

> "*In the first phase, our teaching focuses on providing students with an understanding of the concept of moderation in religion in various countries, including aspects that are parameters and indicators of moderate attitudes in religion. We will present the contents of this material in the first session of three meetings. The aim is to introduce and strengthen students' understanding of various theories related to religious moderation on a global scale.*" (Informant D2, personal communication, June 2023)

In Stage 2, Informant D3 explained that lectures on religious moderation are emphasized to enhance students' abilities to relate the theories taught in Meetings 1-3 with the phenomena of cultural and religious diversity around them. Students are guided to devise strategies for implementing the concept of religious moderation in light of their diverse experiences. These strategies include fostering a tolerant interreligious dialogue based on peace education, rejecting extremism, integrating the concept of religious moderation in making social and humanitarian contributions, and encouraging students to develop a contextual understanding of religious teachings based on the theory of

religious moderation. This treatment was given at the 4-10th meeting, informant D3 explained:

> *"In the second stage of the religious moderation lecture, students are empowered to meet the concepts from the first to the third meeting with the reality of cultural and religious diversity. They try to design an approach to tolerant dialogue between religions, reject extremism, and help social interests. Through the fourth meeting to bond, Students also study the history of religion and its relationship with cultural and social diversity"* (Informant D3, personal communication, July 2023)

After students felt they could connect the concept of religious moderation with societal phenomena, Informant D1 moved on to Stage 3: directly implementing moderate behavior into social life. This effort is facilitated through project-based lectures in Meetings 11-15. In Meetings 11-13, lecture participants are divided into several groups, each tasked with designing a project that exemplifies the application of religious moderation in day-to-day life. These projects can take various forms, such as videos, presentations, plays, or other suitable expressions.

Each group is expected to elucidate how their projects reflect moderation values and why these aspects hold significant importance. In the 14th Meeting, each group presents their projects to the class, and all students have the opportunity to provide constructive feedback on how these projects embody the concept of religious moderation. Group and class discussions will be conducted to delve deeper into the lessons gleaned from these projects. Meeting 15 tasks students with writing an article that encapsulates the skills acquired from the three-stage lectures: understanding theory, linking theory and practice, and practical application in society on religious moderation.

Table 1: Form of Learning Religious Moderation

No	Number of Meetings	Assignment	Project Form
1	11 to 13	Dividing lecture participants into several groups to plan projects for implementing religious moderation in everyday life.	Videos, presentations, plays, or other forms of expression.
2	14	Each group will present the results of their project to the whole class. Other students can provide constructive input regarding the application of religious moderation concepts in this project.	Discussion
3	15	Write an article that connects the learning stages: understanding theory, the relationship between	Article

theory and practice, and its application in society, especially regarding religious moderation.

Information provided by Informant D3 explained that at the 16th meeting, students were required to take the semester final examination, which had three different options. The first option is the written examination, the second choice is the oral examination, and the third option involves developing a project previously submitted in Stage 3 into a scientific article. One of the things that stands out from this explanation is the third option, in which students who can write scientific papers will be given directions to submit their writings to journals with a minimum accreditation level of Sinta 3. This has significant implications, especially in the context of completing a final project. The Faculty of Education and Teacher Training at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang seems to provide an opportunity for students to graduate without having to write a traditional thesis, if students manage to have quality scientific publications and can be published in journals with adequate accreditation at least reaching Sinta level 3. This policy provides wider opportunities for students to demonstrate their academic abilities and scientific contributions through recognized publications. This also reflects the university's orientation towards research and scientific contributions, which can benefit students and the institution (Darmalaksana,&Wahyudin,2021). This choice can be essential in motivating and helping students direct their academic efforts toward higher achievement and providing a significant alternative to meeting graduation requirements (Darmalaksana, & R. Hambali, 2021).

Dividing the religious moderation material into three stages has several important reasons to ensure deep understanding and practical application. At the stage of strengthening the knowledge of religious moderation in various countries, students can explore multiple perspectives on the meaning and indicators of religious moderation from different cultural and historical contexts (Muna, 2023). This helps to transcend narrow views and broaden understanding of the diversity of religious interpretations (Saputera, 2021). The second stage involves efforts to connect the concepts learned with actual practice. This is important so students can see the theory's relevance and implications in everyday life (Samsul, 2020). Through case studies and practical examples, students can identify how religious moderation can be applied to resolve conflicts, promote interfaith dialogue, and build cross-cultural cooperation (Ltek, 2021). In the final stage, students are

invited not only to understand and talk about religious moderation but to integrate the values of tolerance and respect for differences into concrete actions. By facing real situations in a multicultural society, students will be trained to bridge gaps and promote peace (Firmansyah, 2021). Through this approach, students not only have a deeper understanding of religious moderation but can become individuals who can adapt positively to different cultural situations (Syamsuriah, 2022). They will have the necessary skills and knowledge to build a harmonious and inclusive society where various beliefs and values coexist peacefully (Yatno, 2022).

2. Religious Moderation in Critical Thinking Learning

Strengthening religious moderation through learning methods based on Critical Thinking is a very relevant approach in encouraging students to develop an attitude of tolerance towards diverse cultures (Vogt, 1997). Informant D1 explained that this method was chosen to cultivate students' abilities to critically and openly analyze, evaluate, and form an understanding of religion and culture. Through this approach, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills concerning religious and cultural norms, thereby understanding that cultural variations and differing beliefs are natural aspects of society (Moosavi, 2022). Informant D1 shared his experience as follows,

> *"The critical thinking method that we apply at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang aims to train students to analyze, evaluate, and formulate their understanding of religion and culture critically and openly. By using this method, students are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills regarding religious and cultural norms. The goal is for them to understand that societal variations in culture and beliefs are normal. Apart from that, this method also tries to teach students how to wisely deal with sensitive issues around cultural, religious, and racial differences to maintain unity among the people."* (Informant D1, personal communication, July 2023)

In line with the above, Informant D2 mentioned that applying critical thinking-based learning methods also allows students to identify the root causes of intercultural conflicts, often related to narrow perceptions or prejudice against religious differences. By encouraging students to explore different points of view, they can see that religious and cultural values are not always opposite or mutually exclusive. This can help reduce skepticism or distrust of other cultures, thus strengthening intercultural tolerance and cooperation. Informant D2 explained,

> *"Learning methods that focus on critical thinking in Islamic courses and religious moderation allow our students to recognize the root causes of intercultural conflicts, often related to narrow views or prejudice against religious differences. We hope that by encouraging students to investigate diverse viewpoints, they will realize that religious and*

cultural values are not necessarily contradictory or mutually exclusive. Thus, this can help students at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang reduce skepticism or distrust of other cultures, strengthening intercultural tolerance and cooperation."

When conveying his experience, the D3 informant said that the critical thinking-based learning method can produce students who can make wiser decisions in situations involving differences in religion and culture. By being accustomed to considering many different points of view and information, students can avoid actions or words that harm other parties and choose alternatives that promote intercultural harmony. (Aslan, 2020). Thus, strengthening religious moderation through learning methods based on critical thinking can significantly contribute to forming generations of students who are more open, tolerant, and able to adapt to an increasingly complex and diverse society (Saulius, 2013). Informant D3 explained,

> *"In my experience teaching at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang, I often encounter intelligent students. If there is material that is not their thoughts, ask the lecturer directly. This provokes us to carry out critical thinking-based learning to produce students who can make smarter decisions regarding religious and cultural differences. By being accustomed to considering various points of view and different information, students are more likely to avoid actions or words that can harm other parties and prefer alternatives that support intercultural harmony. Therefore, strengthening a moderate attitude toward religion through a teaching approach that focuses on critical thinking can significantly contribute to shaping a generation of students who are more open, tolerant, and able to adapt to society."*

Informant D2 explained that one of the methods lecturers use to implement critical thinking-based learning in forming an attitude of respect for cultural differences is guided discussions. He said guided discussions could encourage students to participate in structured discussions on sensitive topics related to religion and religious moderation. Lecturers can act as facilitators to ensure that meetings are balanced and meaningful, encouraging students to speak with measurable arguments and consider diverse points of view (MacKnight, 2000). As explained by informant D2,

> *"There are three reasons why we chose guided discussions to be a way of instilling moderate understanding. First, guided discussions allow students to develop a deeper understanding of basic Islamic principles and the teachings of religious moderation. In this context, students can systematically understand the values that underlie Islamic teachings, such as tolerance, peace, and respect for diversity. This discussion also provides an opportunity to identify how religious teachings can be applied in different cultural contexts. Second, Guided Discussions also help students appreciate and respect cultural differences. Students can acknowledge cultural diversity, religious views, and practices through open and purposeful dialogue. This contributes to the development of an attitude that is inclusive and respectful of differences, which in turn forms a conscious attitude*

towards cultural plurality in society. Third, Guided Discussions enable students to overcome negative stereotypes and prejudices related to cultural and religious differences. Students can embrace diverse viewpoints and understand the social, historical, and cultural contexts behind these differences through a purposeful exchange of opinions."

Slightly different, Informant D1 prefers to use the analysis model of religious and cultural texts. According to him, this method is done by assigning students to analyze religious or cultural texts from various perspectives. This involves an in-depth understanding of the historical and cultural context behind the text and the ability to identify messages that support tolerance, diversity, and understanding between religions (Rogers, 2004). Analysis of religious and cultural texts plays a central role in Islam and spiritual moderation courses. Through this approach, students are invited to understand and analyze religious texts that form the basis of the teachings and beliefs of Muslims (Luke, 1995). An in-depth understanding of sacred texts such as the Al-Qur'an and Hadith is essential in holistically understanding Islam's teachings.

"I think that the analysis of religious texts can support a broader understanding of the cultural values contained in Islamic teachings. Through an in-depth examination of the historical and cultural contexts in which these texts appear, students can identify how cultural factors have influenced the interpretation and practice of religious teachings. This helps promote a critical attitude towards aspects that require adaptation to remain relevant in diverse cultural contexts. Analyzing religious and cultural texts also plays a vital role in shaping a conscious attitude toward cultural differences. In this way, we invite people to understand that culture significantly shapes how people understand and practice religion."

Unlike the Informant D1 and D2, Informant D3 preferred to give assignments to students to conduct contemporary case studies related to religious and cultural moderation themes. He believes that the use of contemporary case studies helps students relate the theory of religious moderation to more contemporary real-world situations. They can analyze conflicts or incidents involving religious differences and find solutions promoting harmony and tolerance (Sewang, Anwar, 2019). Contemporary case studies in Islamic courses are an approach that allows students to apply the principles of religious moderation in real situations (Sewang, 2020). For example, case studies can involve interfaith dialogue, the need for tolerance, and handling extremism (Taja, 2021). Through actual case analysis, students can understand how Islamic religious teachings can be interpreted wisely and moderately to promote social harmony (Osborne, Roger, 1985). Informant D3 explained,

"One of the essential aspects of religious moderation is the ability to deal with cultural differences openly and inclusively. Case studies on religious moderation in forming an awareness of cultural differences could involve situations where Muslim communities live with people from different cultural backgrounds. Students can analyze how the Islamic principles of hospitality, equality, and mutual respect can be applied in everyday interactions to reduce tensions and encourage cross-cultural cooperation."

The results of a contemporary case study-based learning model for Islamic and religious moderation courses will be seen as a deeper understanding of the complexities of spiritual teachings and the ability to relate them to real-world situations (Zhou, Yuefang, 2008). Students engaged in case studies of this nature are expected to enhance their critical thinking, analytical, and problem-solving skills, particularly when dealing with challenges related to religious and cultural differences (Jacobson, 1996). The application of religious moderation will also positively impact forming an awareness of cultural differences, reducing prejudice, and building peace in a multicultural society (Paige, 2003).

Challenges of Implementing the Religious Moderation Program at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang

After conducting comprehensive discussions with three students who had attended Islamic lectures and religious moderation at Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang, we identified three challenges to successful learning. These included 1) low learning motivation, 2) course plans and strategies that fail to align with students' interests, and 3) a lack of appropriate social support. Addressing the first challenge, informant M1 explained that low learning motivation was the most significant factor contributing to the failure to achieve the objectives of Islamic lectures and religious moderation. According to M1, low learning motivation among students can be influenced by various complex factors. These include high mental and emotional pressure in the lecture environment that leads to feelings of stress and anxiety. The demands for high academic performance and intense competition can also cause students to worry about their inability to meet expectations (Russell, 1994). As a result, they tend to lose interest and enthusiasm for learning because of the psychological burden that hinders the learning process (Smith, 2013). Informant M1 explained,

"I like lecturers who are smart and look very enthusiastic in teaching. But lecturers like that usually have many demanding assignments that make us feel high mental and emotional pressure. Besides that, I also haven't been able to find the relevance of this material to my abilities, so I get bored and lack enthusiasm for learning".

The lack of relevance of course material to students' career interests or aspirations can reduce learning motivation (Salili, Farideh, Chi-yue Chiu, and Ying-yi Hong, 2012). If students feel that the material being taught is not following their interests or life goals, they may feel lazy to invest time and effort in understanding the lesson (Munro, 2014). This can cause boredom and a lack of enthusiasm for learning, so their motivation decreases drastically (Egan, Toby Marshall, Baiyin Yang, 2004). The impact of low learning motivation on achieving the objectives of Islamic lectures and Religious Moderation is very significant. Courses related to religion require deep understanding and solemn reflection. When learning motivation is low, students tend to only fulfill obligations without absorbing and understanding the material correctly (Ho, 1998). This impedes the formation of a deep understanding of Islamic principles and religious moderation (Asvio, 2022). Low motivation also impacts the quality of class discussions and active participation in religious-related academic activities, reducing the effective learning process (Sewang, Anwar, 2020). As a result, students may only meet the minimum requirements without developing in-depth insights into religion, hindering the primary goal of Islamic education, which includes a more holistic and critical understanding of religious teachings and the application of moderation in everyday life (Mawardi, Dalmeri, 2018).

The second factor that challenges the implementation of Islamic lectures and moderation in religion is lecture plans and strategies that are not in the students' interests. Informant M2 admitted that several phenomena made this lecture uninteresting; he stated as follows,

> *"The rigid curriculum and traditional teaching methods reflect the irrelevance of content to social realities and changing times. Limited interaction with moderate religious practitioners and stakeholders also complicates the situation. The solution is to develop inclusive Islamic and Moderation religious curricula that reflect current social perspectives, adopt innovative teaching methods, and involve diverse groups in the educational process. This is essential to address today's educational challenges effectively."*

The first phenomenon identified in the plans and strategies for moderating religious teaching not by students' interests is the lack of content relevance to social reality and the times (Weinstein, Claire E., 1983). A significant number of lectures still embody a rigid and traditional understanding of religion, often failing to connect adequately with contemporary issues that students face. This could result in a lack of interest among students, as they may perceive the teachings as having no practical application in their

daily lives. For instance, if a course overlooks the implications of technology, globalization, or current social issues that could be tied to religious teachings, students might feel less motivated to engage with the course.

The second phenomenon is inflexibility in teaching and assessment methods. Lesson plans that are too colored by face-to-face lectures or reading classic texts without providing space for interactive discussion or creative exploration can cause a loss of interest (Vaidya, 1999). A monotonous teaching approach may constrain students of various backgrounds and learning styles. In addition, judgments that focus solely on traditional written examinations may also overlook the potential of students who excel in oral expression, creative projects, or the practical application of religious moderation (Dansereau, 1978). As a result, students with different interests and abilities may feel that this course plan does not meet their needs and expectations (Nijhuis, 2008).

The third phenomenon is the lack of interaction with moderate religious speakers and related stakeholders. Lectures on religious moderation that only focus on academic theories without inviting reasonable spiritual practitioners to talk about their experiences facing challenges of extremism or intolerance can make students feel they have lost a real connection with the natural world (Hiqmatunnisa, Hani, 2020). If students do not see how the concepts learned can be applied in practical contexts and listen to the experiences of people who have faced different views in society, their interest in the course may wane (Salamah et al., 2020).

The final challenge that can hinder the success of Islamic learning and religious moderation is the lack of appropriate social support. Informant M3 explained that the polarization of religious views in society could create an environment not conducive to open discussion and a deeper understanding of moderate aspects of religion. He also stated that a failure of an approach including teaching religion in educational institutions could result in an inability to respect different religious views and practices, thus hindering their ability to accept and practice moderate values. Moreover, the limited role of middle religious leaders in guiding and assisting students can reduce opportunities to discuss sensitive issues openly and obtain a balanced view (Tanjung, 2022). M3 said,

> *"Yes, sir, there are indeed many benefits if, in the first semester, we go to college, the class has been determined. But in my opinion, this limits our association. I couldn't have more friends as frequently as I thought. The impact is huge because the polarization of religious views in an environment not conducive to open discussion and a deeper understanding of moderate aspects of religion may occur. Moreover, we have a policy that we must follow*

ma'had. Makes our association very limited. Even more so if the lecturer is less competent."

The impact of lack of social support in learning religious moderation has a very significant effect. First, it can reinforce extreme attitudes and intolerance among students. Without the opportunity to hear diverse viewpoints and talk about moderate frames of mind, students may be more vulnerable to the influence of radical groups that offer simple solutions to complex questions about religion (Wickham, 2004). Second, the lack of social support, in this case, can also hinder the development of students' problem-solving and critical skills because they may be more likely to receive information without in-depth study (Husn, 2020). Third, a lack of understanding of the moderation aspect of religion can reduce students' ability to contribute positively in a multicultural and multireligious society because tolerance and respect for differences are neglected. Therefore, creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment is essential where students can feel safe to ask questions, question beliefs, and discuss religious issues with diverse views (Yarmayani, 2018). Support from moderate religious leaders and other influential parties is critical in encouraging a broader understanding of religious moderation and its contribution to a harmonious society (Khafid, 2007). In addition, integrating social and vital skills in the religious curriculum can help produce a more skilled generation in dealing with the complexities of the modern world with a wise and balanced perspective (Sholihah, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang has undertaken efforts to incorporate education on cultural tolerance into their Islam and religious moderation courses. The execution of the program involves a series of steps. It starts with offering comprehensive content on the concepts and characteristics of religious moderation observed across various countries. This knowledge is then linked with practical applications. The final stage involves integrating behavioral moderation into individuals' lives through project-based learning. Moreover, the education on cultural tolerance is enhanced using teaching methodologies that encourage critical thinking. These are implemented through guided discussions, textual analysis, and contemporary case studies. Despite these efforts, the educational initiative faces challenges such as limited student motivation, lecture plans and strategies that don't resonate with students,

and a lack of social support that impedes the implementation of Islamic lecture programs and the promotion of religious moderation.

This study plays a critical role for Walisongo State Islamic University Semarang as it grapples with the complex dynamics of religion in the modern era. By emphasizing a moderate interpretation of religious teachings, this research can assist students and lecturers in developing an inclusive and tolerant outlook on religion. This perspective can foster a harmonious and respectful atmosphere both on the campus and within the wider community. Furthermore, this research can yield practical guidelines for designing a religious curriculum that is in harmony with universal human values and bolsters efforts to stimulate productive interfaith dialogue.

This study has several limitations that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the limited number of respondents may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and experiences of the community on the topic, potentially reducing the representativeness of the research results. Secondly, the narrative inquiry method, being qualitative, is more open to interpretation, implying a risk of researcher bias in data analysis and narrative construction. This issue warrants careful consideration. Thirdly, in relation to religious moderation, relying on merely six sources could diminish the depth of understanding of the issue's complexity in a wider context. Fourthly, the limited number of sources could also impact the quality of research results' generalization to the larger population. Consequently, while this approach can offer profound insights into religious moderation in a narrative context, measures must be taken to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings.

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