

## RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN THE AHLUSSUNNAH WAL JAMAAH PERSPECTIVE: RELEVANCE FOR S1 PIAUD AND S2 ISLAMIC EDUCATION

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### Abstract

#### Keywords:

Religious Moderation,  
Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah,  
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PIAUD,  
Islamic Higher Education

Religious moderation has become an essential discourse in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in responding to extremism, intolerance, and rigid religious interpretations. In the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective, religious moderation is not merely a sociopolitical agenda but a theological, ethical, and educational principle rooted in balance, justice, tolerance, and proportionality. This study aims to examine the concept of religious moderation from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective and to explain its relevance to the development of the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education and the master's program in Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan GenggongProbolinggo. This research employed a qualitative library research design. Data were collected from classical and contemporary literature on AhlussunnahwalJamaah, Islamic theology, Islamic educational thought, and religious moderation. The data were analyzed through content analysis by identifying core concepts, classifying themes, and interpreting their educational implications. The findings reveal that religious moderation in the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective is built upon the values of tawassuth, tawazun, i'tidal, and tasamuh. In the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education, these values are relevant for developing child-friendly religious pedagogy, character formation, and inclusive learning habits. In the master's program in Islamic Education, they are relevant for strengthening academic discourse, methodological openness, and contextual Islamic educational development. Therefore, religious moderation from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective provides a strong foundation for the academic and pedagogical orientation of both programs.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious moderation has become one of the most important issues in contemporary Islamic education (Ichsan, 2026). The growing challenges of intolerance, exclusivism, radical interpretations of religion, and social polarization have made moderation not merely a discourse of religious ethics but a strategic educational necessity (Zainal & Sofa, 2026). In Islamic educational institutions, the issue of moderation is especially urgent because education is the arena in which religious values are transmitted, interpreted, and internalized by future generations (L. Hasanah & Sofa, 2026). Therefore, religious moderation should not be treated as an external slogan added to educational practice, but as an integral paradigm shaping the aims, content, and methods of Islamic education (Sofa, 2026).

In the Islamic tradition, the concept of moderation is deeply rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and the Prophetic tradition (Sofa & Qamariyah, 2026). The notion of *ummatan wasatan* reflects a balanced, just, and exemplary community (Saputra & Sofa, 2026). This principle is further elaborated in the intellectual and theological tradition of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah, which emphasizes a middle path between rigidity and excess, between literalism and unrestricted rationalism, and between individual piety and social harmony (Fillah & Sofa, 2026). For this reason, the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah perspective offers an important conceptual basis for understanding religious moderation not only as a social necessity but also as a theological and pedagogical commitment (Khomsiyah & Sofa, 2026).

Within Islamic educational thought, the problem often lies in the gap between normative ideals and practical implementation (Fansuri & Sofa, 2026). Religious moderation may be frequently mentioned in institutional discourse, yet it is not always translated into curriculum design, classroom methodology, academic culture, and learning experience (Muchlis & Sofa, 2025). In some cases, Islamic education remains trapped in formalistic transmission of religious doctrines without sufficient attention to dialogical understanding, appreciation of diversity, and critical engagement with social realities (Laili & Sofa, 2025). As a result, the educational process may produce students who are knowledgeable in religious texts but insufficiently prepared to embody moderation in real-life contexts (Qumariyah & Sofa, 2025).

This issue becomes more important when connected to two distinct but related academic programs, namely the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education and the master's program in Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo. In the undergraduate Islamic Early Childhood Education program, religious moderation is relevant as the basis for child-friendly pedagogy, character education, and the introduction of religious values in a gradual and compassionate way (N. Sholihah & Sofa, 2025). In the master's program in Islamic Education, religious moderation becomes relevant as an epistemological and methodological framework for developing scholarly thought, educational research, and responsive Islamic pedagogy in the face of contemporary challenges (Fitriah & Sofa, 2025).

The academic development of these programs also requires a conceptual foundation that is institutionally meaningful (Umaidah & Sofa, 2025). Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo, with its Islamic and pesantren-based academic

environment, needs a strong moderate paradigm that reflects both classical Islamic scholarship and contemporary educational demands. In this regard, the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective offers a suitable framework for harmonizing religious authenticity, intellectual openness, and social responsibility(Nurhayati et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the concept of religious moderation from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective and to explain its relevance to the development of the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education and the master's program in Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan GenggongProbolinggo. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the strengthening of Islamic educational thought and practically to the academic orientation of both programs.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of religious moderation in Islam is closely related to the principle of balance, justice, and proportionality(Isnaini & Sofa, 2025). In the broader Islamic framework, moderation is often linked to the Qur'anic concept of *wasatiyyah*, which reflects the ideal position of Muslims as a balanced community(Sultan & Sofa, 2025). In the AhlussunnahwalJamaah tradition, this concept is not only understood normatively but is also reflected in theology, jurisprudence, ethics, and educational thought(Mh & Sofa, 2025). Therefore, this study uses the perspectives of several Muslim scholars whose ideas help explain moderation as both a doctrinal and pedagogical principle(Arifin & Sofa, 2025).

One of the important theoretical foundations for this study comes from Imam Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and Imam Abu Mansur al-Maturidi(Qamariyah & Sofa, 2025). Both scholars are central figures in Sunni theology and represent a balanced approach between revelation and reason(Anwar & Sofa, 2025). Al-Ash'ari emphasized the authority of revelation while still recognizing the role of reason in understanding religious truths(Silvia & Sofa, 2025). Al-Maturidi granted reason a somewhat broader role, yet always within the framework of revelation(Sita & Sofa, 2025). Their perspectives are relevant because they demonstrate that moderation in AhlussunnahwalJamaah is rooted in a theological balance that avoids both rigid literalism and unrestricted rationalism(Sofa, Harifah, et al., 2025). In educational terms, this means that Islamic learning should cultivate both faithfulness to religious sources and intellectual responsibility(Nafila & Sofa, 2025).

In the field of jurisprudence, the perspectives of Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam al-Shafi'i, and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal are also essential(Mardiyah & Sofa, 2025). Although all four regarded the Qur'an and Hadith as the primary foundations of Islamic law, they differed in their methodological emphasis, especially in the use of reason, analogy, public interest, and local practice(Salsabela & Sofa, 2025). This diversity within the Sunni legal tradition shows that AhlussunnahwalJamaah is not a rigid monolith but a framework that accommodates scholarly variation within shared foundational commitments(Zummah & Sofa, 2025). Such a legacy is highly relevant for religious moderation because it teaches respect for legitimate difference and discourages absolutist attitudes in understanding religious knowledge(Astutik & Sofa, 2025).

Imam al-Ghazali provides another major theoretical basis for this study. In his writings on ethics, spirituality, and education, al-Ghazali stressed the integration of

knowledge, morality, and inner purification (Fitria & Sofa, 2025). He viewed education as a process of forming a balanced human being whose intellectual development is inseparable from ethical discipline and spiritual refinement (Rosida & Sofa, 2025). His educational vision supports the argument that moderation is not merely a political or social concept, but a moral and pedagogical orientation (L. Hasanah & Sofa, 2025). In this sense, moderation becomes part of character formation and the cultivation of a responsible religious personality (Sofa & Febrianti, 2025).

The educational thought of Omar Mohammad al-Toumy al-Syaibany is also relevant to this study (Sofa & Sugianto, 2024). Al-Syaibany argued that Islamic education is a holistic process directed toward the development of the human person in spiritual, intellectual, social, and moral dimensions (Asror & Sofa, 2025). This perspective helps explain why moderation is important in educational institutions (Sofa, 2025). Religious moderation should not be reduced to a narrow curricular theme, but should function as a holistic orientation shaping the aims of education, the teacher's role, and institutional values (Sakinah & Sofa, 2025).

Abdurrahman al-Nahlawi's pedagogical theory further strengthens the educational relevance of moderation. He emphasized Qur'anic and Prophetic methods such as exemplification, habituation, advice, dialogue, storytelling, and gradual instruction (Bulqiyah & Sofa, 2025). These methods are especially relevant for the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education, where learners require concrete, compassionate, and developmentally appropriate approaches (Maulidya & Sofa, 2025). Through al-Nahlawi's framework, moderation can be understood as a pedagogical style that avoids coercion, harshness, and dogmatic rigidity (U. Hasanah & Sofa, 2025).

Contemporary Islamic scholarship also contributes to this discussion (R. Sholihah & Sofa, 2025). M. Quraish Shihab emphasized contextual understanding of Qur'anic teachings and highlighted the moral substance of Islam as mercy, justice, and wisdom (Nadzifah & Sofa, 2025). Amin Abdullah proposed an integrative approach in Islamic studies that bridges normative and historical dimensions and encourages interdisciplinary openness (Rofiq & Sofa, 2025). These perspectives are highly relevant to the master's program in Islamic Education because they support the development of academic discourse that is rooted in Islamic tradition while remaining responsive to social realities and intellectual complexity (Rofiq & Sofa, 2025).

From the Ahlul sunnah wal Jamaah perspective, religious moderation is often articulated through the values of *tawassuth* (the middle path), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice and uprightness), and *tasamuh* (tolerance) (Sofa, Firdausiyah, et al., 2025). These values form the conceptual core of this study. They indicate that moderation is not merely the rejection of extremism, but the cultivation of a balanced and responsible religious outlook (Sholeha & Sofa, 2025). In educational settings, these values should inform curriculum design, classroom interaction, academic dialogue, and the broader formation of students' religious character (Nisak & Sofa, 2025).

Thus, the theoretical framework of this study is built on three interrelated foundations (Putri & Sofa, 2025). The first is Sunni theology represented by al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi, which explains moderation as a balance between revelation and reason. The second is Sunni legal methodology represented by the four major jurists, which explains moderation through recognition of legitimate diversity within shared principles. The third is Islamic educational thought represented by al-Ghazali, al-

Syaibany, al-Nahlawi, Quraish Shihab, and Amin Abdullah, which explains moderation as a moral, pedagogical, and intellectual orientation in Islamic education (Jannah & Sofa, 2025).

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach with a library research design. The study focused on conceptual and theoretical analysis of religious moderation from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective and its relevance to the development of the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education and the master's program in Islamic Education.

The object of the study consisted of ideas, concepts, and scholarly arguments found in classical and contemporary literature on AhlussunnahwalJamaah, Islamic theology, Sunni jurisprudence, Islamic education, and religious moderation. Primary data were derived from works of major Muslim scholars and relevant educational thinkers. Secondary data were obtained from journal articles, books, and academic publications related to the topic.

Data collection was carried out through documentation techniques by identifying, selecting, reading, classifying, and recording relevant texts. The collected data were then analyzed through content analysis. The analysis involved three stages. First, data reduction was conducted by selecting the most relevant sources. Second, thematic categorization was carried out by grouping data into central themes such as the concept of religious moderation, AhlussunnahwalJamaah principles, relevance to Islamic Early Childhood Education, and relevance to postgraduate Islamic Education. Third, interpretive analysis was conducted to explain the conceptual relationship between religious moderation and the academic development of the two study programs.

Because this study was based on literature rather than fieldwork, the validity of interpretation was maintained through source adequacy, conceptual consistency, and coherence of argumentation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that religious moderation in the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective is not a secondary or peripheral concept, but a fundamental characteristic of Sunni Islamic thought. It is built on a pattern of understanding religion that emphasizes the middle path, balance, justice, and tolerance. These values are not merely abstract ideals; they are reflected in theology, jurisprudence, morality, and educational practice. Therefore, moderation should be understood as a core framework for Islamic education rather than as an additional institutional agenda (Slama & Sofa, 2025).

From the theological perspective, moderation appears in the balance between revelation and reason. AhlussunnahwalJamaah avoids the rigidity of those who deny the role of reason, but also rejects unrestricted rationalism that undermines scriptural authority. This balance is highly relevant in Islamic education because the educational process must nurture faithfulness to Islamic teachings while also encouraging understanding, reflection, and intellectual responsibility. In this way, students are not only taught what to believe, but also how to understand religious teachings wisely and proportionally (Lathifah & Shofa, 2025).

From the legal and intellectual perspective, moderation is reflected in the Sunni

tradition's recognition of legitimate difference among jurists and scholars (Sudaryanto & Sofa, 2025). The plurality of methods within Sunni jurisprudence demonstrates that unity in Islam does not require uniformity in all matters of interpretation (Amelia & Sofa, 2025). This insight is highly valuable for academic environments, where students must learn that disagreement within legitimate scholarly boundaries is not a threat to Islam, but part of its intellectual richness (Parawansah & Sofa, 2025). Such an attitude is necessary for strengthening academic maturity and preventing exclusivist tendencies.

In the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education, the relevance of religious moderation is primarily pedagogical. Early childhood is the stage at which fundamental attitudes, habits, and emotional responses are formed. For this reason, religious education at this level must be presented in ways that are compassionate, gradual, and suitable for child development. The values of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, *i'tidal*, and *tasamuh* can be translated into everyday learning experiences such as kindness, fairness, cooperation, patience, respect, and empathy. Religious moderation at this level does not take the form of abstract discourse, but of moral habituation and child-friendly educational practice.

Students in the undergraduate Islamic Early Childhood Education program therefore need to understand moderation as a pedagogical principle. When future teachers create inclusive classroom environments, teach religious values without fear-based coercion, and cultivate respectful interaction among children, they are actually implementing AhlussunnahwalJamaah moderation in educational practice. This is essential because early childhood education shapes the emotional and moral foundation upon which later religious understanding will develop.

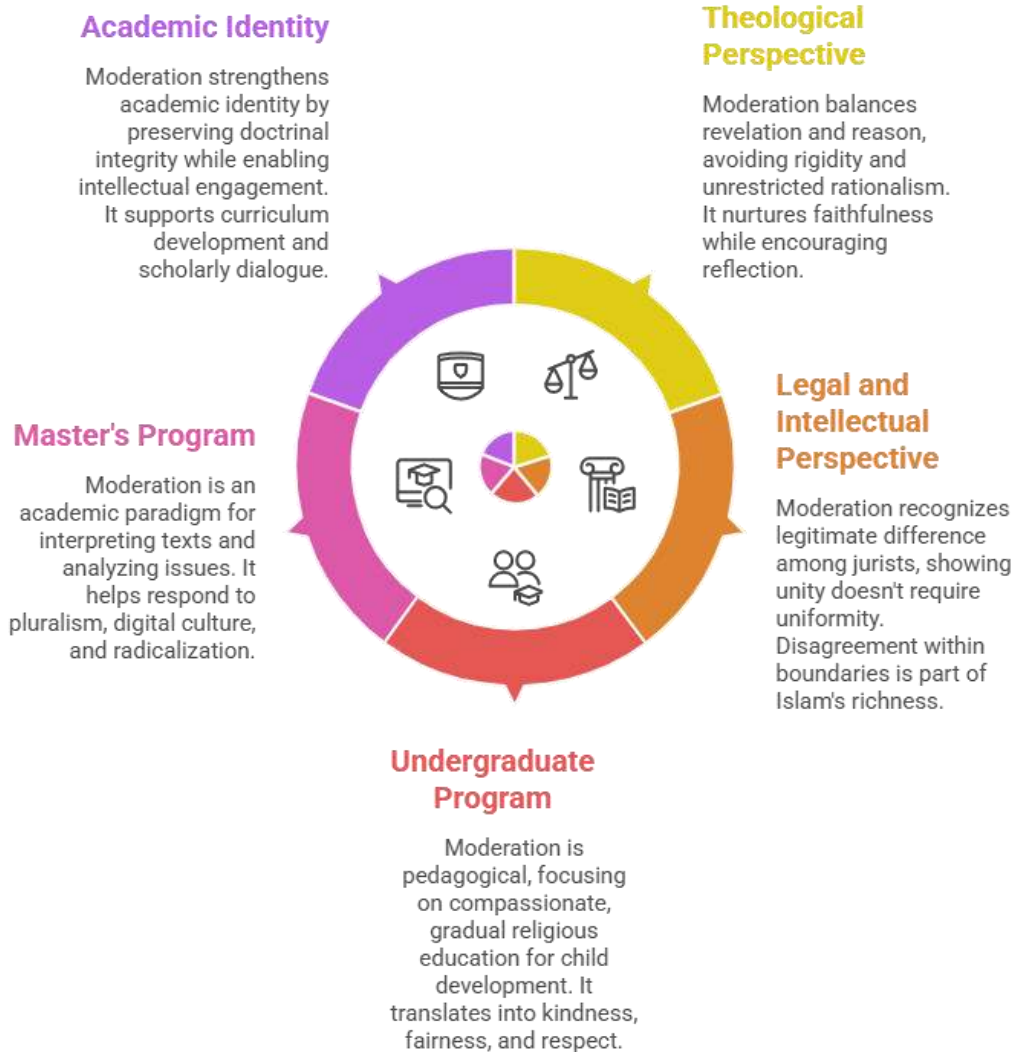
In the master's program in Islamic Education, the relevance of religious moderation becomes broader and more analytical. At this level, moderation should function as an academic paradigm for interpreting religious texts, analyzing educational issues, and developing Islamic educational thought. Graduate students are expected not only to teach religion, but also to examine how Islamic education should respond to contemporary issues such as pluralism, digital culture, interreligious relations, radicalization, and curriculum reform. In this context, the AhlussunnahwalJamaah framework offers a strong basis for combining fidelity to Islamic tradition with methodological openness and contextual awareness.

For the master's program in Islamic Education at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo, moderation is also relevant to the strengthening of academic identity. A program that is rooted in pesantren values and Islamic scholarship needs a framework that preserves its doctrinal integrity while also enabling intellectual engagement with changing realities. The values of moderation support curriculum development, research orientation, and scholarly dialogue that are both rooted and responsive. In this regard, religious moderation should not be treated only as a course topic, but as a guiding principle of institutional academic culture.

The study also indicates that although the undergraduate and postgraduate programs differ in focus, both require religious moderation as a foundational principle. The undergraduate Islamic Early Childhood Education program emphasizes moderation in pedagogical formation and religious habituation, while the master's program in Islamic Education emphasizes moderation in scholarly methodology and academic discourse. These two orientations are different in application, but they are united by the same AhlussunnahwalJamaah foundation.

Therefore, the concept of religious moderation from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective is highly relevant to the academic development of both programs. It provides not only theological legitimacy, but also educational direction. It allows Islamic education to remain faithful to tradition while at the same time becoming inclusive, dialogical, and responsive to the needs of contemporary society.

## Religious Moderation in Islamic Education



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**Diagram 1. Religious Moderation in Islamic Education**

Diagram 1 illustrates that religious moderation in Islamic education is constructed upon interconnected theological, pedagogical, and social foundations. At the theological level, religious moderation is derived from the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective, which emphasizes a balanced, proportional, and non-extreme understanding of religion. This framework is rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and

Hadith and is further developed within the tradition of moderate Islam that views religion as a source of peace, justice, and public benefit.

At the level of core values, religious moderation is represented through four main principles, namely *tawassuth* (the middle path), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice and proportional uprightness), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). These four values form the essence of the AhlussunnahwalJamaah paradigm in shaping a religious attitude that is neither excessive nor exclusive while remaining firmly grounded in Islamic principles. These values are not only normative in nature, but also operational in educational practice.

At the pedagogical level, the diagram emphasizes that religious moderation must be translated into learning processes that are compassionate, dialogical, gradual, and exemplary. Islamic education based on moderation is not constructed through coercion, symbolic violence, or rigid binary thinking, but through habituation, dialogue, respect for differences, and continuous character formation. In this sense, religious moderation functions not merely as a learning topic, but as an educational approach.

At the social level, religious moderation has broader implications, namely fostering tolerance, respect for diversity, social harmony, and resistance to radicalism. This means that Islamic education grounded in moderation does not only aim to form individuals who are personally pious, but also seeks to develop social responsibility and readiness to live within a plural society.

The diagram also demonstrates the relevance of religious moderation to the two study programs. In the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education (S1 PIAUD), religious moderation is relevant to character building, the habituation of religious values, the development of compassionate pedagogy, and the creation of inclusive learning environments. At this level, the values of moderation are implemented in simple and concrete forms appropriate to children's developmental stages. Meanwhile, in the master's program in Islamic Education (S2 Pendidikan Agama Islam), religious moderation is relevant to strengthening academic discourse, developing research methodology, fostering intellectual openness, and conducting contextual analysis of contemporary issues in Islamic education. Thus, at the postgraduate level, religious moderation functions as both an academic paradigm and a scholarly approach.

The expected outcome of implementing religious moderation in Islamic education is the formation of students who are moderate, inclusive, and capable of developing a contextual understanding of Islam. In addition, religious moderation is intended to cultivate responsible religiosity, appreciation of difference, and the ability to integrate Islamic values with social realities in a wise and constructive manner.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that religious moderation in the AhlussunnahwalJamaah perspective is a fundamental concept rooted in the values of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, *i'tidal*, and *tasamuh*. These values reflect a balanced and responsible way of understanding Islam, avoiding both rigidity and excess. In this sense, moderation is not merely a social or political strategy, but a theological, moral, and educational principle.

For the undergraduate program in Islamic Early Childhood Education, religious moderation is relevant as a basis for child-friendly pedagogy, character formation, and the gradual introduction of Islamic values. For the master's program in Islamic

Education, moderation is relevant as a framework for academic inquiry, methodological openness, and contextual educational development. Thus, both programs at Universitas Islam Zainul Hasan Genggong Probolinggo can be strengthened by adopting religious moderation from the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah perspective as a central academic and pedagogical orientation.

The practical implication of this study is the need to integrate moderation values into curriculum design, teaching methods, and academic culture in both programs. The limitation of this study lies in its library-based design, which has not yet examined field implementation. Future research may therefore focus on empirical studies concerning the implementation of Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah moderation in learning practices, curriculum development, and institutional culture.

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