Fostering Tolerance and Countering Extremism: Religious Moderation Efforts in Madrasah Aliyah Negeri Surabaya

Fathur Rohman[a], Safiye Kesgin[b], Muhammad Fahmi[c], Al Qudus Nofiandri Eko Dwi Sucipto[d], Syaifuddin[e]

a)   Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
b)   Ankara Haci Bayramı Veli Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi, Türkiye
c)   Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
d)   Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia
e)   Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Indonesia

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji peran moderasi beragama sebagai langkah pencegahan terhadap radikalisme, dengan fokus pada implementasinya di Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya, dalam rangkaian inisiatif Kementerian Agama. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif, data dikumpulkan melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen. Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana program moderasi beragama di MAN Surabaya, seperti pelatihan bagi guru, diskusi tentang toleransi agama, serta integrasi nilai-nilai moderasi dalam kurikulum dan kegiatan ekstrakurikuler, secara efektif mengurangi intoleransi dan meningkatkan kesadaran siswa akan pentingnya keragaman dan toleransi. Inisiatif-inisiatif ini tidak hanya menciptakan lingkungan sekolah yang lebih harmonis, tetapi juga memperkuat ketahanan siswa terhadap ideologi ekstremis dengan mempromosikan pemahaman agama yang inklusif dan kritis. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya integrasi moderasi beragama dalam lembaga pendidikan sebagai strategi jangka panjang untuk membangun ketahanan masyarakat terhadap ideologi radikal. Selanjutnya, penelitian ini menyarankan agar keterlibatan aktif guru, orang tua, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan terhadap program-program ini sangat penting untuk menjaga efektivitas inisiatif ini.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of religious moderation as a preventive measure against radicalism, focusing on its implementation within the context of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya, under the initiatives of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The research highlights how the religious moderation programs at MAN Surabaya, such as teacher training, religious tolerance discussions, and the integration of moderation values into both the curriculum and extracurricular activities, effectively reduce intolerance and increase student awareness of the importance of diversity and tolerance. These initiatives not only foster a more harmonious school environment but also strengthen students' resilience to extremist ideologies by promoting a critical and inclusive understanding of religion. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating religious moderation in educational institutions as a long-term strategy to build societal resilience against radical ideologies. It further suggests that for sustained success, the active involvement of teachers, parents, and continuous program evaluation are crucial in maintaining the effectiveness of these initiatives.

A. Introduction

Radical movements and social conflicts are predicted to persist in the coming years.[1] Radicalism associated with social conflicts often originates from economic deprivation, which fosters a sense of economic marginalization. This marginalization manifests in feelings of alienation, estrangement within one's own environment, and perceived threats from other social groups. Radical groups have significant potential to infiltrate ongoing social conflicts within society. Issues such as marginalization, economic inequality, and poverty remain central themes in radical groups' campaigns. Furthermore, class struggles—whether among the lower, middle, or upper classes—are highly susceptible to exploitation by certain groups seeking to incite violence. Indonesia is not immune to the entrapment and threats posed by radicalism. According to data from the Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT RI), terrorist activities in Indonesia declined by more than 89% between 2018 and 2023.[2] However, despite this decrease, the country must not become complacent. A sense of complacency regarding these positive trends could backfire, as radical extremist groups may take advantage of this situation to further propagate their violent ideologies.

Efforts to eradicate terrorist activities in Indonesia have been continuously undertaken. Although regulations addressing counter-radicalism and counterterrorism have been established, these measures have not yet proven effective in deterring terrorist actors. This is evidenced by the fact that many terrorists who were killed in security operations had previously been incarcerated. This failure indicates that combating terrorism cannot rely solely on imprisonment. Additional measures are necessary, particularly those that directly address ideological understanding. Such efforts are crucial for eliminating the exclusive and rigid interpretations that have long been entrenched in the minds of radical individuals. Since radicalism is rooted in ideology, it must be countered with an ideological approach—specifically, a counter-ideology strategy.[3] In this context, counter-ideology entails reconciling the radicals' narrow worldview with the more inclusive and open perspectives embraced in Indonesia. While this is undoubtedly a complex and challenging task, terrorism cannot be allowed to persist, especially when it manipulates religious teachings to justify its actions.

In this context, religious moderation is essential as a counter-ideological approach to radicalism. As a legitimate movement initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, religious moderation is necessary to address the persistent threats of radicalism and religious intolerance in Indonesia, which have remained active over the past two decades. Suhartawan asserts that religious moderation enables

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[1] Boy Salamuddin, "Meningkatkan Penanggulangan Radikalisme Guna Mewujudkan Sistem Keamanan Nasional Dalam Rangka Ketahanan Nasional," *Jurnal Lemhannas RI* 3, no. 1 (2015).

[2] BNPT-RI, "Kepala Bnpt Ri: Indonesia Tidak Boleh Lengah Hadapi Gerakan Radikalisme Di Bawah Permukaan," BNPT, 20232024, https://www.bnpt.go.id/kepala-bnpt-ri-indonesia-tidak-boleh-lengah-hadapi-gerakan-radikalisme-di-bawah-permukaan.

[3] Nur Ali et al., "Interreligious Literacy Learning as a Counter-Radicalization Method: A New Trend among Institutions of Islamic Higher Education in Indonesia," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 32, no. 4 (2021/10/02 2021), https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09596410.2021.1996978.

society to maximize the benefits of religious and state institutions in educating future generations, fostering intergenerational collaboration, enhancing a more open and inclusive understanding of religion, and facilitating dialogue among cultural, religious, and state figures.[4]

Indonesia, in fact, possesses a strong foundation for social harmony, which must be properly managed. This harmony should not be merely a topic of discussion in seminars or an abstract discourse; rather, it has long been an integral part of Indonesian society. However, this reality is often overlooked by the public. Some foreign observers tend to adopt a fragmented perspective on religious harmony in Indonesia. They rely solely on statistics, reports, or sources that intentionally frame Indonesia as a country experiencing increasing religious violence—despite the fact that such conflicts are not always rooted in religious factors. This highlights the importance of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation within educational institutions in Indonesia, as examined in this study. Educational institutions are not entirely immune to radical movements. Moreover, radicalism has increasingly targeted the younger generation, particularly young Muslims who are still students. Research findings from PPIM Jakarta reveal the growing phenomenon of radicalism in schools, emphasizing the urgency for policymakers and school administrators to reinforce the values of pluralism.[5] The emergence of intolerance among students is largely influenced by unregulated access to reading materials and school activities. This issue is exacerbated by the lack of school oversight regarding the content taught in extracurricular programs and the literature accessed by students and young people.

The phenomenon of radicalism in Indonesia has prompted extensive research into the role of religious moderation as a preventive measure. Religious moderation is increasingly recognized as a vital approach to fostering unity and harmony among Indonesia's diverse religious communities. This is particularly crucial in a multicultural society where inter-religious conflicts can arise. Idi and Priansyah emphasize that religious moderation can effectively address social and political challenges, promoting peace and cooperation among different faiths in Indonesia.[6] Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has actively promoted religious moderation as a state policy, which includes various initiatives aimed at countering radical ideologies.[7] Educational institutions play a significant role in the promotion of religious moderation. Research by Yusuf et al. indicates that the Ma'had Al-Jami'ah institutions are instrumental in instilling moderate Islamic values among students, thereby countering the influence of radical and liberal organizations targeting the youth.[8] Similarly, Wahidin et al. highlight

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[4] Budi Suhartawan, "Wawasan Al-Quran Tentang Moderasi Beragama," *Ulumul Qur'an: Jurnal Kajian Ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Tafsir* 1, no. 2 (10/01 2021), accessed 2025/02/28, https://dx.doi.org/10.58404/uq.v1i2.75.
[5] Convey_Indonesia, *Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia* (Jakarta: 2018).
[6] Abdullah Idi, and Deni Priansyah, "The Role of Religious Moderation in Indonesian Multicultural Society: A Sociological Perspective," *Ajesh* 2, no. 4 (2023), https://dx.doi.org/10.46799/ajesh.v2i4.55.
[7] Suhadi Cholil, "Freedom of Religion Amid Polarization and Religious Moderation Policy," Interreligious Studies and Intercultural Theology (2023), https://dx.doi.org/10.1558/isit.24603.
[8] Muhamad Yusuf et al., "The Role and Management of Ma'had Al-Jami'ah in Constructing Religious Character Values in Ptkin," *Ta Dib* 27, no. 1 (2024), https://dx.doi.org/10.31958/jt.v27i1.10644.

that university policies that explicitly support religious moderation can significantly mitigate the risk of radicalism within academic settings.[9] This is echoed by Faizah et al., who argue that the role of educators in public universities is crucial for embedding moderate religious values and preventing radical ideologies from taking root.[10] The integration of religious moderation into various societal frameworks, including legal and educational systems, is essential for its effectiveness. Faozan and Rasyidi discuss how legal frameworks can shape the implementation of religious moderation, thereby fostering social harmony in a culturally diverse society.[11] Additionally, Setiawan et al. note that mainstreaming religious moderation training within organizations like Muhammadiyah can help combat the rise of radical Islam.[12] This is complemented by the findings of Cholil, who highlights the importance of government initiatives in promoting religious moderation as a countermeasure to extremism.[13] Moreover, the digital landscape presents both challenges and opportunities for promoting religious moderation. Aziz argues that social media campaigns can effectively disseminate messages of moderation, countering the narratives of radicalism that often proliferate online.[14] The necessity of adapting religious moderation to contemporary contexts, including digital platforms, is critical for reaching younger generations and fostering a culture of tolerance and understanding.[15]

The position of this study among the aforementioned research lies in its effort to explain radicalism mitigation through religious moderation at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya. This aspect highlights its novelty. This study contributes to the academic discourse by emphasizing the significance of religious moderation as a strategy for mitigating radicalism in formal educational institutions, specifically madrasahs. It examines the practices, urgency, and impact of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation in Islamic-based schools in Surabaya. To address these research questions, qualitative data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation at MAN Surabaya. The collected data were analyzed using an interactive analysis model, which involves data collection, data condensation, data display, and

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[9] Didin Wahidin, Nandang A. Saefuloh, and Zubaedah W. Lestari, "Portraying the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Non-Religious Universities in West Java," *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research* 4, no. 1 (2023), https://dx.doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i1.446.

[10] Rohmatul Faizah, Ahmad Baedowi, and Cholid Fadil, "The Role of Religion Lecturers in Preventing Radicalism at Public Universities," *Ta Dibuna Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 4, no. 2 (2021), https://dx.doi.org/10.30659/jpai.4.2.23-31.

[11] Muhammad Faozan, and Abdul H. Rasyidi, "Critical Review and Reality of Religious Moderation in Law and Legal Frameworks in Indonesia," *Asian. J. Of. Sci. Technol. Eng. Art.* 1, no. 2 (2023), https://dx.doi.org/10.58578/ajstea.v1i2.2259.

[12] Asep Setiawan et al., "Mainstreaming Religious Moderation Training on Muhammadiyah Perspective for Mubaligh Muhammadiyah in South Banguntapan," *Iccs* 1, no. 1 (2023), https://dx.doi.org/10.18196/iccs.v1i1.24.

[13] Cholil.

[14] Moh A. Aziz, "Revisiting Religious Moderation in Indonesia Idealism, Trending Research, and Challenge in Digital Era," (2022), https://dx.doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-15-2_26.

[15] Purniadi Putra, Arnadi Arnadi, and Hadisa Putri, "Strengthening Student's Character through Religious Moderation Education in the Digitalization Era," *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (Ijies)* 7, no. 1 (2024), https://dx.doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v7i1.4857.

conclusion drawing. The findings provide a detailed explanation of the practices, urgency, and impact of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation in Islamic-based schools.

B. The Urgency of Radicalism Mitigation through Religious Moderation

The implementation of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation at MAN Surabaya is crucial, as it serves as a filter to protect all members of the school community from radical ideologies. Radicalism often arises from a shallow understanding of religion, compounded by socio-economic factors that make individuals susceptible to extremist groups. This highlights the importance of addressing radicalism through religious moderation as a preventive strategy.

Religious moderation is particularly important for maintaining a conducive and safe educational environment. By preventing the spread of extreme ideologies, it helps preserve harmony within the school and the broader community. It also contributes to creating a healthy learning environment where students can develop without the threat of radical influences. Moreover, religious moderation supports students in understanding the significance of tolerance and respect for diversity, which is essential for fostering an inclusive atmosphere in schools.

A misinterpretation of religious teachings within educational institutions can be catastrophic, as education not only serves as a means of transferring knowledge but also values, which are integral to maintaining the social fabric and national unity. In a diverse society like Indonesia, education plays a key role in shaping future citizens, making the prevention of radicalism, particularly through the promotion of religious moderation, even more critical.

In the perspective of the academic community at MAN Surabaya, radicalism poses several risks. It can lead to internal conflicts, disrupt the learning process, and create an uncomfortable environment for students and teachers alike. Radicalism can damage relationships between students and faculty, undermine school reputation, and hinder educational progress. This creates an atmosphere where students may feel unsafe, which in turn disrupts the teaching and learning process. The long-term consequences of allowing radicalism to flourish include a decline in the quality of education and a deterioration of student relationships.

Without effective mitigation, radicalism has the potential to foster disharmony among students and staff, eroding the core values of unity and national pride that are vital to a country like Indonesia. The importance of mitigating radicalism through religious moderation in educational institutions has been widely acknowledged by various stakeholders. The Ministry of Religious Affairs has actively emphasized the need for young people to avoid radical ideologies, warning that such ideologies not only threaten national security but also the well-being of individuals and families. The proliferation of radical ideas, particularly through social media, poses a significant challenge, with young people being the primary target.

The educational community at MAN Surabaya recognizes that religious moderation is essential for maintaining stability and safety within the school environment. They agree that religious moderation is a powerful tool to reduce potential conflicts and enhance social cohesion. By fostering an inclusive and harmonious learning environment, religious moderation helps prevent the spread of extremist ideologies and encourages the development of tolerant attitudes among students. This approach is strategically important in creating a safe space for learning and helping students understand and embrace the values of tolerance while avoiding radical behaviors.

C. The Practice of Radicalism Mitigation through Religious Moderation and Inclusivism

Religious moderation serves as the primary strategy for mitigating radicalism, particularly within the educational framework of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya. In Indonesia, radicalism often stems from a narrow interpretation of religion, which is influenced by economic, social, and ideological factors that promote extreme and exclusive worldviews. Religious moderation offers an inclusive and tolerant approach, encouraging all members of the school community to recognize the importance of diversity and mutual respect. In this context, religious moderation emphasizes a preventive approach rooted in character education, aiming to cultivate an open-minded attitude toward differences. Consistent with this perspective, Hasani and Naipospos argue that religious moderation is an inclusive and tolerant approach to addressing the challenges of radicalism among youth, particularly within educational institutions. This is reflected in MAN Surabaya, where mainstreaming the values of religious moderation has been strategically implemented as an effort to mitigate radicalism.

Education that fosters tolerance and mutual respect plays a crucial role in reducing radicalism within school environments. Radicalism in the educational sphere often arises from a narrow and extreme-exclusive understanding of religion. Therefore, both theoretical and practical approaches to religious moderation serve as key strategies in countering radicalism. Education plays a critical role in shaping students' character, and integrating religious moderation into educational frameworks is a preventive measure to curb the spread of extreme-radical ideologies among students. The term religious moderation is rooted in the concept of the "middle path," which seeks to balance the practice of one's own faith with respect for the religious practices of others. Masdar Hilmy argues that religious radicalism emerges when socio-economic disparities create a sense of marginalization among certain groups, prompting them to adopt an extreme-exclusive religious interpretation as a means of seeking identity and empowerment. In this context, education serves as a vital tool in addressing these underlying issues by instilling inclusive values and a balanced religious perspective, thereby preventing the escalation of radical ideologies within the student body.

Radicalism prevention at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya is implemented through various strategies, primarily focusing on character education. The school integrates key values into its

curriculum, such as tolerance, which promotes respect for differences and understanding diverse perspectives; empathy, which fosters the ability to understand and share the feelings of others; and justice, which instills respect for the rights of others and a commitment to fairness. To reinforce these values, MAN Surabaya organizes open discussions and dialogues through seminars on social and religious issues, inviting notable speakers, including the Head of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) of Surabaya, to promote policies and ideas related to religious moderation.

In addition to curriculum-based efforts, MAN Surabaya has established a monitoring and mentoring system to detect and prevent radical behaviors among students. This initiative involves teacher and staff supervision, as well as active collaboration with parents and the local community. The school engages parents by organizing meetings and discussions on relevant issues during report card distribution, parenting sessions, and semester-end meetings. Through these efforts, parents become actively involved in fostering moderate religious values at home and ensuring that students are not exposed to radical ideologies.

Further strengthening its commitment to religious moderation, MAN Surabaya has developed an inclusive curriculum that aligns with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy on religious moderation. This curriculum is designed to prevent radicalism within the academic community by incorporating teachings that promote critical thinking, open-mindedness, and respect for diversity. To support this initiative, the school provides teacher training programs to enhance educators' awareness and competence in radicalism prevention. These training sessions are conducted internally by the school, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and in collaboration with NGOs, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to address issues of radicalism in the classroom.

Beyond classroom instruction, MAN Surabaya also promotes religious moderation through extracurricular activities. These activities serve as an alternative channel for students to engage in positive and constructive interactions that reinforce the values of tolerance and inclusivity. Some of these extracurricular activities include sports such as futsal, volleyball, and fitball, as well as religious arts like Banjari music. Additionally, students participate in scouting (Pramuka), the flag-raising squad (Paskibraka), and community service programs, all of which cultivate a sense of civic responsibility and social engagement. Through a combination of curriculum-based education, teacher training, parental involvement, and extracurricular activities, MAN Surabaya fosters an environment of inclusivity and tolerance. This holistic approach ensures that students develop a balanced and open-minded religious perspective, positioning MAN Surabaya as a model for radicalism mitigation in formal Islamic education institutions.

The radicalism prevention efforts at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya are still categorized at a light level. This level is characterized by the absence of overt radical symptoms but the presence of indications of misunderstanding or low tolerance regarding religious and social issues. The

primary targets of these efforts are students who exhibit exclusive attitudes, a lack of tolerance, or social withdrawal.

According to the madrasah principal, there have been instances where students preferred to isolate themselves and showed little engagement in social interactions with their peers. Similarly, some parents displayed certain exclusive characteristics, such as wearing short-length pants (cingkrang) and having long beards, while also avoiding interactions with other parents during school events. These behaviors reflect exclusivism and a lack of social tolerance but are not yet at an extreme or dangerous level, thus categorizing them within light-level radicalism.

To address these tendencies, MAN Surabaya emphasizes tolerance, empathy, and justice in every subject. Classroom activities involve assignments and group discussions that encourage collaboration across different social and ideological backgrounds. Additionally, classroom discussions on the importance of moderation, Pancasila values, and the concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin (Islam as a blessing for all creation) are conducted to instill inclusive perspectives among students.

Beyond the classroom, MAN Surabaya promotes inclusive extracurricular activities to foster student participation in collective and community-oriented programs. These include sports (group exercises, futsal, volleyball), arts, scouting (Pramuka), and flag-raising squad (Paskibra), all of which emphasize teamwork, unity, and social engagement. Through these strategies, the school seeks to mitigate early indications of radicalism by nurturing a culture of tolerance and inclusivity among students.

Radicalism in educational settings can be categorized into light, moderate, and severe levels, each requiring tailored intervention strategies. At the moderate level, radical tendencies become more concrete, marked by a reluctance to engage in discussions about differences, social withdrawal, and the dissemination of sectarian-themed content or propaganda, although not yet extreme. Students at this level may begin avoiding interactions with certain groups, showing increased exposure to radical content on social media, and even spreading exclusive or intolerant views.

To counter moderate-level radicalism, intensive involvement of counseling teachers (Bimbingan Konseling/BK) is essential. This includes personal counseling sessions to correct misunderstandings and regular communication with parents, ensuring that families contribute to intervention efforts. Additionally, curriculum enrichment should introduce real-world case studies on the impacts of radicalism, encouraging students to develop critical thinking skills and a balanced perspective. School staff, teachers, and parents must collaborate to monitor student interactions both within school and on digital platforms. Implementing an early warning system allows for timely interventions if students engage with or share radical content online.

At the severe level, radicalism manifests in explicit support for extremist actions, outright rejection of moderation, and potential involvement in radical networks or communities. Students at

this stage may exhibit aggressive and intolerant behavior, discriminate against certain groups, or even participate in radical activities outside of school due to exposure to extremist propaganda.

Handling severe radicalism requires a multi-layered intervention approach. Special counseling sessions with counseling teachers should be prioritized, and if necessary, psychologists should be involved. Close collaboration with parents, community leaders, and law enforcement agencies is crucial, especially if the student's behavior poses a potential security threat. In cases where students show clear involvement in radical networks, the school may need to coordinate with security authorities, such as the police, Densus 88 (Counterterrorism Unit), and the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT), following established legal procedures.

Community involvement is also a key element in intervention efforts. Local stakeholders, including religious leaders and neighborhood associations (RT/RW), should take part in monitoring the student's behavior and providing guidance. Additionally, long-term deradicalization programs should be implemented, such as vocational training, intensive spiritual counseling, and structured community service projects. These programs aim to facilitate reintegration, instill positive values, and shift radical perspectives toward more inclusive and moderate viewpoints. Regular behavioral monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess progress and adjust mentorship and intervention strategies as needed, ensuring that students gradually disengage from radical influences.

The findings of this study indicate that the religious moderation program at MAN Surabaya has significantly contributed to increasing students' understanding of diversity. Before the implementation of this program, some students exhibited intolerant attitudes toward religious and social differences. However, through radicalism mitigation efforts, students gradually became more open-minded and appreciative of diversity. Additionally, the study observed a decline in conflicts within the school environment, with a noticeable increase in inclusive attitudes and harmonious relationships among students.

Inclusivity is an essential value in religious practice. The opposite of inclusivity is exclusivity, which should be avoided in religious perspectives. Exclusive attitudes tend to be rigid and lead individuals or groups to exclude those who do not align with their beliefs. More concerning is that such exclusivity can escalate into justifying punitive actions against those perceived as deviating from religious teachings, sometimes even to the extent of advocating the deprivation of others' rights or lives. Historically, this exclusivist stance was demonstrated by the Khawarij group, and today, similar attitudes are observed among Takfiri groups, which engage in labeling others as infidels or heretics.

The exclusive mindset leaves little room for rational thinking and contextual interpretation of religious doctrines. This perspective contradicts Islamic teachings, as reflected in Surah al-Nahl (16:125) and Surah al-Baqarah (2:256), which emphasize wisdom, gentle persuasion, and the absence of coercion in religion. In this context, inclusive religious practices and non-exclusivist interpretations become crucial, and these can be fostered through religious moderation programs.

The study further confirms that prior to the implementation of the religious moderation program at MAN Surabaya, some students exhibited intolerance toward other religious groups. However, after the program was introduced, their attitudes shifted toward greater openness and respect for differences. Observational reports also indicate that since the launch of this program, there have been no significant incidents of intolerance within the school. This suggests that educational interventions in religious moderation play a vital role in fostering a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment.

As an Islamic educational institution, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya integrates religious moderation values into both its curriculum and extracurricular activities, such as Scouting (Pramuka) and the Youth Red Cross (Palang Merah Remaja/PMR). This aligns with Alomari's study, which suggests that religious education in schools can serve as a tool to promote moderation and tolerance among students. The programs implemented at MAN Surabaya have successfully enhanced students' understanding of diversity and tolerance. This is consistent with Pettinger's argument, which states that education-based interventions have a positive effect in preventing radical extremism in school environments. By emphasizing moderation, tolerance, and respect for differences, education can play a crucial role in countering radicalism and extremism.

One of the key outcomes of religious moderation programs at MAN Surabaya is the development of organic tolerance, which refers to a type of tolerance that not only acknowledges and respects differences but also fosters cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships with those holding different views. This concept differs from passive tolerance, which merely accepts diversity without actively engaging in collaboration. Organic tolerance is essential for building social harmony and peaceful coexistence among individuals in a diverse society.

Radicalism mitigation at MAN Surabaya is also carried out through awareness campaigns on the importance of tolerance and religious moderation, which are integrated into various school activities. According to Koehler, education that promotes dialogue and social interaction among students is a key strategy in preventing radicalization. Programs that bring together students from diverse religious and social backgrounds in collaborative activities help reduce intolerance and foster mutual understanding among students.

The school implements strategic programs that involve all students, regardless of religious background, in joint social activities to reinforce the importance of religious moderation. Additionally, teachers incorporate discussions on radicalism within subjects such as Religious Studies, Civics Education, and Pancasila, helping students broaden their understanding of the dangers of extremist ideologies. Educators at MAN Surabaya also adopt dialogical approaches when addressing radical thought patterns among students, ensuring that discussions about religious and social issues are conducted in an open and constructive manner. Through these efforts, MAN Surabaya not only prevents radicalism but also cultivates an inclusive, tolerant, and harmonious school environment.

Teachers at MAN Surabaya acknowledge the challenges of addressing students who have been exposed to extremist ideologies from external sources. However, they report that by adopting a dialogical approach and creating spaces for discussion, students have become more open to differing perspectives. Initially, some students exhibited intolerant attitudes, but through consistent engagement and interactive learning strategies, these tendencies have been significantly reduced.

One of the most strategic approaches in radicalism mitigation through religious moderation is the use of interactive learning methods that encourage students to discuss the importance of religious moderation. Inclusive school programs, including social and religious activities, have successfully fostered a peaceful and harmonious environment. According to teachers, integrating religious moderation into education is crucial in maintaining harmony within the school. Interviews with the school principal revealed that these programs have raised awareness among students about the importance of peaceful coexistence. Additionally, teachers observed that this approach has reduced apathy among students regarding social issues, making them more engaged in community activities that promote diversity and tolerance.

Teachers at MAN Surabaya implement interactive learning models, encouraging peer discussions on religious moderation. This finding aligns with research by Busher and Holmer, which highlights that interactive learning and classroom discussions effectively promote moderate views on religious and political issues. Teachers report that after participating in religious moderation activities, students show greater enthusiasm for social initiatives that emphasize diversity and tolerance. These findings are further supported by Davies' study, which asserts that active participation in social activities helps reduce students' vulnerability to radical ideologies.

Additionally, Schmid emphasizes the importance of education in fostering critical thinking as a defense against radicalism. Given that student radicalization often stems from exposure to extremist ideologies via social media, religious moderation programs at MAN Surabaya aim to promote an understanding of religion as a source of peace and tolerance rather than conflict. This initiative aligns with the "counter-radicalization" theory proposed by Busher and Holmer, which stresses that preventive approaches based on religious and social education are the most effective strategies for countering radicalism among students.

Teachers at MAN Surabaya confirm that students' attitudes have shifted positively since the implementation of religious moderation programs. Those who previously exhibited intolerant behaviors have gradually become more open to differences. This transformation supports existing research advocating for preventive approaches in schools as a means of tackling radicalism at an early stage. By combining interactive learning, open discussions, and social engagement, MAN Surabaya has successfully created an educational environment that promotes tolerance, inclusivity, and critical thinking as key components in radicalism prevention.

The findings of this study emphasize the critical role of religious moderation in mitigating radicalism, aligning with previous research that highlights the preventive function of education in countering extremism. This study reinforces the notion that educational institutions that actively implement religious moderation programs can significantly reduce the risk of radicalization among students. Consequently, the findings support the perspective that inclusive, moderation-based religious education is fundamental in shaping a generation that is tolerant and open to differences.

The religious moderation framework introduced by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, as implemented at MAN Surabaya, can be understood as a perspective, attitude, and behavior that maintains a balanced position, upholds justice, and avoids extremism in religious practice. The indicators of religious moderation should be grounded in reliable sources, including religious texts, the national constitution, local wisdom, and collective consensus. Religious moderation should be viewed as a balanced approach between exclusive religious practice (personal faith observance) and inclusive religious respect (acknowledging and appreciating the beliefs of others). This equilibrium in religious practice helps prevent individuals from adopting extremist, radical, blind fanaticism, or revolutionary tendencies in religious expression. Therefore, religious moderation serves as a solution to counterbalance two extremes in religious practice: ultra-conservatism (far-right extremism) on one side and radical liberalism (far-left extremism) on the other.

Moreover, the religious moderation initiative by the Ministry of Religious Affairs serves as a key mechanism for fostering tolerance and social harmony at local, national, and even global levels. Choosing a moderate approach by rejecting both extremism and radical liberalism in religion ensures balance, sustains civilization, and promotes peace. Through this framework, people of different religious backgrounds can respect one another, accept differences, and coexist peacefully. In a heterogeneous and multicultural society like Indonesia, religious moderation is not merely an option but a necessity that must be implemented to maintain social stability and unity.

The study also corroborates previous research asserting that religious moderation can serve as an effective tool in preventing radicalism among students. Education plays a central role in instilling the values of moderation, particularly in a Muslim-majority country like Indonesia. The research findings demonstrate that integrating religious moderation programs into both the curriculum and extracurricular activities can reduce intolerance and strengthen social cohesion. Through these measures, MAN Surabaya has successfully created an educational environment that nurtures tolerance, inclusivity, and peaceful coexistence, reinforcing the importance of religious moderation as a sustainable strategy for radicalism mitigation.

The integration of religious moderation values into education requires various strategic approaches, including critical thinking, diversification of religious authority, and religious literacy awareness. Critical thinking is essential in interpreting religious texts to cultivate an authentic and contextual understanding of religion. Conceptually, ultra-conservative religious views often emerge

from an extreme theocentric perspective, which prioritizes divine satisfaction while neglecting humanistic aspects of religion. A purely theocentric mindset indoctrinates followers to perceive worship as merely a means to "please" God through ritualistic practices, often in a narrow and rigid manner. This perspective fosters an ideology that prioritizes fulfilling divine expectations while overlooking the social and moral functions of religion for humanity.

Another important strategy is the diversification of religious authority. In the current era of disruption, individuals are increasingly reevaluating their religious practices, as traditional habits and norms face challenges from emerging cultural shifts and technological advancements. The rise of millennial and Gen Z generations, coupled with widespread access to the internet and social media, has diminished the conventional role of religious authorities (such as kiai, ustadz, and religious teachers) in their daily lives. This shift necessitates a new approach to religious education, one that acknowledges digital influences while reinforcing moderate and inclusive religious perspectives.

In this context, religious literacy awareness becomes a crucial component in fostering moderate religious understanding. The Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia must take concrete steps to lead a national movement for religious literacy (religious literacy awareness), particularly targeting the millennial generation. The goal of this initiative is to ensure that young people develop a well-rounded, moderate understanding of religion, one that emphasizes spirituality and moral guidance rather than mere ritualistic formalities. Religion should be restored to its fundamental role as a source of ethical guidance and spiritual fulfillment, accessible to individuals from all walks of life.

Education that emphasizes religious moderation serves as a powerful preventive measure against radicalism in educational institutions. The findings of this study enrich the discourse on the role of educational institutions in mitigating radicalism through moderation-based approaches. According to Bjørgo, education is one of the most effective tools for preventing radicalization, particularly when values of moderation and tolerance are deeply integrated into the educational curriculum. This research also supports the findings of Rosand et al., who assert that inclusive religious education plays a vital role in shaping a tolerant younger generation, protecting them from exposure to extremist ideologies.

Therefore, strengthening education with values of tolerance and religious moderation is an essential effort in radicalism mitigation. The younger generation must be equipped with moderate religious principles to ensure that their religious perspectives remain inclusive rather than exclusive. When young people adopt an inclusive approach to religion, their religious orientation aligns with the principle of rahmatan lil 'alamin—a vision of Islam as a source of mercy and compassion for all beings in the universe. Through these efforts, education can serve as a gateway to peace, coexistence, and resilience against radical ideologies.

D. The Impact of Radicalism Mitigation through Religious Moderation

The implementation of religious moderation as a strategy for radicalism mitigation at MAN Surabaya has yielded significant positive impacts, including increased harmony and peace within the school community, a decline in conflicts related to radicalism, and greater participation in religious moderation programs. These effects are evident in the enhanced understanding of religious moderation among teachers, staff, and students, the reduction of intolerant attitudes, and the development of mutual respect among students. Additionally, a more peaceful school atmosphere, fewer student conflicts, and an increase in activities that promote religious moderation highlight the success of this initiative.

Before the implementation of radicalism mitigation efforts, students at MAN Surabaya were more susceptible to intolerant attitudes. However, after the introduction of religious moderation programs, there was a notable shift toward greater tolerance and mutual respect. Previously, students tended to display less openness to differences, but following the program, their understanding and acceptance of diversity improved. Before participating in these programs, students were more easily influenced by extremist-radical ideologies, as their perspectives on religion were narrower and more rigid. Now, they have a deeper appreciation of tolerance and inclusivity, demonstrating a more balanced and open approach to religious and social differences.

The positive impact of this program has extended beyond the school environment, reaching parents and the wider community. Parents and local society have expressed a sense of reassurance and confidence in the school's efforts to mitigate radicalism through religious moderation. They have observed a noticeable improvement in their children's behavior, with students becoming more tolerant and actively participating in activities that support religious moderation. Many parents now feel more at ease knowing that their children are learning in an environment that fosters inclusivity and mutual respect.

Observational data further support the positive transformation of the learning environment at MAN Surabaya, where security, inclusivity, and harmony have significantly improved. This conclusion is reinforced by direct feedback from students, parents, and teachers, who have reported a safer, more accepting school climate following the implementation of religious moderation programs. Students themselves acknowledge that the school has become a more inclusive and welcoming space, making their learning experience more comfortable and enriching.

Upon entering the campus of MAN Surabaya, one immediately notices a serene and peaceful atmosphere, with a welcoming and open-minded attitude from the school community. This sense of warm acceptance and openness to outsiders reflects a deeply ingrained culture of inclusivity, which is likely a direct result of the religious moderation programs initiated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs and implemented in Islamic educational institutions like MAN Surabaya. These outcomes demonstrate that religious moderation not only mitigates radicalism but also fosters an

environment of peace, inclusivity, and harmony, making it a crucial strategy for promoting tolerance in educational settings.

E. Discussion

This study highlights the importance and effectiveness of implementing religious moderation as a strategy to mitigate radicalism in educational institutions, specifically at Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) Surabaya. The findings demonstrate that religious moderation programs can play a central role in creating a tolerant, inclusive, and harmonious environment, both within the school and the wider community. However, several key points emerge from the discussion of these findings, particularly regarding the effectiveness of these programs, the challenges faced, and the broader implications for education and policy in Indonesia.

The implementation of religious moderation programs at MAN Surabaya has shown significant success in promoting tolerance and reducing radical ideologies among students. Through the integration of moderation values into the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and teacher training, the school has created a more inclusive and respectful learning environment. These efforts have led to a noticeable reduction in intolerance and an increase in students' understanding of religious diversity. Furthermore, students report feeling more secure and open-minded in an environment free from extremist influences. This confirms the hypothesis that religious moderation can be an effective tool for countering radicalism and promoting social cohesion in a multicultural setting like Indonesia.

However, while the programs appear effective, it is important to recognize that their long-term impact remains uncertain. Radicalism, being deeply rooted in complex social, economic, and psychological factors, may require sustained efforts over time. Future studies should assess the long-term outcomes of these moderation initiatives and their continued influence on students as they transition into adulthood.

Despite the positive outcomes, the implementation of religious moderation at MAN Surabaya is not without its challenges. One of the primary obstacles is resistance from certain individuals who may perceive religious moderation as incompatible with their understanding of religious practice. This challenge is compounded by socio-economic factors, where marginalized students, facing economic hardship, might be more susceptible to radical ideologies. To address these challenges, it is crucial to provide more comprehensive and continuous training for both teachers and students, ensuring that moderation values are deeply embedded in the school culture and remain part of daily interactions.

Another challenge lies in ensuring that religious moderation is not perceived as a political or ideologically driven agenda. The school must remain neutral and focus solely on fostering tolerance and understanding. It is essential that the moderation programs avoid being used as tools for political influence, as this could undermine their legitimacy and effectiveness.

Education plays a crucial role in preventing radicalism by shaping the values, attitudes, and behaviors of young people. The findings from this study reinforce the idea that schools, as formative environments, are ideally positioned to promote religious moderation and reduce the risk of radicalization. MAN Surabaya's approach demonstrates how integrating religious moderation into both the formal curriculum and extracurricular activities can contribute to creating a balanced and inclusive educational environment. The school's efforts go beyond simple ideological education; they emphasize the development of critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to appreciate diversity, all of which are key to preventing extremism.

In a broader context, these findings suggest that religious moderation should be incorporated into the national education policy to combat the growing influence of radical ideologies. The success of this approach at MAN Surabaya could serve as a model for other educational institutions in Indonesia and globally. The Ministry of Religious Affairs' initiatives are crucial in providing the necessary resources and framework for schools to effectively implement these programs.

The success of religious moderation programs at MAN Surabaya highlights the importance of institutionalizing these practices at the national level. The Indonesian government and the Ministry of Religious Affairs should continue to support and expand these initiatives by providing schools with the necessary resources, guidelines, and training. Additionally, there should be a national framework to evaluate the effectiveness of such programs and ensure that they are adapted to the unique needs of different regions, particularly in areas more prone to extremist ideologies.

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of religious moderation in mitigating radicalism, there are several avenues for further research. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to assess the lasting impact of religious moderation on students' attitudes and behaviors over time. Comparative studies between schools that have implemented religious moderation and those that have not could provide more concrete evidence of its effectiveness. Additionally, exploring the perceptions of parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders would offer a more holistic view of how religious moderation can be integrated into broader social and community efforts to prevent radicalism.

The cultural and social context of Indonesia plays a significant role in the success of religious moderation initiatives. Indonesia's long history of religious pluralism and tolerance provides a unique backdrop for promoting moderation. The school environment, which encourages open discussions about religious tolerance and values diversity, aligns with these national ideals. However, regional differences and socio-economic disparities must be considered when applying these programs nationwide. Schools in areas with higher rates of poverty or political instability may require additional support to combat the appeal of radical ideologies. Therefore, while the model implemented at MAN Surabaya is successful, it must be adapted to local contexts to be effective nationwide.

The findings of this study have broader implications beyond Indonesia. The concept of integrating religious moderation into educational systems could be applicable in other countries grappling with radicalism and religious extremism. By creating inclusive, tolerant, and critical thinking environments, educational institutions globally can play a central role in countering extremism. The approach in Indonesia can serve as a model for countries with similar demographic and socio-political contexts, especially in regions experiencing tensions due to religious and cultural diversity.

While the goal of religious moderation is to promote tolerance, it is essential to navigate ethical concerns around freedom of belief. Schools must ensure that religious moderation programs respect the individual rights of students to practice their faith as the

y see fit. There is a risk that religious moderation could be perceived as a form of ideological control or as an attempt to limit religious freedoms. Therefore, clear guidelines should be established to ensure that these programs are inclusive, non-coercive, and supportive of all students, regardless of their religious beliefs.

In conclusion, the implementation of religious moderation in educational settings, as exemplified by MAN Surabaya, is an effective strategy for mitigating radicalism and promoting a culture of tolerance and respect. However, ongoing efforts, research, and policy support are necessary to ensure the sustainability and broader application of these programs across Indonesia and beyond.

F. Conclusion

The implementation of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation, initiated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and applied in educational institutions such as MAN Surabaya, has demonstrated significant progress in fostering an inclusive understanding of religion. Various initiatives, including teacher training, interfaith discussions, curriculum integration of moderation values, and extracurricular activities, have helped create a more open and tolerant learning environment. These efforts play a crucial role in reducing the potential for radicalism by enhancing the collective awareness of teachers, staff, and students regarding the importance of respecting diversity and cultivating religious tolerance.

Given the persistent threat of radicalism in society, the urgency of radicalism mitigation through religious moderation cannot be overstated. Educational institutions like MAN Surabaya have a strategic role in educating the younger generation to reject extremist, radical, and terrorist ideologies. These programs not only prevent the infiltration of intolerant beliefs but also build student resilience by strengthening their religious understanding in a way that is moderate, inclusive, and critical. The integration of religious moderation into curricula, classroom discussions, and student activities has proven effective in developing students' critical thinking skills, helping them resist manipulative extremist narratives.

The positive impact of these initiatives is evident. Intolerant attitudes among students and staff have significantly declined, while awareness of the importance of tolerance continues to grow. The school environment at MAN Surabaya has become more harmonious, characterized by greater openness to interfaith dialogue and the reinforcement of inclusive values. Observations and feedback from students, teachers, and parents confirm that the school has become a safer and more inclusive space, with a notable increase in collaboration and social cohesion.

The success of MAN Surabaya in implementing religious moderation as a radicalism mitigation strategy highlights that this approach is not merely a short-term solution but a long-term investment. Strengthening religious moderation in education ensures that future generations are equipped with the values of tolerance, inclusivity, and critical thinking, making them more resilient to radical

ideologies. Ultimately, these programs serve as a foundational step toward fostering a peaceful, diverse, and harmonious society, where religion functions not as a tool for division, but as a force for unity and coexistence.

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