Optimizing Religious Moderation through Progressive Islamic Education: A Philosophical Study

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education has an essential role in shaping religious moderation. However, the increasingly complex challenges of extremism and religious intolerance require a more progressive approach to dealing with them. This research aims to optimize religious moderation through progressive Islamic education and examine the philosophy of Islamic education as a conceptual foundation. This study used a qualitative approach with literature analysis and documentation data collection techniques. The research results show the importance of religious moderation in complex social, political, and cultural contexts. The philosophy of Islamic education provides a solid theoretical and methodological foundation for developing a progressive Islamic education that promotes religious moderation. Ontologically, the understanding of religious moderation emphasizes recognition of the complexity of spiritual reality and the importance of tolerance for different interpretations and practices. In epistemology, a moderate approach recognizes that knowledge about religion is limited and influenced by social and cultural factors. Therefore, critical thinking, interreligious dialogue, and continuous learning are essential in achieving religious moderation. In axiology, religious moderation emphasizes values such as tolerance, mutual respect, peace, justice, and the adaptability of values to the development of society and changing times. In conclusion, optimizing religious moderation through progressive Islamic education based on a study of Islamic educational philosophy encourages a broader understanding and application of religious moderation in society, especially in the context of diverse, multicultural education.

Introduction

Religious moderation has become an increasingly relevant issue in the context of modern global society.¹ Communities in various countries face many issues and challenges

related to differences in beliefs, religious polarization, and conflicts between religions, including the Indonesian community. Indonesia has the risk of being under pressure from the influence of the West and the East; the implication is that it can make it easier for someone to legalize laws and indoctrinate society, especially the mindset that is the main target, such as pressure from the East. Religion-based ideologies include Islam (as a transnational movement), Christianity, and other new religious groups. Meanwhile, pressure from the West includes secular ideology: Liberalism, Neoliberalism, and Radicalism. They promoted values such as secularism, individualism, liberalism, pragmatism, and consumerism. These various influences must be addressed with firm and adaptive readiness while still not losing the identity of Indonesian customs and values.

The results of PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta’s research in collaboration with Convey-UNDP in 2017 stated that there would be a big risk for radicalism in the next 5-10 years, and some of them will become ASN (civil servants). In addition, the challenges of extremism and religious intolerance in Indonesia are also increasingly complex. Previous studies have attempted to examine and provide solutions to deal with this problem. Starting from increasing the national insight of the community, adapting the Cairo declaration, formation of LSM (non-government organization) with deradicalization programs, utilization of social media to convey messages of tolerance, and promoting awareness of religious moderation through Islamic education. However, there has been no study that

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4 Ibid.
8 Supriadi, Ajib, and Sugiarto, "Intoleransi Dan Radikalisme Agama: Konstruk LSM Tentang Program Deradikalisasi."
10 Arief, “Moderasi Beragama Dalam Perspektif Pendidikan Islam.”
specifically examines what forms of Islamic education can be used as a means of optimizing religious moderation in Indonesia. Therefore, strengthening Islamic education in a new direction must be a major concern from now on. In fact, the reality of religious diversity in Indonesia is very complex and real, so the role of Islamic education in religious moderation is believed to be essential. Islamic education also plays an important role in shaping understanding and a moderate attitude towards religion. The various parties should participate in efforts to create social harmony and peace, so it is important to optimize religious moderation among Muslims. Islamic education plays an important role in shaping understanding and a moderate attitude towards religion.

Essentially, Islamic philosophy is used as the principle of moderation in Indonesian religion relationship. In this research, the study of educational philosophy is used to understand the theoretical foundations and principles that can promote the optimization of religious moderation through progressive Islamic education. By having an understanding of educational philosophy, many innovative approaches, effective learning strategies, and curriculum development can be identified to support the realization of progressive Islamic education that strengthens religious moderation. However, despite the importance of progressive Islamic education in optimizing religious moderation, there are still limitations in understanding and applying this concept in an educational context. Therefore, in-depth research and a comprehensive study of educational philosophy is needed.

This study aims to examine the optimization of religious moderation through progressive Islamic education using the study of educational philosophy. It is hoped that this research can make a significant contribution in enriching the understanding and practice of progressive Islamic education that focuses on religious moderation, as well as contributing new ideas as a conceptual foundation in the development of sustainable education policies.

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Methods

This study uses qualitative research methods with an inductive approach using a study of literary sources. The sources of literature used as research data come from book sources, the latest research journals that are relevant to this research subject, as well as national and international seminar proceedings. The library sources used have been indexed on Google Scholar, Garuda, and SINTA. This research used documentation as the main data collection technique. Furthermore, the data was analyzed using the content analysis technique, including analyzing content critically regarding theories related to religious moderation, progressive Islamic education, and relevant data of philosophical studies to produce more valid data.14

Result And Discussion

The Problems Arising in the Context of Religious Moderation

Conceptually, religious moderation can be analyzed through the study of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, which are three branches of philosophy related to the understanding of reality, knowledge, and values. Ontologically, within the context of religious moderation, leads to an understanding of the nature of religion and its position in reality. A moderate approach to religious ontology recognizes the existence of multiple interpretations, beliefs, and practices within this complex reality, highlighting the absence of a single absolute truth and emphasizing the importance of tolerance for differences in achieving religious moderation.

From an epistemological perspective, in relation to religious moderation, the study of epistemology encompasses the ways in which we comprehend and acquire knowledge about religion. A moderate approach to religious epistemology acknowledges the limitations of our knowledge about religion, which can be influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. It emphasizes the significance of critical thinking, interfaith dialogue, and continuous learning in attaining religious moderation.

In terms of axiology, within the context of religious moderation, axiology involves an understanding of the values that underlie religious practices and inter-religious relations. A

14 Sugiyono, Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, Dan R&D (Bandung: ALFABETA, 2017).
Moderate approach to religious axiology prioritizes values such as tolerance, mutual respect, peace, and justice. This includes respecting human rights, promoting gender equality, and rejecting violence or extremism carried out in the name of religion. Religious moderation also recognizes the adaptability of values to societal development and changing times. In conclusion, by examining ontology, epistemology, and axiology, religious moderation can be understood as the recognition of the complexity of religious reality and the limitations of knowledge influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors. It also encompasses values such as tolerance, mutual respect, peace, justice, and the ability to adapt these values in the pursuit of religious moderation.

In the context of religious moderation, several problems that may arise. The first major issue is imbalance and non-neutrality. Religious moderation must be carried out with the principles of justice, neutrality, and equality for all existing religions. However, there is often an imbalance and non-neutrality in the handling of various religions. This can create feelings of injustice and discontent among religious communities that feel neglected or treated unfairly. The other issue is about Abuse of power. Religious moderation often involves parties with power, such as government agencies or dominant religious groups. Abuse of power in religious moderation can lead to discrimination against minority religious groups, persecution, or defamation of different voices, even to accommodate radical movement. However, in Indonesia during the reign of President Joko Widodo was more focused on the protection of minority groups and harshly reacted to radical movement.

Religious conflict can also be a source of conflict between different religious groups. Different views about religious practices, values, or beliefs can raise serious tensions and disagreements. Religious conflicts can threaten social stability, lead to violence, and hinder cooperation between religious communities. Additionally, there is a significant gap and lack of mutual understanding that religious moderation often faces. This gap in knowledge and understanding of different religions contributes to the exacerbation of stereotypes and

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prejudices, thereby hindering meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding between religious groups.\(^\text{18}\)

The challenges of technology and social media also affect the religious moderation practice. The digital age and social media have expanded the reach and impact of religious moderation. Challenges include the dissemination of corrupt or provocative content on social media platforms, the emergence of religious extremism online, and the spread of misinformation or incitement to conflict.\(^\text{19}\) Addressing this challenge requires collaboration between government agencies, social media platforms and civil society.

One of the serious problems is violence committed under the pretext of religion. Religious extremism and terrorism often threaten peace and stability, and harm the image of peaceful religions.\(^\text{20}\) Religious extremism is one of the main challenges, namely the existence of extremist groups that use religion as a justification for committing violence or spreading intolerance. These groups can threaten social stability and religious freedom and exacerbate interfaith relations.

There is also an issue of Imbalance of Legal Protection. There is an imbalance in the legal protection of religious freedom and the rights of religious minorities. Several local laws or regulations still limit minority religious activities or provide preferential treatment to the majority religion.\(^\text{21}\) This can hinder religious moderation and create injustice.

Another problem is also about Inequity in the Distribution of Resources.\(^\text{22}\) Inequality in the distribution of resources, including education and access to public services, can exacerbate interfaith tensions. If minority religious groups feel they are treated unfairly or do not have equal opportunities, this can increase tensions between religions and hinder moderation. Political Influence and Religious Identity can be the other issues which can


complicate religious moderation. The use of religion in politics can strengthen divisions between religions and increase polarization, thereby hindering efforts to build dialogue and cooperation between religions.

Moreover, Inadequate education and understanding of religion or a lack of in-depth understanding of different religions can make religious moderation efforts difficult. Religious education curricula that are not inclusive or lack opportunities to learn about other religions can reinforce stereotypes and prejudice. To address these challenges in implementing religious moderation, collaborative efforts are required among the government, religious leaders, civil society, and individuals to enhance its effectiveness. This entails promoting inclusive education, ensuring equitable legal protection, fostering interfaith dialogue, and enforcing stringent laws against religious extremism and intolerance.

**Limitations of Traditional Islamic Education in Promoting Religious Moderation**

Islamic education plays an important role in internalizing the values of religious moderation, as well as being an effective means to familiarize and provide an in-depth understanding to each individual as a learner about the importance of religious moderation in the current era. Considering that Indonesia is a very homogeneous and diverse country. However, in practice there are limitations to traditional Islamic education in encouraging religious moderation. Traditional Islamic education tends to focus more on learning conservative religious aspects, such as teaching scriptures, interpretations, and religious laws. This can result in a limited understanding of other religions, interreligious dialogue, and contextual understanding of diverse social and cultural realities.

Other limitation is about the lack of Discussion on Tolerance and Pluralism. Traditional Islamic education often does not pay sufficient attention to the values of tolerance, harmony

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and religious pluralism. This can limit students' ability to appreciate religious differences, understand universal values, and interact positively with other religious communities. Several traditional Islamic educational institutions have not updated their learning curriculum to include contemporary issues related to pluralism, multiculturalism, or other social challenges. Thus the inability to comprehensively address these issues may hinder a broader understanding of the role of religion in diverse societies.

There are also some issues related to discussion on Gender and Human Rights. Traditional Islamic education tends to place a stronger emphasis on religious aspects and often does not comprehensively address gender and human rights issues. This can hinder a deep understanding of gender equality, social justice, and the protection of human rights in the context of religion.

Other concern is related to Life Skills. Traditional Islamic education often focuses more on theoretical understanding and religious spirituality than on developing practical life skills. This can hinder students from facing the challenges of a diverse world, such as technological advances, social changes, and cross-cultural interactions. Meanwhile, closed Religious Interpretation Traditional Islamic education sometimes tends to teach a rigid religious interpretation and does not consider the diversity of opinions and perspectives within the Islamic religion itself. This can hinder the understanding of plurality in religion and narrow students' views on inclusive Islam. Traditional Islamic education also tends to focus more on the context of religion itself, but may pay less attention to broader social and cultural aspects. This can hinder students' ability to understand cultural differences, social contexts, and the challenges faced by diverse societies.

The current issue is also about the lack of Understanding of Technological Advancements. Traditional Islamic education may tend to pay less attention to the...

integration between religion and modern science, including technological advances.\textsuperscript{31} Lack of understanding of the role of technology in society can prevent students from adapting to changing times and understanding the implications of religion in a broader context. Moreover, Traditional Islamic education often does not adequately address complex contemporary social issues, such as poverty, social inequality, the environment or peace.\textsuperscript{32} This limited discussion can limit students’ understanding of religious social responsibility and the importance of contributing to building a just and harmonious society.

Another issue is that Traditional Islamic education often focuses more on teaching dogmatic religious knowledge, without placing sufficient emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.\textsuperscript{33} The lack of empowering students in critical thinking can hinder their ability to analyze, evaluate, and understand religious contexts in depth. Several traditional Islamic educational institutions still place less emphasis on teaching civic values, freedom of religion, and active participation in democratic life. It is now important to include discussions on human rights, citizenship, and pluralism in traditional Islamic education to promote religious moderation and active engagement in society.

To overcome these limitations, there needs to be an effort to expand the curriculum and teaching methods in traditional Islamic education. This includes the integration of modern science, discussing contemporary social issues, involving women in religious education, teaching critical thinking skills, and empowering civic values and freedom of religion. Additional training for educators is also needed so that they have the knowledge and skills to teach about religious moderation. Collaboration between traditional Islamic educational institutions, formal educational institutions, and civil society organizations is also important to provide better resources and access to knowledge about other religions and moderate values.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.


Progressive Islamic Education Approach in Optimizing Religious Moderation

A progressive Islamic education approach can play an important role in optimizing religious moderation. This approach involves developing curricula, teaching methods, and educational approaches that are more inclusive, contextual, and open to social and cultural change. The progressive Islamic education approach recognizes the importance of understanding the wider social and cultural context in studying religion. This includes an understanding of diverse religious, cultural, and worldview differences, so that students can develop a more inclusive understanding, tolerance, and respect for differences.\(^{34}\)

The progressive Islamic education approach encourages integration between religious knowledge and modern science. This allows students to understand religion in a wider context, including an understanding of scientific, technological and social developments that occur in society as well as placing an emphasis on developing critical thinking skills.\(^{35}\) Students are taught to analyze, evaluate, and understand religious texts critically, as well as to relate them to complex social and cultural contexts. It helps students develop a deep understanding of the values of moderation, tolerance and interfaith dialogue.

Progressive Islamic education also encourages the active involvement of women in religious education. This is important for addressing gender disparities in access to religious education and ensuring that women’s perspectives are respected and included in religious learning. Empowering women in religious education also contributes to religious moderation and gender equality in society.\(^{36}\) However, in fact, there are several obstacles to enforcing gender equality in education, including internal constraints, namely women who are still unable to escape the influence of culture, stereotypes of society, and their environment, which results in low motivation for women to progress and a lack of confidence, so that women are often left behind in decision-making matters. In addition, external constraints

outside of women, such as religion and society, as well as government policies. Such as understanding and culture that always place men in a higher position than women.  

Furthermore, through progressive Islamic education it opens opportunities for discussion of contemporary social issues that are relevant to religious moderation, such as pluralism, peace, the environment, poverty, and human rights. It helps students understand the role of religion in promoting social justice, diversity and societal well-being. So that each individual will have high awareness and tolerance and have social awareness in the Muslim community. Students are taught to respect differences, interact with religious communities.

A progressive Islamic educational approach enables students to understand religion in a context that is relevant to today's social, cultural, and political realities. This helps students connect religious values with issues faced by modern society, so that religion becomes relevant and useful in everyday life. Learning is well designed and systematic to encourage students to develop critical and analytical thinking skills. Students are taught to analyze religious texts, question traditional understandings, and explore deeper meanings. This helps students develop strong intellectual prowess and the ability to consider different perspectives.

In order to educate students to be able to adapt in the current era while still adhering to religious teachings, progressive Islamic education helps students develop a positive and inclusive Muslim identity. Students are taught to respect diversity in Islam and overcome prejudices or stereotypes that may exist against different Muslim groups or communities. It promotes internal tolerance within the Muslim community and a more positive contribution to society as a whole.

Students are encouraged to share their perspectives, experiences and knowledge of religion, which creates an inclusive and respectful learning environment. It also develops

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38 Idris and Mokodenseho, “Model Pendidikan Islam Progresif.”

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communication skills, the ability to work with people of different religious beliefs and backgrounds, and practical life skills. Students are taught skills such as leadership, social activity, entrepreneurship, and self-empowerment. It helps students become resilient individuals, contribute positively to society, and face life’s challenges with confidence.\footnote{Idris and Mokodenseho, “Model Pendidikan Islam Progresif.”}

**The Contribution of Islamic Educational Philosophy in the Development of Progressive Islamic Education in Optimizing Religious Moderation**

From an ontology point of view, progressive Islamic education in optimizing religious moderation assumes that reality is complex and continuously evolving. This approach acknowledges the diversity of views, interpretations, and understandings of Islam. Progressive Islamic education ontology reflects the understanding that religious truth and understanding can be found through continuous reflection, dialogue, and study. From an epistemological point of view, progressive Islamic education emphasizes the importance of critical thinking, common sense, and the use of scientific methods in understanding and interpreting Islamic teachings. Understanding religion is seen as a social construct that is open to continuous exploration and renewal.

The epistemology of progressive Islamic education values pluralism of thought and supports ongoing research, learning, and reflection in order to gain a deeper understanding of Islam. From an axiological point of view, progressive Islamic education has inherent values and goals. These values include tolerance, fairness, inclusivity, freedom of thought, and openness to differences. This approach views axiology as an ethical foundation in education, with the aim of forming individuals who have good moral and ethical character. Progressive Islamic education teaches values that can help individuals make the right decisions, interact positively with society, and become agents of change that benefit humanity.

Overall, the ontology of progressive Islamic education recognizes the complexity of reality and the diversity of understandings of religion, while the epistemology of progressive Islamic education emphasizes critical thinking and reflection in achieving a deeper understanding of Islam. Meanwhile, the axiology of progressive Islamic education involves
values and goals that lead to the formation of good moral and ethical character in order to promote religious moderation.

The philosophy of Islamic education makes an important contribution to the development of progressive Islamic education in optimizing religious moderation. Islamic educational philosophy views education as a means to develop human potential holistically, both in terms of intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social.43 In the context of progressive Islamic education, the philosophy of Islamic education puts forward an understanding that is inclusive, critical, and oriented towards the times. To encourage students to have a deep understanding of Islamic values that are universal and relevant in contemporary life. Philosophy of Islamic education helps identify fundamental principles in Islam that can provide a basis for the development of progressive Islamic education in optimizing religious moderation.

The philosophy of Islamic education can also contribute to the development of a learning approach centered on students. Progressive Islamic Education seeks to enable learners in the learning-teaching process, build critical thinking skills, communicate effectively, and collaborate with others. It can be a foundation for progressive Islamic education to encourage learning that focuses critically on problem-solving and the application of Islamic concepts in everyday life.

In addition, the philosophy of Islamic education also emphasizes the importance of a balanced understanding between religion and science.44 Progressive Islamic education recognizes the importance of science and technology in understanding the realities of the world and responding to the challenges of the times. However, in this context, progressive Islamic education also ensures that religious values are not neglected and remain the moral foundation for learners.

Religious moderation is also an important focus in progressive Islamic education. The philosophy of Islamic education helps to promote centralism and avoid extremism in religious understanding by encouraging students to respect differences, dialogue with

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diverse religious understandings, and build inclusive and tolerant understanding. In order to optimize religious moderation, progressive Islamic education also introduces an approach centered on universal values such as justice, peace, and compassion. It helps learners understand that Islam is a religion of Rahmatal lil alamin (mercy to the universe) and encourages them to play an active role in building a harmonious and peaceful society.

Overall, the philosophy of Islamic education provides a strong theoretical foundation and values for the development of progressive Islamic education and the optimization of religious moderation. By promoting inclusiveness, criticism, and a student-centered approach, progressive Islamic education can make a positive contribution to preparing a young generation that is noble, broad-minded, and able to face the challenges of the time wisely.

Furthermore, educational philosophy encourages criticism of traditional thinking and stereotypes in Islamic education. Through a critical approach, educational philosophy helps identify irrelevant or inadequate assumptions in traditional Islamic education, promotes critical reflection on less inclusive or discriminatory practices, and helps develop contextual and relevant Islamic educational approaches. The Islamic philosophy of education encourages the empowerment of students in the learning process. The progressive Islamic approach to education based on the philosophy of education emphasizes the active involvement of students, providing space for them to think critically, argue, and participate in learning. This helps students develop independence, creativity, and the courage to express their opinions.

Through its contributions, the philosophy of education helps to form a strong theoretical and methodological foundation for the development of progressive Islamic education, which promotes inclusiveness, contextuality, and critical thinking in the understanding and practice of Islam. Through progressive Islamic education based on an educational philosophical perspective, religious moderation can be enhanced by building a contextual, critical, and inclusive understanding of religion. It helps to avoid extremism and fundamentalism and promotes a moderate, tolerant, and respectful attitude in the context of religious life.

45 Hussin and Mukarromah, "Filsafat Pendidikan Islam Dalam Perspektif Holistic Learning.”

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The philosophy of education provides an essential foundation for progressive Islamic education by emphasizing the importance of the renewal and advancement of religious thought and practice. It involves the recognition that religion must evolve with the evolution of society and changing times. In fact, religious moderation from the perspective of Islamic education philosophy combines contextual understanding, critical thinking, inclusion, tolerance, justice, and equality, as well as the spirit of renewal and progress in the practice of religion. It aims to create a harmonious, inclusive, and mutually respectful society in the midst of the diversity of religious beliefs.

Conclusions

The philosophy of Islamic education provides a strong theoretical and methodological foundation for developing a progressive Islamic education that promotes religious moderation. In the perspective of ontology, progressive Islamic education recognizes the diversity and complexity of reality in understanding religion. The epistemology of progressive Islamic education emphasizes critical thinking and the use of scientific methods to gain an understanding of Islam. Progressive Islamic education axiology involves values such as tolerance, justice, inclusivity, freedom of thought, and ethical action. Overall, progressive Islamic education recognizes the diversity of religious understanding, encourages critical thinking, and teaches ethical values to achieve religious moderation.

Future research can conduct more in-depth studies exploring the impact of progressive Islamic education on optimizing religious moderation, or empirical studies may involve case analysis, surveys, or participatory observations to test the effectiveness of this approach in increasing religious moderation in society. Overall, progressive Islamic education based on the perspective of educational philosophy has great potential for optimizing religious moderation by promoting contextual understanding, critical thinking, inclusivity, interfaith dialogue, gender equality, and collaborative learning.

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