

Islamic Education as a Catalyst for Religious Moderation: Reframing Muslim Youth Engagement at the Grassroots

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Abstract

This study examines how Islamic education can catalyze religious moderation by reframing Muslim youth as active grassroots agents rather than passive recipients of institutional messages. It employs library research with descriptive-critical qualitative analysis of the supplied review manuscript and its cited conceptual literature on moderation, youth participation, local culture, interfaith dialogue, and digital engagement. The synthesis indicates that formal, top-down programs may establish normative direction but often have limited social reach when they are disconnected from local experience and sustained participation. Islamic education can bridge this gap by integrating contextual religious literacy, ethical reflection, collaborative community service, interfaith dialogue, and critical digital literacy. The article's novelty is a youth-centered educational framework that links value internalization, participatory action, contextual adaptation, and continuous evaluation as mutually reinforcing dimensions of grassroots moderation. The framework is conceptual and requires empirical testing in diverse communities.

Keywords: Islamic Education, Religious Moderation, Muslim Youth.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini untuk mengkaji bagaimana pendidikan Islam dapat menjadi katalisator moderasi beragama dengan memosisikan kembali generasi muda Muslim sebagai agen aktif di tingkat akar rumput, bukan sekadar penerima pasif pesan-pesan kelembagaan. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi kepustakaan dengan analisis kualitatif deskriptif-kritis terhadap manuskrip tinjauan yang disediakan beserta literatur konseptual yang dirujuk mengenai moderasi beragama, partisipasi generasi muda, budaya lokal, dialog antaragama, dan keterlibatan digital. Hasil sintesis menunjukkan bahwa program formal yang bersifat top-down dapat memberikan arah normatif, tetapi sering kali memiliki jangkauan sosial yang terbatas ketika tidak terhubung dengan pengalaman lokal dan partisipasi berkelanjutan. Pendidikan Islam dapat menjembatani kesenjangan tersebut melalui integrasi literasi keagamaan kontekstual, refleksi etis, pengabdian masyarakat kolaboratif, dialog antaragama, dan literasi digital kritis. Kebaruan artikel ini terletak pada pengembangan kerangka pendidikan berorientasi pada generasi muda yang menghubungkan internalisasi nilai, tindakan partisipatif, adaptasi kontekstual, dan evaluasi berkelanjutan sebagai dimensi-dimensi yang saling memperkuat dalam mewujudkan moderasi beragama di tingkat akar rumput. Kerangka ini bersifat konseptual dan memerlukan pengujian empiris dalam beragam komunitas.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Islam, Moderasi Beragama, Generasi Muda Muslim

Introduction

Religious diversity is a defining feature of contemporary society, particularly in contexts where different faith traditions share public spaces.¹ Religious moderation enables individuals to maintain their convictions while respecting the dignity and rights of others. In Indonesia, this principle is shaped by the interaction of Islamic traditions, local cultures, civic institutions, and digital media.² However, religious differences can generate misunderstanding when they are framed as threats. Therefore, religious moderation should be cultivated through meaningful social interactions, shared responsibilities, and practices that promote justice and mutual care. Religious moderation should not be interpreted as weakening religious commitment or eliminating theological distinctions. Rather, it concerns the ethical expression of religious convictions within a pluralistic society. Islamic education has an important role in developing this orientation because it encompasses religious knowledge, moral dispositions, behavior, and social responsibility.³ Learning about compassion, justice, and respect should extend beyond memorization to reflection, dialogue, and practical engagement. Through this approach, religious understanding can be translated into ethical conduct and peaceful coexistence.

A major challenge in promoting religious moderation lies in the gap between institutional policies and everyday community experiences. Programs developed by

¹ Riza Umami and Muhammad Zakaria, "A Digital Interfaith Simulation-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning Model to Strengthen Religious Moderation," *EDUJAVARE: International Journal of Educational Research*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.70610/edujavare.v4i02.1935>.

² Fatmawaty Padedeng and S T Wardah Hanafie Dos, "A Conceptual Framework of Islamic Religious Education for Strengthening Religious Moderation in a Multicultural Society," *Fitrah: Jurnal Studi Pendidikan*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.47625/fitrah.v17i1.1236>.

³ Widya Wulandari and Dwi Wulan Sari, "Actualization of Religious Moderation Content Strategic Plan at State Islamic University," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* (Institut Agama Islam Tribakti Kediri, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v34i1.3016>.



central institutions may prioritize formal events and attendance figures without establishing sustainable relationships. Although institutional initiatives provide resources and normative guidance, their effectiveness depends on meaningful community participation. Consequently, educational programs should incorporate locally defined priorities, sustained mentorship, and opportunities for collaborative action. Such integration enables institutional support to strengthen grassroots initiatives rather than replace community agency.

Muslim youth occupy a strategic position in connecting Islamic education with contemporary social challenges. Their participation in families, schools, religious organizations, neighborhoods, and digital networks provides opportunities to communicate religious values across different social settings. Nevertheless, young people are not a homogeneous group and should not automatically be assumed to hold inclusive perspectives.⁴ They require reliable knowledge, critical thinking skills, and opportunities to participate in accountable decision-making. Youth empowerment should therefore emphasize substantive leadership, inclusive participation, and responsible engagement with religious and social diversity.

Grassroots engagement refers to the social environments in which people encounter and negotiate religious differences directly, including neighborhoods, schools, mosques, youth organizations, and digital communities. These settings provide opportunities to develop trust through repeated interaction and shared activities. Interfaith dialogue can strengthen this process by enabling participants to challenge stereotypes, exchange experiences, and identify common concerns. However, dialogue may remain ceremonial without continuity and practical collaboration. Integrating discussion with community service, collective reflection, and sustained cooperation can transform mutual understanding into meaningful social solidarity.

The digital environment further shapes how young people encounter religious ideas and construct social identities. Social media facilitates educational communication and community networking but can also accelerate misinformation, prejudice, and hostility. Accordingly, Islamic education should integrate digital literacy, source verification, ethical communication, and critical evaluation of online content. Youth-led media initiatives can promote respectful disagreement and responsible information sharing. Nevertheless, digital engagement should complement rather than replace direct community interaction, ensuring that online communication contributes to stronger social relationships.

Local wisdom provides additional resources for contextualizing religious moderation within community life. Cultural traditions associated with hospitality, deliberation, cooperation, and mutual assistance can make educational values more accessible.⁵ However, local customs should not be romanticized because some practices may reproduce exclusion or inequality.⁶ Islamic education must therefore evaluate cultural resources through the principles of justice, human dignity, and inclusion. This critical approach preserves cultural relevance while ensuring that local traditions contribute to equitable and respectful relationships.

⁴ Asa'ari, Nuzul Iskandar, and Hainadri, "Actualization of Religious Moderation in Islamic Fatwas in Mainstream Online Media in Indonesia," *JURNAL PENELITIAN* (LP2M IAIN Pekalongan, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.28918/jupe.v20i1.1096>.

⁵ Evia Darmawani et al., "Contribution of Religious Moderation among Multicultural Counseling Competence," *Jurnal Konseling Dan Pendidikan*, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.29210/167100>.

⁶ Agustiar, "Actualization of Religious Moderation Jurisprudence in Interacting with People of Other Religions," *Jurnal STIU Darul Hikmah*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.61086/jstiudh.v10i2.66>.

The implementation of religious moderation also requires attention to social justice and unequal conditions. Tolerant discourse may have limited credibility when communities experience discrimination, exclusion, or unequal access to public resources. Youth initiatives can address these concerns by combining interfaith dialogue with educational assistance, environmental activities, and community advocacy. Teachers and religious mentors remain essential in guiding ethical reasoning and ensuring the reliability of religious knowledge. Effective mentorship should balance educational guidance with youth autonomy, shared decision-making, and appropriate safeguarding.

Evaluation is equally important for determining whether educational initiatives produce meaningful social learning. Attendance figures, event frequency, and online engagement provide useful information but cannot independently demonstrate changes in attitudes or relationships. Participatory evaluation should examine the inclusiveness of activities, continuity of collaboration, responses to disagreement, and participants' reflections over time.⁷ Multiple indicators and follow-up assessments can provide a more comprehensive understanding of program outcomes. Evaluation should therefore function as a mechanism for continuous improvement rather than merely administrative reporting. Against this background, this article reframes Islamic education as a catalyst for grassroots religious moderation by examining the relationship between educational values, youth participation, community collaboration, digital responsibility, and institutional support. Drawing on a library-based approach, the discussion synthesizes conceptual perspectives to develop an integrated framework for educational and community practice. Its contribution lies in emphasizing the translation of religious principles into observable relationships, inclusive participation, and shared social responsibilities. However, the conceptual framework does not establish causal effectiveness in specific field settings. Further empirical research is necessary to examine its applicability across different cultural, social, and institutional contexts.

Literature Review

1. Religious Moderation in Islamic Thought and Contemporary Society

Religious moderation has emerged as an important conceptual framework for understanding how religious commitment can coexist with respect for diversity, social responsibility, and peaceful relations in pluralistic societies. In Indonesia, religious moderation is conceptualized as a balanced approach to practicing religion rather than an attempt to moderate religious teachings themselves.⁸ This distinction is significant because moderation concerns the interpretation and enactment of religious commitments in social life, particularly when individuals encounter differences in religious identity, culture, and worldview. The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs identifies four principal indicators of religious moderation: national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and accommodation of local culture. These indicators provide a policy-oriented framework for translating abstract religious principles into observable social attitudes and practices. Accordingly,

⁷ Nurman Ginting and Isman Efendi Limbong, "Actualization of Religious Moderation Values in Multi-Ethnic Schools," *Scaffolding: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Multikulturalisme*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.37680/scaffolding.v7i1.7229>.

⁸ Arbanur Rasyid et al., "Actualization of the Concept of National Fiqh in Building Religious Moderation in Indonesia," *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss2.art5>.



religious moderation can be understood as a combination of theological commitment, ethical conduct, and responsible participation in a diverse society.

The conceptual foundations of religious moderation are closely associated with the Islamic principle of *wasatiyyah*, commonly interpreted as a middle, balanced, or just orientation. Within Islamic educational discourse, this principle is connected to *tawassuth* (moderation), *tawazun* (balance), *i'tidal* (justice), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). These values provide a normative basis for educating learners to maintain their religious convictions without demeaning people who hold different beliefs.⁹ Moderation, therefore, should not be reduced to the avoidance of disagreement or the elimination of religious identity. Rather, it requires the capacity to distinguish between firm personal conviction and the unjust treatment of others. Islamic education can cultivate this capacity by helping learners interpret religious teachings alongside ethical responsibilities, social realities, and the consequences of their actions. This approach positions moderation as a practical expression of religious ethics rather than merely a political slogan or institutional requirement.

A further conceptual clarification concerns the distinction between religious moderation as a policy agenda and moderation as an educational disposition. Policy frameworks can establish institutional priorities, develop curricula, and provide resources, but they cannot automatically guarantee that learners internalize the intended values. Research on religious moderation education among urban Muslim youth in Indonesia critically examines hierarchical approaches to moderation policy and the ambiguity surrounding its meaning in young people's social experiences. This research suggests that institutional campaigns require closer engagement with young people's interpretations and everyday religious practices.¹⁰ The finding challenges the assumption that the formal dissemination of moderation messages is sufficient to transform attitudes. It also indicates that educational approaches should create opportunities for dialogue, critical reflection, and meaningful participation rather than treating young people merely as recipients of official messaging. Consequently, religious moderation should be approached as an educational and social process whose credibility depends partly on how young people experience and practice its values.

Religious moderation is also connected to broader educational perspectives on coexistence and global citizenship. UNESCO's framework for Global Citizenship Education emphasizes cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioral dimensions of learning. The cognitive dimension concerns knowledge and critical understanding, while the socio-emotional dimension emphasizes empathy, solidarity, and respect for difference.¹¹ The behavioral dimension focuses on responsible action at local, national, and global levels. This framework complements Islamic educational principles by demonstrating why knowledge about tolerance alone may be insufficient to produce tolerant conduct. Learners also need emotional capacities and practical opportunities to apply what they have learned. For Islamic education, these

⁹ Farhurrahman Farhurrahman et al., "Adaptive Islamic Religious Education Learning Orchestration through a Deep Learning Approach Based on Religious Moderation in Madrasah," *Social Science Academic*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.37680/ssa.10409>.

¹⁰ Ach Barocky Zaimina, "Addressing Digital Religious Polarization: Policy Analysis of Religious Moderation Narratives on Indonesian Government Social Media," *Al'Adalah* (IAIN Jember, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v28i1.572>.

¹¹ Siti Mahmudah, Alamsyah Alamsyah, and Etin Anwar, "Contextualization of Hijrah and Jihad for Religious Moderation of Religious Campus Students in Indonesia," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v22i2.14352>.

dimensions can be integrated with the development of akhlaq, justice, compassion, and social responsibility. Religious moderation consequently becomes a multidimensional educational objective that links religious understanding with ethical dispositions and responsible action.

2. Islamic Education as a Foundation for Moderate Character and Reflective Pedagogy

Islamic education provides a significant framework for connecting religious knowledge with ethical judgment and social conduct. Its educational objectives extend beyond the acquisition of doctrinal information to include the development of faith, moral character, responsibility, and constructive engagement with society. Concepts such as akhlaq (moral character), amanah (trustworthiness), 'adl (justice), rahmah (compassion), and ta'awun (cooperation) offer ethical resources for responding to differences without abandoning religious commitments. When taught contextually, these concepts can help learners recognize that religious responsibility includes the treatment of neighbors, the protection of human dignity, and the avoidance of unjust harm. Islamic education can therefore contribute to moderation by linking theological understanding with decisions made in everyday social relationships. The strength of this contribution depends on whether educational institutions connect religious concepts to lived situations rather than presenting them solely as definitions to be memorized.

The integration of religious moderation into Islamic education requires curriculum development, appropriate teaching methods, and supportive institutional environments. Educational values are shaped not only by textbooks but also by classroom relationships, teacher conduct, institutional culture, and opportunities for social participation.¹² A curriculum may contain messages about tolerance and justice, yet learners may struggle to internalize those messages if school practices contradict them. Conversely, consistent modeling of fairness, respect, and nonviolent conflict resolution can make religious principles more credible and accessible. Research on religious moderation in Islamic Religious Education textbooks and their implementation in Indonesian schools identifies values such as nonviolence, egalitarianism, fairness, and tolerance. The findings connect the representation of moderation in educational materials with teaching practices and student interactions, suggesting that the educational impact of a curriculum depends partly on how its principles are enacted in actual learning environments.

The importance of teachers and educational institutions is further emphasized in reviews of religious moderation within Islamic education. Existing reviews examine the integration of moderation in Indonesian Islamic educational institutions and consider the educational, social, economic, and policy-related influences on implementation.¹³ Other reviews focus on the role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in cultivating religious moderation among elementary school students. Collectively, these studies direct attention to curriculum, teacher capacity, institutional support, and the gradual formation of tolerance among learners. They also indicate that moderation is not produced through a single intervention but requires coordinated educational practices. Nevertheless, studies centered on classroom instruction and teacher responsibilities do not, by themselves, fully explain

¹² Gagah Daruhadi, "Al-Qur'an Solutions in Internal and External Moderation of Religious People in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Science*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.55324/ijoms.v3i11.994>.

¹³ Henderi Kusmidi, "An Overview of Islam and Religious Moderation: Concept, Principles, and Indicators," *Jurnal Ilmiah Syi'ar*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.29300/syr.v22i2.8752>.



how young people can become independent actors in community-level moderation initiatives. This limitation provides a basis for extending the discussion from the internal educational environment to grassroots participation.

Reflective and participatory pedagogy offers a means of bridging this gap. A learner may correctly explain the meaning of tolerance but still lack the skills to listen respectfully during disagreement, identify stereotypes, or negotiate a peaceful response to conflict. Educational experiences should therefore combine conceptual learning with discussion, case analysis, reflective writing, collaborative activities, and engagement with community issues. Research on reflective and participatory approaches to religious moderation in Indonesian multifaith schools emphasizes pedagogical practices intended to transform attitudes and behavior. Related research on interreligious learning in Indonesian Islamic education highlights dialogical facilitation, structured encounters, local wisdom, institutional leadership, and professional development. Collectively, these studies suggest that Islamic education can foster moderation more effectively when learners are actively involved in interpreting religious and social questions and when educators provide opportunities to practice the values being taught.

3. Muslim Youth Agency and Grassroots Religious Moderation

Muslim youth occupy an important position in grassroots religious moderation because they participate in multiple social environments, including schools, universities, families, religious organizations, neighborhood networks, and digital communities. Their potential contribution should not be explained simply by demographic assumptions that younger people are inherently more tolerant, progressive, or innovative. Youth attitudes vary according to religious socialization, educational experiences, peer networks, access to information, and local social conditions.¹⁴ Nevertheless, young people can contribute distinctive forms of participation when they are provided with meaningful opportunities to develop initiatives and collaborate with other community members. Their roles may include facilitating discussions, organizing community service, responding to misinformation, building intergroup relationships, and communicating moderation values through accessible digital content. Understanding youth as agents therefore requires attention to both their capacity to act and the social structures that enable or restrict their participation.

Research on religious moderation education among urban Muslim youth in Indonesia critically considers how formal moderation policies are interpreted by young Muslims in their social environments. The research questions hierarchical approaches that may classify young people through rigid labels without sufficiently clarifying how moderation is understood in daily life.¹⁵ This perspective suggests that educational programs need to engage youth interpretations, concerns, and social experiences rather than assuming that official definitions are automatically shared by participants. It also raises a question about the relationship between institutional direction and grassroots initiative. In the context of the present study, youth participation is understood as a process through which young people contribute to identifying community concerns, developing initiatives, and enacting moderation

¹⁴ Karlana Indrawari et al., "Analysis of Islamic Education Learning Planning Based on Religious Moderation in Indonesian State Islamic Religious Universities," *At-Ta'lim : Media Informasi Pendidikan Islam*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.29300/attalim.v23i2.4105>.

¹⁵ Lailatul Afiah and Ali Ahmad Yenuri, "Contextual Learning Model to Realize Islamic Moderation in Islamic Religious Education," *Jurnal Kajian Islam*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.56566/jki.v2i1.221>.

values while remaining connected to sound religious guidance and responsible institutional support.

A meaningful understanding of youth engagement also requires distinguishing participation from symbolic involvement. UNICEF's guidance on adolescent participation and civic engagement emphasizes the importance of meaningful and equitable opportunities for young people to be heard and involved in decisions affecting them. Its framework addresses participation strategies, organizational commitments, and monitoring and evaluation. Related guidance on monitoring children's and adolescents' participation in development processes directs attention to the difference between recording young people's presence and assessing whether their perspectives influence planning and decisions. Although these resources focus on children and adolescents more broadly rather than religious moderation alone, their principles offer a useful analytical lens for grassroots initiatives. A youth program should therefore be assessed not only by the number of participants but also by whether young people can shape priorities, contribute to implementation, and influence decisions. Applied to religious moderation, this perspective shifts the focus from youth as campaign audiences to youth as collaborators in creating peaceful community relationships.

Grassroots engagement is especially significant because religious moderation is practiced in everyday relationships rather than exclusively within formal policy settings. Neighborhood interactions, community celebrations, volunteer activities, local problem-solving, and responses to social tensions provide settings in which attitudes toward difference can be expressed and tested.¹⁶ A youth initiative may, for example, organize a collaborative environmental project, a social-service activity, or a discussion on preventing religious stereotyping. The value of such activities lies not simply in the event itself but in the relationships, shared responsibilities, and opportunities for dialogue that emerge during the process. These experiences can make moderation relevant to community concerns and help participants see cooperation as a practical response to shared problems. However, activities should be designed around locally identified needs rather than imposed as standardized events without community consultation. This contextual orientation supports a conception of grassroots moderation as participatory social practice grounded in the realities of local life.

4. Interreligious Dialogue, Collaborative Action, and Digital Engagement

Intergroup contact theory offers an established theoretical explanation for why structured interaction may improve relationships between people from different social groups. Research on intergroup contact discusses the conditions under which contact can reduce prejudice, including relatively equal status, common goals, cooperation, and support from relevant authorities. A major meta-analysis of intergroup contact research, covering hundreds of studies and more than 250,000 participants, indicates that intergroup contact typically reduces prejudice, while also recognizing the importance of contextual conditions. These findings provide a general social-psychological foundation for considering dialogue and cooperation in religious moderation initiatives.¹⁷ They do not establish that every interfaith

¹⁶ Fella Lahmar, "Analysis of Religious Moderation Discourse in the Curriculum Islamic Religious Education in Egypt," *Permata: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.47453/permata.v6i1.3113>.

¹⁷ Asnil Aidah Ritonga and Nurmawati, "Analysis of the Representation of Religious Moderation Values in Senior High School Islamic Religious Education Textbooks under the Merdeka

encounter will be successful or prove the effectiveness of a particular Islamic educational intervention. Rather, they suggest that contact is more likely to be constructive when activities encourage cooperation, shared objectives, and supportive social norms.

The implications of contact theory are relevant to Muslim youth engagement at the grassroots level. Dialogue can create opportunities to correct misconceptions, clarify differences, and establish respectful relationships across religious or cultural boundaries. Yet dialogue should not be understood as an end in itself, particularly when participants have unequal access to resources or influence.¹⁸ Discussions are more likely to be meaningful when participants can speak without intimidation, listen to opposing perspectives, and work toward identifiable shared goals. Collaborative community projects can complement dialogue by translating mutual understanding into visible cooperation. Young people from different backgrounds, for instance, may work together on environmental cleanliness, support for vulnerable residents, disaster assistance, or other community priorities. Such activities should not require participants to dilute their religious identities; instead, they demonstrate that shared civic responsibilities can provide a basis for cooperation across difference.

Interreligious dialogue must also be distinguished from the assumption that all religious differences can or should be resolved through agreement. Constructive dialogue permits participants to retain different theological positions while recognizing the dignity and rights of others. In Islamic education, this distinction allows educators to address religious identity with intellectual seriousness while discouraging prejudice, coercion, and violence. Learners can examine how disagreement has been handled in religious, historical, and contemporary contexts without being instructed to abandon their convictions. The educational objective is to develop the ability to engage responsibly with difference, not to erase difference itself. Dialogue should therefore be supported by accurate information, ethical facilitation, and clear safeguards against intimidation or discrimination. When linked to community projects, it can help transform moderation from an abstract principle into a pattern of interaction that is visible in daily life.

Method

This study adopts library research to examine the conceptual relationship between Islamic education, religious moderation, and Muslim youth engagement at the grassroots. Library research is appropriate because the objective is to synthesize and critically interpret existing written sources rather than collect new field data. The principal basis is the user-provided manuscript, “A Critical Library-Based Review of Muslim Youth Engagement in Promoting Religious Moderation at the Grassroots.” Its sections on moderation, youth, dialogue, methods, findings, and recommendations provide the core analytical material. The study does not claim to have interviewed participants or observed programs directly. The findings should therefore be understood as a literature-based conceptual synthesis.

The source material includes the supplied manuscript’s discussion of scholarly articles, books, and institutional documents. References named in that manuscript are treated as reported literature, not automatically as independently verified

Curriculum: A Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 2025, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpi.2025.141.105-117>.

¹⁸ Marsha Aulia Salwa et al., “Analytical Study of the Value of Religious Moderation in the Medina Charter Agreement in the History of Islamic Culture in MI,” *Al-Mudarris (Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Islam)*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.23971/mdr.v9i2.11399>.

evidence. This distinction is important because several citations in the source excerpt are incomplete or appear only indirectly related to the claim they accompany. For example, the manuscript cites work on local wisdom and moderation as well as studies concerning digital learning and educational technology. A source's appearance in a bibliography does not prove that it directly supports every statement in the manuscript. The analysis consequently notes where original-source verification is needed. The review is organized around five analytical themes: the meaning of moderation, the educational role of Islamic learning, youth agency, grassroots participation, and digital/interfaith engagement. These themes are drawn from recurring concerns in the supplied manuscript. The thematic structure enables comparison across conceptual discussions and proposed practices. The top-down versus participatory distinction is examined across program design, community ownership, and sustainability. The analysis is not a formal systematic review with a registered protocol or exhaustive database search. It is described more accurately as a critical narrative library review.

Results and Discussion

The synthesis identifies a gap between normative commitments to religious moderation and their everyday implementation. Formal policies and institutional campaigns may communicate official values without ensuring community ownership. Islamic education can address this gap by connecting religious principles with learners' daily decisions and relationships. Moderation should therefore be developed through ethical interpretation and practical engagement rather than declarative instruction alone. Institutional and grassroots approaches offer complementary strengths. Institutions provide legitimacy, resources, and shared standards, whereas community initiatives respond more directly to local needs. However, institutional programs may become formalistic, while grassroots activities often face financial and sustainability constraints. Collaborative partnerships should consequently provide reliable support while preserving community autonomy. Youth participation constitutes a matter of agency rather than attendance. Meaningful engagement enables young people to identify priorities, make decisions, lead activities, and evaluate outcomes.¹⁹ Youth-led dialogue and community service can strengthen ownership and accountability. Accordingly, program evaluation should examine young people's actual influence over decision-making processes.

Islamic education bridges religious understanding and public ethics through values such as compassion, justice, restraint, and respect. These principles require contextual interpretation to guide responses to misinformation, exclusion, and disagreement. Teachers should facilitate critical reflection and ethical reasoning rather than rely exclusively on moral instruction. Such learning develops the capacity to address differences without dehumanizing others. Interfaith dialogue is most effective when sustained through reciprocal listening and collaborative action. Isolated discussions may remain ceremonial without follow-up activities. Recurring youth forums combined with community service can strengthen trust and mutual understanding. Nevertheless, continued cooperation and reflective evaluation are necessary to assess meaningful progress.

¹⁹ Noer Hidayah et al., "Assessing Religious Literacy in Indonesian Secondary Education and Its Implications for Religious Moderation," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan* (Puslitbang Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan Balitbang Kementerian Agama RI, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v23i3.2152>.



Digital media offers opportunities to promote moderation but also amplifies misinformation and polarization. Islamic education should integrate religious literacy, source verification, critical media analysis, and ethical communication. Digital engagement must be assessed beyond popularity metrics and connected with reflective learning and offline community activities. Local culture enhances educational relevance through familiar languages, artistic expressions, and mutual-help traditions. However, cultural practices require critical assessment to prevent exclusion and inequality. Contextualized education should combine cultural sensitivity with commitments to justice, dignity, and fairness.

Sustainability requires long-term activities, adequate resources, mentorship, and leadership succession. Government agencies, educational institutions, religious leaders, families, civil society, and youth organizations can contribute complementary resources. Effective partnerships require clear responsibilities and shared decision-making to prevent external actors from dominating community initiatives. Evaluation should extend beyond attendance and activity counts to examine sustained collaboration, inclusive participation, and changes in responses to disagreement.²⁰ Multiple indicators, mixed methods, and transparent reporting can strengthen assessment. The reviewed material also reveals limitations in the available evidence, including incomplete methodological information and potentially weak connections between some references and their associated claims. Future research must verify sources and distinguish empirical findings from normative arguments. Overall, Islamic education functions as an enabling rather than deterministic catalyst for grassroots religious moderation. The proposed conceptual framework integrates four interrelated dimensions: value internalization, participatory youth agency, contextual and digital engagement, and reflective evaluation. Together, these dimensions connect ethical principles with community ownership, locally relevant action, and continuous learning. Although the framework requires empirical validation, it offers a foundation for program development and future research. Its central contribution is a shift from merely communicating moderation toward practicing it through

Table 1. Analytical Framework for Youth Centered Grassroots Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

Dimension	Educational focus	Common limitation	Proposed development
Value internalization	Religious literacy, ethical reflection, justice, compassion, restraint	Values remain slogans or memorized concepts	Case-based learning, reflective journals, modeling, and applied ethics
Youth agency	Youth co-design, leadership, facilitation, and shared decisions	Youth are invited but lack real influence	Youth committees with transparent roles, mentorship, and decision rights
Grassroots contextualization	Local needs, language, cultural resources, and inclusive participation	Uniform programs lack relevance; local power imbalances go unchallenged	Community consultation, local adaptation, and safeguards for minority voices

²⁰ Faisal Bachrong and Abd. Karim, "Assilessureng and Assijigeng: The Concept of Religious Moderation Tomanurunge Ri Bacukiki," *Al-Qalam*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v28i1.1031>.

Dimension	Educational focus	Common limitation	Proposed development
Interfaith collaboration	Dialogue, listening, joint service, and sustained relationships	Events become ceremonial and episodic	Recurring forums linked to practical community projects
Digital responsibility	Source verification, media creation, counter-speech, ethical communication	Viral reach is mistaken for learning; misinformation spreads rapidly	Digital literacy paired with offline dialogue and evidence-based evaluation
Institutional partnership	Resources, training, recognition, safeguarding, and coordination	Top-down control or fragmented local initiatives	Partnership agreements that support rather than displace youth ownership
Participatory evaluation	Sustainability, cross-identity participation, trust, and social learning	Attendance and event counts dominate assessment	Baseline reflection, follow-up interviews, activity records, and transparent reporting

At the conceptual level, value internalization requires Islamic education to move from information transmission toward ethical interpretation. Learners need opportunities to consider how religious teachings guide their response to disagreement and difference. Case-based learning can connect concepts such as justice and compassion with realistic community dilemmas. For instance, students can examine how a rumor about a religious group should be verified before it is shared. Such learning should not reduce complex theology to simplistic slogans. Teachers should invite careful reasoning grounded in reliable sources and ethical responsibility. The outcome sought is informed conviction expressed through respectful conduct.

Beyond formal instruction, the internalization of values depends on consistency between curriculum and institutional behavior. Students notice whether adults practice the fairness and respect that they teach. A school that promotes tolerance while allowing humiliating speech sends conflicting messages.²¹ Teachers and administrators can establish procedures for listening to complaints and addressing exclusion. No institution can eliminate every disagreement. It can, however, model principled and transparent ways of managing conflict. The hidden curriculum therefore matters alongside formal lesson content. From a participatory perspective, youth agency places young people in substantive decision-making roles. Youth participation should begin when issues and goals are identified, not after a program has already been designed. This helps ensure that activities respond to actual concerns and communication styles. A youth group may decide that online misinformation or neighborhood stereotyping is its most urgent concern. Youth leadership can reproduce exclusion if only confident or well-connected participants are heard. Facilitators should rotate responsibilities and create accessible ways to

²¹ Ahmad Barizi, Farida Isroani, and Jamilah Jamilah, "Assistance in Religious Moderation Curriculum Design in the Digital Era Islamic Religious Education Courses in Salahuddin Pasuruan," *Amalee: Indonesian Journal of Community Research and Engagement*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.37680/amalee.v4i2.2954>.

contribute. Agency becomes more democratic when participation is broad and accountable.

The sustainability of youth participation also depends on meaningful mentorship. Religious teachers and community leaders can provide contextual knowledge and ethical guidance without monopolizing decisions. Mentorship helps young organizers handle disagreement, misinformation, and competing expectations.²² A mentor can review the accuracy of a public educational message before it is shared. Excessive supervision can turn youth-led work into another top-down activity. Roles should be negotiated clearly and reviewed together. The aim is supported autonomy rather than either control or abandonment. Context-sensitive engagement begins with listening to the community. Local priorities should be identified through conversation with residents and groups affected by the issue. This practice prevents programs from assuming that every community faces the same challenges. One neighborhood may prioritize youth bullying while another may focus on shared public services. Consultation can still privilege influential voices if not deliberately inclusive. Organizers should include women, minorities, less-connected youth, and people directly affected.²³ Contextual design becomes more legitimate when it reflects plural local experience. In this regard, local wisdom can make ethical learning more accessible when used critically. Stories, customary practices, and shared traditions can illustrate cooperation and hospitality. They provide a vocabulary that residents already recognize. A community might draw on mutual-help traditions to coordinate a service day across groups. Tradition should not be treated as beyond scrutiny where it excludes or disadvantages people. Educators should ask whose experiences a custom includes and whose it leaves out. Cultural relevance and ethical critique can coexist.

Within pluralistic educational settings, interfaith collaboration should prioritize relationship-building rather than staged representation. Dialogue is strongest when participants can speak honestly and are not reduced to representatives of entire religions. Listening to personal experience helps challenge stereotypes and oversimplified assumptions.²⁴ A recurring small-group discussion can precede a collaborative neighborhood project. Dialogue can become unsafe if participants are pressured to disclose private beliefs or defend their whole community. Facilitators should establish consent, respectful boundaries, and equitable speaking time. Trust grows when participation is voluntary and respectful.

The practical significance of interfaith engagement becomes more apparent when dialogue leads to joint social action. Cooperation around shared concerns demonstrates that difference does not prevent collective responsibility. Projects also create repeated opportunities to observe reliability and care across group boundaries. Youth from different backgrounds may coordinate tutoring, environmental work, or disaster assistance. Service activities should not be presented as proof that underlying tensions have disappeared. Teams should reflect on challenges and maintain

²² Ibnu Azka et al., "Contested Religious Moderation: Dabates among Indonesian Islamic Leaders," *Al-Wasatiyah: Journal of Religious Moderation*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.30631/ajrm.v5i1.4929>.

²³ Ahmad Shofiyuddin, Siti Khoiriyah, and Rangga Sa'adillah, "Building Tolerance And Balance: A Systematic Literature Review On Religious Moderation Among Students In Higher Education," *Journal of Islamic Civilization*, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.33086/jic.v5i2.5305>.

²⁴ Abdul Rozak, Mokhammad Mahfud, and Aulia Miftah Razak, "Communication on Mainstreaming of Religious Moderation in Gunung Kidul and Kebumen Regencies," *Arkus*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.37275/arkus.v9i2.303>.

communication after the event. Practical solidarity can become a foundation for continuing dialogue. In contemporary networked environments, digital responsibility has become an essential component of youth engagement. Digital content can amplify educational messages but also spread hostility at high speed. Young people need skills to verify sources and identify manipulative emotional framing. A media workshop can ask participants to trace a claim to its original source before reposting it. Verification is difficult when content is ambiguous or rapidly changing. Training should normalize correction, uncertainty, and responsible delay before sharing. Digital citizenship becomes part of religious and civic ethics.

Equally important, youth-produced media should be judged by quality and consequences, not only popularity. A video may attract attention while reinforcing stereotypes or simplifying a sensitive issue. Responsible communication considers accuracy, audience, privacy, and the possibility of harm. A campaign can invite viewers to check evidence and listen to affected communities rather than shame opponents.²⁵ Public correction can trigger harassment if personal information is exposed. Youth groups need clear moderation and safeguarding procedures. Ethical content creation supports dialogue rather than digital antagonism. At the organizational level, institutional partnership links community initiative with reliable support. Schools, religious organizations, local government, and civil society can provide resources and continuity. Partnership is necessary because volunteers cannot always sustain programs alone. Institutions may offer venues, facilitator training, transport support, or modest project funding. Support becomes counterproductive when funders dictate the agenda or use youth only for publicity. Written agreements should clarify shared goals, decision-making, reporting, and safeguarding. Partnership can combine institutional capacity with local legitimacy.

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of institutional engagement depends on recognizing the limits of formal campaigns. Public declarations and seminars may establish visibility but do not automatically change daily behavior. Follow-up mechanisms are needed to connect awareness with action. Each training event can conclude with a locally selected project and a scheduled review. Not every participant will continue beyond the event. Programs should create accessible pathways for sustained involvement rather than rely on a small core group. Continuity becomes an explicit design objective.²⁶ To ensure accountability, participatory evaluation makes learning responsive to community needs and experiences. Evaluation should ask whether activities were relevant, inclusive, sustained, and perceived as beneficial. This aligns assessment with the social purpose of moderation. Organizers can track repeat participation, collaborative tasks completed, and participants' reflections on disagreement. Self-reported tolerance may not correspond perfectly to behavior. Use multiple forms of evidence and describe limitations transparently. Evaluation can improve programs without overstating their effects.

²⁵ Ushwa Dwi Masrurah Arifin Bando and Kartini Kartini, "Caring for the Nationality of the Region: Religious Moderation as Socio-Religious Capital in Facing Religious Authorities, AI and Extremism in Enrekang," *International Journal of Scientific Multidisciplinary Research*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.55927/ijsmr.v4i2.1>.

²⁶ M Islahuddin et al., "Challenges of Religious Moderation Through Islamic Religious Education in Junior High Schools: A Systematic Literature Review," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama Indonesia (JSAI)*, 2026, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jsai.v7i1.9756>.



Conclusion

This library-based study argues that Islamic education can serve as a catalyst for religious moderation when it connects religious knowledge with ethical reflection, youth agency, locally grounded participation, interfaith collaboration, and responsible digital engagement. The source manuscript indicates that top-down initiatives can provide a normative foundation but may remain limited when communities and young people have little influence over design or follow-up. Community-based approaches are more responsive to local realities, yet they need resources, mentorship, legitimacy, and continuity. The most constructive model is therefore not a rejection of formal institutions but a partnership in which institutions enable youth-led action while protecting inclusion and accountability. The article's novelty is a conceptual framework integrating value internalization, youth agency, grassroots contextualization, digital responsibility, institutional partnership, and participatory evaluation as connected dimensions of moderation-oriented Islamic education. The framework shifts the emphasis from delivering messages about tolerance to cultivating the knowledge, relationships, and practices through which moderation can be enacted in everyday life. Since the study relies on library research, its propositions should not be mistaken for empirically verified causal effects. Future research should test the framework through comparative field studies and longitudinal evaluation that include diverse youth and grassroots perspectives. In practical terms, Islamic education becomes a catalyst when young Muslims are trusted and prepared to transform religious values into sustained, inclusive, and accountable community action.

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