

MODERATE ISLAMIC EDUCATION AS A SPACE FOR NEGOTIATING THE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY OF ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: Social and religious diversity in Indonesia, especially in rural areas, challenges adolescents' religious identity formation. Teenagers in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency, live between local religious traditions and the influence of social media and global religious information. This study aims to understand the role of moderate Islamic education as a space for negotiating adolescents' religious identity in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency. Using a qualitative approach with a case study method, this research explores the experiences of adolescents who live in the midst of local religious traditions and the influence of social media. The results show that moderate Islamic education functions as a dialogical space that allows adolescents to interpret religious values reflectively and contextually. Teenagers learn to balance religious teachings with their social lives, and understand local traditions as part of spirituality that is in line with Islamic teachings. The implication of this research is the need to develop moderate Islamic education as a model of youth character development in Islamic educational institutions. Empathetic, open and critical education needs to be integrated in the curriculum to form a young generation that is religious, tolerant and adaptive to social change without losing their Islamic roots.

Keywords: Moderate Islamic Education, Religious Identity, Islamic Tradition

Abstrak: Keberagaman sosial dan keagamaan di Indonesia, khususnya di pedesaan, menantang pembentukan identitas keagamaan remaja. Remaja di Desa Tanjung Alam, Kabupaten Asahan, hidup di antara tradisi keagamaan lokal dan pengaruh media sosial serta informasi keagamaan global. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami peran pendidikan Islam moderat sebagai ruang negosiasi identitas keagamaan remaja di Desa Tanjung Alam, Kabupaten Asahan. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, penelitian ini menggali pengalaman remaja yang hidup di tengah tradisi keagamaan lokal dan pengaruh media sosial. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan Islam moderat berfungsi sebagai ruang dialogis yang memungkinkan remaja menafsirkan nilai-nilai agama secara reflektif dan kontekstual. Para remaja belajar untuk menyeimbangkan ajaran agama dengan kehidupan sosial mereka, serta memahami tradisi lokal sebagai bagian dari spiritualitas yang selaras dengan ajaran Islam. Implikasi penelitian ini adalah perlunya pengembangan pendidikan Islam moderat sebagai model pembinaan karakter remaja di lembaga pendidikan Islam. Pendidikan yang empatik, terbuka, dan kritis perlu diintegrasikan dalam kurikulum untuk membentuk generasi muda yang religius, toleran, dan adaptif terhadap perubahan sosial tanpa kehilangan akar keislaman mereka.

Kata Kunci: Pendidikan Islam Moderat, Identitas Keagamaan, Tradisi Islam

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a country with extraordinary religious, ethnic, and cultural diversity. This diversity is not merely a demographic fact, but a reflection of a long history of social, cultural, and religious interactions that have shaped the character of the nation. In the context of religious life, Indonesia is recognized as home to various beliefs, including Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as various local beliefs that coexist in the same social space. Amidst this diversity, Islam is the religion with the largest number of followers, but it remains within a national framework that upholds tolerance and humanity (Heriyudanta, 2023).

Islam in Indonesia has grown through a peaceful, accommodating, and cultural process. Since its early spread, Islamic scholars and propagators did not eliminate local cultures, but integrated Islamic teachings with the traditional wisdom of the Indonesian people. From this process, a distinctive form of Islam emerged, known as Islam Nusantara or moderate Islam, which emphasizes a balance between religious texts and social context (Ruslan, Meriyanti, 2023). In the contemporary religious reality of Indonesia, the term moderate Islam has increasingly emerged as an antithesis to two extreme tendencies that have developed in society, namely rigid conservatism on the one hand, and excessive liberalism on the other.

Religious moderation is an idea that emphasizes balance in thinking, attitude, and behavior, inviting Muslims to bring the values of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* into a diverse living space. (Albana, 2023) Islamic education, in this context, plays a strategic role as a medium that not only transfers religious knowledge but also instills reflective awareness of how to practice Islam wisely, contextually, and tolerantly (Azmi Uwafiq Muhammad, 2023).

However, the role of Islamic education cannot be separated from the social context in which it grows. In Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency, Islamic education practices take place in a community that has strong religious traditions while also being open to social change. This village represents a distinctive rural Islamic life, on the one hand still rooted in local values and traditional wisdom, on the other hand beginning to interact with modernity, digital media, and the flow of global religious ideology. Adolescents are the group that most intensely experiences the friction between tradition and modernity (Lubis, 2022).

Adolescence is a crucial period in the formation of self-identity. At this stage, individuals not only seek to understand who they are, but also strive to find their social position and existential meaning in society. This search for identity encompasses the intertwined dimensions of values, morals, and spirituality in the process of personality formation. In a

religious context, the religious identity of adolescents does not exist as something fixed and final, but rather through a dynamic process of negotiation between the religious teachings they learn, their daily experiences, and the social interactions they have in their family, school, and community environments (Syarifah & Hidayat, 2024).

In the digital age, teenagers are exposed to a wide variety of religious discourse spread across social media. They can easily access online lectures on YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, which often present Islamic views from various ideological spectrums. On the one hand, this diversity of information broadens their horizons and opens up space for deeper spiritual reflection; on the other hand, it also causes identity confusion when teenagers do not yet have the critical ability to sort and assess information proportionally (Heriyudanta, 2023).

In such situations, moderate Islamic education plays an important role as a space for dialogue where adolescents can discuss, question, and reinterpret religious values in the context of the society they face. Through dialogue and reflection, teachers and religious mentors not only act as conveyors of doctrine but also as facilitators who help adolescents understand the meaning of religiosity rationally and empathetically. Thus, moderate Islamic education becomes an important platform for adolescents to build an inclusive, reflective, and

contextual religious identity, rather than simply dogmatically imitating (Ruslan, Meriyanti, 2023).

This dialogical approach emphasizes that religious practice is not a process of standardization, but rather a space for encounter between text and context, between the normative teachings of Islam and the ever-changing social reality. When teenagers are given the opportunity to ask questions, discuss, and think critically without fear of being judged, they learn to understand Islam not only as a set of rules, but as a way of life full of love, tolerance, and balance (Mubarok & Sunarto, 2024).

Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village, whether through madrasahs, majelis taklim, or youth mosque gatherings, has become an important arena where religious moderation is practiced not as a doctrine but as a social practice. It is in these spaces that the process of negotiation between religious teachings and local traditions, between text and context, between idealism and reality, takes place. Moderate Islamic education provides opportunities for youth to understand religious diversity not in black-and-white terms, but through the lens of balance, dialogue, and respect for diversity (Mujib & Madian, 2022).

Studies on moderate Islamic education as a space for negotiating the religious identity of adolescents are becoming increasingly relevant in the context of rapid social change and digital technology development. The religious

identity of today's adolescents is no longer formed solely through formal education or the family environment, but also through complex interactions with various religious discourses present in the public sphere, including social media. In this situation, Islamic education plays an important role as an arena where religious values can be understood, questioned, and reinterpreted in a dialogical and contextual manner.

Research by Syarifah & Hidayat (2024) provides an important perspective on the younger generation and the challenges of digitalization. They found that Indonesian Muslim Generation Z is exposed to a wide range of online religious content, from conservative to liberal. In this situation, moderate Islamic education acts as a filter of values that helps adolescents reflectively reinterpret the meaning of religiosity. Through dialogue-based learning, teachers can guide students to understand Islam in a contextual, rational, and civilized manner, so that their religious identity is not rigid but dynamic.

In addition, research by Inayati, Fajriah (2024) shows that the internalization of moderate religious values associated with local wisdom can strengthen the religious identity of adolescents without eliminating their cultural roots. Through Islamic religious education that accommodates local culture, adolescents learn that being Muslim does not mean rejecting tradition, but rather understanding Islamic values in

the context of the culture in which they live. This shows that moderate Islamic education functions as a space for negotiation between religious identity and cultural identity.

Research by Ikhwan Rasmana Tarigan & Muhammad Farih (2025) emphasizes the importance of the pedagogical dimension in moderate Islamic education. They found that PAI and Budi Pekerti learning at SMK Semen Gresik, which is based on the values of religious moderation, encourages students to think critically about the teachings they receive. Through a dialogical and reflective approach, students not only understand religious teachings but also learn to position themselves in a diverse society with a tolerant and balanced attitude.

In a broader context, M. Solichin (2019) also emphasizes that moderate Islamic education that integrates local wisdom plays an important role in building a space for negotiating the religious identity of adolescents in Islamic boarding schools. This space allows students to internalize Islamic values rooted in the culture of the archipelago, thereby forming an inclusive and contextual religious character. Research on moderate Islamic education has largely focused on formal institutions or national policies. However, not much attention has been paid to how religious moderation is articulated in the context of rural communities, which are rich in cultural and social dynamics. It is at the local level

that Islamic values are often most deeply rooted and undergo the most significant transformation.

A study of the practice of moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village is important to understand how the values of religious moderation live in everyday life, especially in shaping the identity of religious, reflective, and tolerant youth. Thus, this study aims to explore how moderate Islamic education plays a role as a space for negotiating the religious identity of youth in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency.

The contribution of this research lies in its effort to expand the discourse on moderate Islamic education from the policy level to cultural practices at the community level. This research not only presents an empirical portrait of the process of internalizing religious moderation in the environment of Islamic boarding schools and rural communities, but also offers a conceptual model of how local wisdom can be dynamically integrated into the character education of Muslim youth. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for the development of curricula, learning strategies, and Islamic education policies that are more contextual and responsive to local socio-cultural changes.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative method with a case study approach because it aims to understand in depth how moderate Islamic education plays a

role as a space for negotiating the religious identity of adolescents in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency. This approach was chosen to explore the meanings, experiences, and narratives of adolescents and their social environment in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation. The qualitative approach is considered the most appropriate because it is able to reveal subjective, cultural, and spiritual aspects that cannot be measured quantitatively, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of the social and religious context of rural communities (Creswell, 2018).

The research location was set in Tanjung Alam Village, Asahan Regency, North Sumatra. This village is known for its religious community, with lively religious activities through madrasas, Al-Qur'an education parks, and youth religious gatherings. The selection of this location was based on the socio-cultural characteristics of the community, which is oriented towards religious values but remains open to modernity (Lubis et al., 2024). These conditions make Tanjung Alam Village relevant as a locus of research on how moderate Islamic education interacts with local values and becomes a forum for the formation of youth religious identity. This research was conducted over three months, from July to September 2025.

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-

depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation involving Muslim adolescents aged 15–22 years, madrasah teachers, ustaz and ustazah, religious leaders, community leaders, and parents. Meanwhile, secondary data came from various educational institution documents, religious activity reports, village archives, and scientific literature relevant to the theme of moderate Islamic education and the formation of religious identity among youth in Islamic boarding schools and rural communities.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews to explore the informants' views and experiences regarding the values of religious moderation, participatory observation to observe the behavior, social interactions, and religious activities of adolescents, and documents to reinforce the data obtained in the field. All data were analyzed interactively following the model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) through three main stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the condensation stage, the data was selected and focused to suit the research objectives. Next, the data was presented in the form of narratives and main themes that showed the dynamics of moderate Islamic education. In the final stage, conclusions were drawn and verified by linking the field findings to previous theories and research results (Sugiyono, 2008).

To ensure data validity, this study applied source and method triangulation by

comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation to ensure consistency and validity of findings. In addition, member checks were conducted by requesting clarification from informants to ensure that data interpretation was consistent with their experiences, as well as peer debriefing with colleagues to minimize researcher bias. Field notes and researcher reflections were also used as validation materials to maintain the objectivity and integrity of the research results. Through this methodological design, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of how moderate Islamic education functions in shaping the religious identity of adolescents in rural communities and to enrich the study of Islamic education based on local wisdom.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tanjung Alam Village is located in Asahan Regency, North Sumatra. This village is known for its religious community, with the presence of madrasahs, TPQs, and active majelis taklim. Regular religious activities such as youth recitation, tahlilan, and short-term Islamic boarding schools are an important part of social life. In recent years, the development of social media and the flow of global information have also begun to influence the religious mindset of the younger generation in this village.

Youth in Tanjung Alam Village are generally in an interesting position: they live in a strongly religious environment, but are also exposed to various Islamic views from the digital world. This

condition makes Islamic education at the local level not only a means of religious teaching, but also a meeting place between traditional values and modern thinking.

This study found that moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village serves as a space for religious identity negotiation for teenagers. Through education that takes place in madrasahs, majelis taklim, and non-formal activities such as short-term Islamic boarding schools and youth recitation groups, teenagers learn to understand religion not only as a set of normative rules, but also as a value of life that can be interpreted according to their social context.

Moderate Islamic Education as a Space for Dialogue

Islamic education in Tanjung Alam is open and participatory. Religious teachers and ustadz in madrasahs and youth assemblies provide space for students to ask questions and relate Islamic teachings to their daily realities. This approach creates a dialogical learning climate, where youth can express their views, doubts, and personal experiences without fear of being judged. As one informant said, "Our ustadz said that if we have doubts or don't understand something, we should just ask. Religion is not something to be feared, but understood." This open attitude makes moderate Islamic education a space for conversation between text and context, which helps youth internalize Islamic

values in a more reflective and personal way.

The informant's statement illustrates how Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village is not based on fear or blind obedience to religious rules, but on curiosity and the search for meaning. When the ustadz encourages his students to ask questions, he is actually opening up space for critical and reflective thinking, two things that are very important in forming mature religious beliefs.

This open attitude means that classes or religious gatherings are no longer places for memorizing dogma, but rather spaces for dialogue between text and context. On the one hand, Islamic teachings as sacred texts are still respected; but on the other hand, teenagers' life experiences of friendship, differences, and digital life are given space to be discussed. In such a space, the process of learning religion becomes more lively and personally meaningful. Teenagers do not feel compelled to follow the teachings, but rather understand the reasons behind them. They learn that Islam is not just a collection of prohibitions and commands, but a source of values that can guide them to face modern realities wisely. In other words, the attitude of the ustadz who gives them the freedom to ask questions has fostered *a sense of ownership* of religious knowledge. Young people no longer simply "accept" teachings, but consciously internalize Islamic values, so that their

religiosity grows from a process of understanding, not coercion.

Negotiation between Local Tradition and Global Islam

Teenagers in Tanjung Alam Village live amid two major currents: rich local religious traditions with cultural practices such as tahlilan, grave pilgrimages, and Maulid Nabi celebrations, and the influence of Islamic teachings spread through social media and global networks. In this context, moderate Islamic education acts as a cultural mediator that bridges the two.

Teachers and religious leaders do not necessarily reject local practices, but rather provide an understanding that the values of goodness, prayer, and social solidarity in these traditions are still in line with Islamic teachings. Through this approach, teenagers learn that religiosity does not have to be uniform, but can be expressed according to the local social and cultural context (Azra, 2003, 2005).

These findings indicate a shift in adolescents' perspectives on local religious practices. In the past, some of them viewed traditions such as tahlilan, grave pilgrimages, or Maulid Nabi celebrations as outdated and irrelevant to the modern Islamic teachings they encountered on social media. However, after participating in a moderate Islamic education process that provided space for dialogue and contextual explanations, they began to see that these practices were not merely rituals passed down from

generation to generation, but spiritual expressions with deep social meaning.

The youth learned to understand that local traditions embody values of togetherness, respect for ancestors, and social solidarity among villagers. These values are in line with Islamic principles of friendship, caring, and respect for others. With this new understanding, they no longer see the differences between traditional Islam and modern Islam as a contradiction, but as a rich diversity of religious practices that can complement each other.

Moderate Islamic education, in this context, serves as a cultural bridge. It guides young people to remain rooted in local culture, while at the same time being open to universal Islamic values such as justice, mercy, and humanity. This attitude fosters a balanced form of religiosity that is not trapped in formal symbols, but also does not reject the traditions that have shaped the collective identity of society. In other words, religious moderation not only maintains a balance between the extreme right and left, but also becomes a way for teenagers to find their own spiritual home, a home that stands on the foundation of local culture, but is covered by universal and inclusive Islamic values.

The Role of Teachers and Ustadz as Mediators of Identity

Teachers and ustadz have an important position in the process of negotiating the religious identity of adolescents. They not only act as conveyors of knowledge, but also as

mediators and role models who balance firm values and social empathy. In interviews, most teenagers stated that they felt comfortable discussing with teachers who did not judge them. Teachers who were moderate encouraged them to think critically and appreciate differences. This shows that the success of moderate Islamic education is highly dependent on the communicative capacity and dialogical character of educators.

These teenagers' statements show that the emotional relationship and communication style of teachers are key to the success of moderate Islamic education. When teachers or ustadz are open, patient, and non-judgmental, teenagers feel valued as individuals who are learning, not as students who must always be right or wrong. This kind of safe space encourages them to speak up, express their doubts, and even ask critical questions about the religious teachings or practices they encounter in their daily lives.

The moderate attitude of teachers not only influences teenagers' religious knowledge, but also shapes the way they understand differences and interact with others. In a dialogical learning atmosphere, teenagers learn that respecting differences is part of faith, not a threat to it. They begin to understand that religion does not have to be conveyed in a patronizing tone, but can be instilled through conversations full of empathy and warmth.

These findings also show that moderate Islamic education will not be effective without teachers who have high

communicative capacity and social sensitivity. Moderate teachers are not merely conveyors of knowledge, but also facilitators of dialogue, good listeners, and role models in their openness to differences. In this context, the character of teachers reflects the values of moderation themselves; they teach tolerance not only through words, but also through the way they treat their students. A humanistic and open approach to education fosters confidence in young people in interpreting religious teachings. They learn that being a Muslim does not only mean obeying symbols, but also being responsible in social and humanitarian actions.

The Influence of Social Media on the Formation of Religious Identity

Social media is a significant external factor in the process of shaping the religious identity of adolescents. The adolescents of Tanjung Alam Village actively access various religious content on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram. Through these media, they are exposed to a variety of styles of preaching, ranging from casual and lighthearted to harsh and ideological.

This diversity of content has a dual impact. On the one hand, social media broadens the religious knowledge of adolescents, making it easier for them to find answers to questions that may not have been discussed at school or in religious gatherings. Creative digital preaching is also able to attract their attention, making religion feel closer to their daily lives. However, on the other

hand, this flood of unfiltered information also causes identity confusion. Teenagers are faced with various versions of religious truth that sometimes contradict each other, ranging from moderate to conservative to even extreme. As a result, some teenagers feel uncertain about which one to follow, while others become prone to judging right and wrong in black and white terms.

Adolescents with a moderate understanding tend to be more selective and critical in accepting religious information, while those without a strong religious education are more easily influenced by extreme religious views. Moderate Islamic education in this village plays an important role in equipping teenagers with religious digital literacy skills, namely the ability to assess the validity of sources, understand context, and avoid discourse polarization. Thus, moderate Islamic education not only functions as a space for learning values, but also as an ideological protection mechanism amid the rapid flow of global religious information.

Analysis and novelty of the research

The findings of this study show that moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village does not merely function as a means of transmitting religious values, but also as a social and cultural space where teenagers negotiate their religious identity. The educational process does not stop at memorizing verses or understanding fiqh laws, but has

developed into an arena where teenagers discuss life experiences, differences of opinion, and the challenges of being a Muslim in the modern era.

Findings in the field show that madrasahs, majelis taklim, and non-formal activities such as short-term Islamic boarding schools and youth recitation sessions become spaces for intergenerational and inter-discourse dialogue. In these spaces, ustadz and teachers do not act as sole authorities, but as facilitators who encourage youth to understand Islam in a reflective and contextual manner.

This finding is in line with the idea of *dialogical education* (Susanti et al., 2024), which places students as active subjects in the learning process. (Putu Laksmi Ari Dewi et al., 2025) emphasizes that true education is a process of mutual learning between teachers and students that leads to critical awareness (*conscientização*). In this context, moderate Islamic education becomes a medium for adolescents to understand their religion through conversation and reflection, not through the imposition of dogma.

Adolescents in Tanjung Alam Village form their religious identity through interaction with their social environment, local traditions, and the flow of digital information. This process confirms the view of in *The Social Construction of Reality*, that identity is not something static, but rather the result of social construction that continues to

change as humans interact with their environment.

Moderate Islamic education provides a safe space for this construction process. Through dialogical learning activities, adolescents can test their religious understanding, negotiate the values inherited from their families with new experiences from social media, and form a synthesis of identity that is appropriate to the context of their lives. In other words, adolescents' religious identity is not born from imposed doctrine, but from a continuous dialogical process. They learn to position themselves between the two worlds of local Islamic tradition and the modern, digital global reality.

Further research findings show that religious moderation in Tanjung Alam Village is not realized through formal campaigns or government slogans, but grows from the social and cultural practices of the community. Teenagers learn moderate attitudes through the example of teachers, interactions in social activities, and the habit of respecting differences. This is in line with the view of (Siti Nurhamidah Auliani et al., 2024) which emphasizes that Islam is inherently open, rational, and adaptive to changing times. Moderation is not a political middle ground, but rather an intellectual attitude rooted in the spirit of *ijtihad* and respect for diversity of interpretation in Islam. (Muhammad Sholeh Hoddin, Wahidmurni, Basri, 2023) Moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam has

realized this principle in practice, by providing space for young people to interpret religion according to their social context without losing their basic faith.

Furthermore, these findings are also in line with the idea of which states that Islamic education in Indonesia has a dual function, namely as a means of transmitting religious values and as a forum for shaping a pluralistic national character. In Tanjung Alam Village, these two functions coexist, building religiosity as well as tolerant social awareness.

One interesting aspect of the field findings is how teenagers reinterpret local religious practices. Traditions such as tahlilan, kenduri, and grave pilgrimages, which were once considered outdated, are now understood as spiritual expressions that contain social values such as solidarity, respect for ancestors, and a sense of togetherness. This phenomenon demonstrates the ability of teenagers to reinterpret traditions. They do not reject traditions, but give them new meaning in accordance with the times. This process illustrates a form of living Islam that is adaptive to cultural changes, or as explained by n The Religion of Java, that the religious practices of Indonesian society are always integrated with the local cultural system.

Thus, moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam allows young people to preserve their cultural roots without losing the universal spirit of Islam. This forms a religious identity that is not trapped in the traditional-modern or

textual-cultural dichotomy, but moves dynamically according to its social context. Moderate Islamic education provides a reflective space where teenagers can reinterpret Islamic teachings within the framework of modern life without losing their local traditional roots. This negotiation process involves a dialogue between textual values (normative teachings) and contextual values (social reality). The involvement of open-minded teachers and an inclusive learning environment are key factors in the formation of an adaptive religious identity. Teachers who act as moral mediators help teenagers build a balance between faith, reason, and social empathy.

In addition, findings regarding the role of social media confirm that religious moderation needs to be balanced with religious digital literacy. Moderation cannot be taught verbally alone, but needs to be manifested in critical and analytical thinking skills regarding religious content. With thus, moderate Islamic education functions as a dynamic space for negotiation where adolescents discover their religious identity autonomously, openly, and responsibly. This process confirms that moderation is not merely a middle ground, but a rational, inclusive way of thinking rooted in universal human values.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that moderate Islamic education in Tanjung Alam Village functions not only as a means of transmitting religious teachings, but also as a

social and cultural space where adolescents negotiate their religious identities. Through an empathetic and contextual teaching approach, adolescents learn to understand Islam in a reflective manner that is relevant to their daily lives. They find a balance between text and context, and interpret local traditions as part of a spirituality that has social value without losing the spirit of universal Islam. Moderate Islamic education has proven to be a bridge between local culture and inclusive Islamic teachings. This study also emphasizes the important role of teachers as dialogical figures who create a humanistic learning atmosphere that is open to critical questions. Teenagers not only learn about religion, but also learn to appreciate differences and act wisely. Although the influence of social media shapes the way teenagers think, moderate Islamic education helps them sort through information, understand diversity of views, and foster critical awareness in religion. Thus, religious moderation is not only a theological discourse, but also a cultural strategy that guides teenagers to face the dynamics of the times with mature faith, tolerance, and a broad outlook on life. Implicitly, moderate Islamic education needs to be developed more broadly as a model for character building among teenagers in various Islamic educational institutions. The values of openness, empathy, and balance between text and context must be integrated into the curriculum and learning practices in order to produce a young generation that is religious, reflective, and adaptive to socio-cultural changes without losing their deep Islamic values.

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