

Religious Moderation in Early Childhood Education: Integration of Values In The RA Curriculum in Cilacap Regency

Nurchasanah

UIN Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri Purwokerto

ABSTRACT: Indonesia, which is rich in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity, requires an attitude of religious moderation as the key to maintaining unity and harmony in society. Religious moderation emphasizes an attitude of tolerance and avoidance of extremism, so that differences are not a source of conflict, but an opportunity for mutual understanding. Therefore, education from an early age plays an important role in instilling the values of moderation so that future generations are able to live side by side in peace and harmony. The method in this study is qualitative. Religious moderation is an important value that needs to be instilled from an early age to form the character of children who are tolerant, inclusive, and able to live peacefully amidst diversity. In the context of the RA curriculum, the values of moderation can be integrated through a thematic approach, play activities, storytelling, and daily interactions that are fun and in accordance with child development. Although its implementation in RA Cilacap Regency faces a number of challenges such as limited teacher understanding and resource support, various opportunities such as local wisdom, community support, curriculum flexibility, and government policies

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I. INTRODUCTION

(Indonesia is known as a country that is very rich in diversity. This diversity includes ethnicity, culture, language, customs, and religion. With more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is inhabited by hundreds of ethnic groups that have their own identities (Khoiri, 2019). Amid these differences, Indonesia upholds the values of unity within the framework of Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Sutrisno, 2019b). However, this diversity also presents its own challenges, especially in maintaining harmony between citizens. In this context, it is important to instill the values of tolerance and togetherness from an early age.

The diversity of Indonesian society is not only a cultural wealth, but also a potential conflict if not managed wisely. Differences in beliefs and views can give rise to social friction if not accompanied by an attitude of mutual respect (Mohammad Abror, 2020). A number of cases of intolerance and radicalism involving various groups show that national and humanitarian values need to be continuously strengthened (Rofik & Misbah, 2021). Therefore, an understanding of the importance of living side by side in differences must be part of the education process.

In today's social reality, religious moderation is one of the strategic approaches to strengthen national and religious life in Indonesia (Mhd. Abror, 2020). Religious moderation is not just a slogan, but an attitude and perspective that places religion as a source of peace, tolerance, and justice. Religious moderation encourages religious people not to be extreme in their beliefs or in expressing them (Siti Nurdina Awalita, 2023). With this attitude, differences are no longer a source of conflict, but rather an opportunity to get to know each other and learn from each other.

The concept of religious moderation is very important in the context of Indonesia's multiculturalism. Given the complexity of Indonesian society, extreme approaches both ideologically and in religious practice can damage the foundations of the nation (Atmanto & Muzayanah, 2020; Casram, 2016; Nasrudin et al., 2022; Zain, 2020; Zuhriah, 2020). The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has declared religious moderation as a national agenda. This emphasizes that moderate values must be instilled in various aspects of life, including in the education system. Education is a strategic key to building a tolerant and peace-loving generation.

Religious moderation is not only the task of religious institutions, but also educational institutions, including early childhood education (Sutrisno, 2019a). Early childhood is in the golden phase of development, where the formation of character and basic life values is very effective. In this phase, children have the ability to absorb information and values very quickly and deeply. Therefore, introducing the values of religious moderation from an early age is very important to form an inclusive and tolerant personality.

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Early Childhood Education Institutions (PAUD), especially Raudhatul Athfal (RA), play a vital role in forming the foundation of children's character. RA as an Islamic educational unit has a great responsibility in instilling friendly, tolerant, and moderate religious values. The learning process at RA not only teaches cognitive and motoric aspects, but also affective aspects such as attitudes, values, and character. Therefore, the integration of religious moderation values into the RA curriculum is very relevant.

The RA curriculum needs to include basic values of religious moderation that can be internalized through fun and contextual learning activities (Siti Nurdina Awalita, 2023). Values such as tolerance, respect for differences, cooperation, and love of peace can be included in learning themes that are close to the world of children. For example, through Islamic stories, games, songs, or simple social activities that foster empathy and concern. This strategy will make children accustomed to living in diversity without feeling threatened by differences.

Cilacap Regency as one of the regions in Central Java is an area that has quite high socio-cultural and religious diversity. There are communities from various backgrounds that live side by side in this area. In this context, RA in Cilacap Regency has challenges as well as opportunities to be at the forefront in instilling the values of religious moderation to the younger generation. The role of teachers, institutions, and curriculum is very strategic in responding to these challenges.

However, in practice, not all RAs systematically integrate the values of religious moderation into the curriculum and teaching and learning activities. Many RAs still focus on the cognitive and memorization aspects of religion without paying attention to the dimensions of attitudes and values of socio-religious life (Zain, 2020). This is an important concern, considering that value education cannot be postponed and must be carried out from an early age on an ongoing basis. This gap between concept and practice needs to be examined in depth.

Most RA educators also still need capacity building in terms of character education based on religious moderation. Teachers' understanding of the concept of moderation, age-appropriate delivery methods, and integration into the curriculum need to be improved. Without adequate understanding and competence, these values are difficult to convey appropriately and effectively (Anggita & Suryadilaga, 2021). Therefore, teacher capacity development and curriculum assistance are important parts of this effort.

Integration of moderation values into the RA curriculum cannot stand alone, but must be in line with policy support, development of teaching materials, and involvement of parents and the community. The child's environment must also support the values instilled in school. Consistency between the values taught in RA and those found by children in their daily environment will strengthen the formation of moderate and inclusive character. In other words, moderation education must be a joint movement.

On the other hand, there are not many in-depth empirical studies on the practice of religious moderation in early childhood education, especially in areas such as Cilacap Regency. Comprehensive research is needed to explore how the integration of moderation values is applied in the RA curriculum. This includes teaching strategies, learning materials, assessments, and responses from children and the surrounding environment. These findings will be an important basis for developing future policies and practices.

One interesting aspect to study is how the value of moderation is inserted into thematic learning activities at RA. Themes such as family, environment, friends, and nature can be effective means to introduce the values of togetherness, respect for differences, and helping each other. This study can answer whether these activities are consciously and planned to form moderate characters, or simply run spontaneously without clear value goals.

It is also important to explore how RA teachers perceive religious moderation and to what extent they understand the importance of integrating these values. Teachers' perceptions will greatly influence how they design learning, choose methods, and provide role models to children. Whether teachers only understand moderation as a normative concept, or have internalized and practiced it in their daily lives, will greatly determine the effectiveness of this value education process.

In addition, the challenges faced by RA institutions in areas such as Cilacap also need to be explored. For example, are there structural, cultural, or resource constraints in implementing moderation education? Is there resistance from the community, or lack of support from related agencies? Knowing the inhibiting factors will help formulate more realistic and applicable strategies to encourage strengthening moderation values in RA.

This research is also important in the context of national character building. Education that instills moderate, tolerant, and peaceful values in early childhood will create a strong foundation for future society. Investing in values in children will contribute greatly to forming citizens who are open-minded, not easily provoked, and able to appreciate differences. Therefore, RA as the first formal educational institution for children must take a central role in this movement.

The RA curriculum, which has so far referred to the 2014 RA Curriculum and its adjustments to national policies, needs to be revitalized to be more explicit in accommodating the values of moderation. This study aims to see whether the curriculum is sufficiently responsive to the challenges of the times and how it can be more contextual to local socio-cultural conditions. Strengthening the content of values and learning approaches based on children's real lives is an urgent need. By examining the practice of integrating moderation values in RA, we can also explore local innovations carried out by teachers or institutions in developing friendly and inclusive learning. This innovation can be a model for other RAs, especially in areas with high diversity

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such as Cilacap. A contextual approach based on local wisdom can be a strength in itself in grounding national and humanitarian values in children.

Considering these dynamics, it is important to conduct research on how the values of religious moderation are integrated into the curriculum and learning practices at RA in Cilacap Regency. This research is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions in the development of character education that is contextual and relevant to the needs of the times. This is also a real contribution in building a peaceful, inclusive, and civilized Indonesia.

Ultimately, early childhood education should not only be a space to form basic academic skills, but should also be an arena for instilling noble values of life. In the context of a pluralistic Indonesia, the values of religious moderation are an important foundation that needs to be instilled from the start. This research is present as part of this effort, with the hope that it can be a reference and inspiration in building a tolerant, wise, and loving future generation.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a library research method. This approach was chosen because the main focus of the study is to examine in depth the theoretical and normative concepts related to religious moderation, early childhood education, and the integration of these values in the Raudhatul Athfal (RA) curriculum. The qualitative approach allows researchers to understand phenomena comprehensively, contextually, and interpretively based on data sourced from scientific literature.

Literature study as the main method in this research is conducted by tracing, reading, and analyzing various relevant written sources. These sources include scientific books, journal articles, education policy documents, RA curriculum documents, RA teacher training modules, and documents from the Ministry of Religion related to the religious moderation program. In addition, references from relevant previous research results are also important references in building an analytical framework.

In data analysis, researchers use content analysis techniques to examine and interpret the contents of the documents and literature studied. The analysis is carried out by identifying the main themes that emerge from various sources, then grouping and interpreting them to find a common thread between the theory of religious moderation and its application in the RA curriculum. This approach allows researchers to deeply understand the relationship between moderate religious values and learning strategies in early childhood.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. The Concept of Religious Moderation and Its Urgency in the Context of Early Childhood Education

Religious moderation is a concept rooted in the need to balance belief in religious teachings with a pluralistic social life (Imran, 2022). In a pluralistic society like Indonesia, religious moderation is present as an approach to avoid extreme attitudes both in religion and in responding to differences (Chakim et al., 2023; Firdaus, 2018; Nugroho & Nawawi, 2023). This concept emphasizes the importance of practicing religious teachings peacefully, fairly, and respecting the existence of others who have different beliefs or outlooks on life. In the context of the state, religious moderation is not only about harmony between religious communities, but also maintaining social cohesion and national stability.

As a country with diverse religions and beliefs, Indonesia often faces complex social dynamics. In such situations, a moderate approach to living a religious life becomes a shared need (Ilaihi et al., 2024). Radicalism and intolerance often arise from a narrow and textual understanding of religion, which is not accompanied by an empathetic attitude towards others. Therefore, religious moderation is a solution to reaffirm the spirit of togetherness and prevent the emergence of horizontal conflicts based on religious identity.

Religious moderation is not an attempt to equate all religions, but rather to foster a perspective that respects diversity. It teaches that religious truth belongs to each adherent, but in living together, universal values such as compassion, justice, and tolerance must be upheld (Trio Mashuri et al., 2023). Within this framework, religious understanding and practice should not be used as a tool to belittle or eliminate other groups. On the contrary, religious teachings should strengthen humanity and social justice.

The Indonesian government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs has made religious moderation one of the national priority programs (Dodego & Witro, 2020). This shows that the state is aware of the importance of a moderate approach in religious life to prevent social polarization and strengthen national unity. Religious moderation is not just a discourse, but must be implemented in various sectors, including education. Education is seen as the most strategic vehicle for forming a moderate generation that is able to live side by side peacefully.

In the realm of education, the values of religious moderation can be instilled from an early age. Children are the next generation who will shape the face of the nation in the future. Therefore, providing a foundation of tolerant, open, and peaceful life values from an early age is very important. Children have great potential to accept and internalize noble values, including in terms of religious attitudes. Early childhood is known as a period of very strong personality formation.

Early childhood education not only serves to prepare basic academic skills, but also to shape attitudes, character, and life values. This is where the important role of religious moderation in children's education emerges (Tolchah et al., 2021). By

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introducing attitudes of mutual respect, appreciating differences, and fostering empathy from an early age, we plant the seeds of tolerance that will grow strong in children. Religious moderation ultimately becomes an integral part of children's character education.

The social context of children today also demands an educational approach that is able to respond to changing times and global challenges. Children grow up in an environment that is not only culturally heterogeneous, but also exposed to very diverse information through digital media. If they are not equipped with a strong attitude in responding to differences, they could be trapped in the current of radicalism or intolerance from an early age. Therefore, moderation education is an urgent need, not just an option.

Religious moderation in the context of early childhood does not mean teaching religious relativism, but rather developing an attitude of respecting the beliefs of others while remaining steadfast in one's own beliefs. This is important so that children grow as individuals who are not only intellectually intelligent, but also emotionally and socially mature. Education that only emphasizes the cognitive aspect without paying attention to character formation will actually produce individuals who are vulnerable to exclusive and discriminatory ideologies.

The concept of moderation must be explained in language and approaches that are appropriate for the world of children. Values such as honesty, togetherness, respect for differences, and caring for others can be introduced through stories, games, and fun social activities (Faturrochman et al., 2019). In everyday activities, children can be invited to discuss how to treat friends who have different opinions or help friends who are in trouble. These simple activities will provide direct experience of the importance of the values of moderation in life.

Religious moderation can also be introduced through exemplary figures in religious stories that are full of humanitarian values and compassion. Children tend to easily understand values through concrete characters and narratives. Therefore, it is important for teachers and parents to choose and convey stories that depict religious teachings that are full of peace and wisdom, not stories that actually instill suspicion of those who are different.

The urgency of religious moderation education is also in line with current global challenges, such as the rise of hate speech, identity-based discrimination, and social conflict. Early childhood education that ignores the formation of inclusive attitudes will leave a gap for the entry of values of violence and intolerance. On the other hand, children who are raised in a moderate educational environment will grow into agents of peace who are ready to build a just and harmonious society.

The world of children is a world full of honesty and spontaneity. Values that are instilled early on will more easily become part of the child's personality. Therefore, moderation education should not begin when they are adults, but since children begin to recognize their social environment. When children learn to share toys with friends, wait their turn, and apologize, that's where the values of moderation can be inserted naturally and pleasantly.

Moderation also teaches children to be able to see differences as something natural, even as wealth that must be appreciated. In a heterogeneous classroom atmosphere, teachers can make moments of difference a means of learning. For example, when there are children who come from different family backgrounds, teachers can help children understand that all friends are valuable even though not all are the same. This inclusive attitude will leave a mark and shape children's perspectives on social life.

Good education does not only produce children who know a lot, but also those who are able to think wisely and act fairly. In this case, the values of moderation such as avoiding excessive attitudes, loving peace, and living a balanced life are foundations that need to be strengthened (Ratnaningsih et al., 2020). Moderation also provides children with the provision to face a complex world, full of differences, and often triggering conflict if not faced with maturity.

Religious moderation is also closely related to multicultural education, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing the diversity of identities and cultures. Early childhood education based on the principle of moderation will help children learn about and respect other cultures without feeling that their identity is threatened. Children who are accustomed to living in an environment that values diversity will grow into individuals who are open to cross-cultural and cross-religious cooperation.

It is undeniable that in some cases, religious values are taught exclusively and rigidly to children, without room for dialogue or understanding different points of view. This can be the beginning of the emergence of intolerance. Therefore, the role of teachers and parents is vital in ensuring that religious education given to children is inclusive, contextual, and humanistic. This is where the importance of a correct understanding of the concept of religious moderation in children's education lies.

Childhood is a time when basic moral, social, and spiritual values begin to grow. This is a very strategic phase for forming moderate character. Small habits such as greeting, appreciating differences in friends' food or clothing, and playing without discrimination, can be an effective means of instilling these values. This process must be carried out consistently and become part of the school and family culture.

Early childhood education should be directed to build a foundation of religious life that is full of love, not fear; full of empathy, not suspicion; and full of appreciation, not judgment. Therefore, a moderation-based educational approach is very appropriate to be applied from the earliest stages (F., 2007). Children who are invited to understand that religion teaches goodness and humanity will more easily accept and make these values a part of their lives.

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Taking all these aspects into consideration, it becomes clear that religious moderation is not a concept that is only relevant to adults or the political world. It is very important to be introduced since children start learning to interact with others. Instilling the values of moderation in early childhood will be a long-term social investment that will have an impact on creating a peaceful, just, and harmonious society.

Thus, the urgency of religious moderation in the context of early childhood education becomes very real. This is not only about producing religious children, but also children who are able to live religious lives wisely, peacefully, and with full respect for others. Religious moderation in early childhood education is a fundamental strategy in building a strong and civilized national civilization.

B. Integration of Religious Moderation Values in the RA Curriculum

Early childhood education has a strategic position in forming the foundation of children's character and personality. The Raudhatul Athfal (RA) curriculum as an Islamic-based early childhood education unit has a great responsibility not only in forming cognitive abilities, but also instilling humanistic and moderate religious values. This is where the importance of integrating religious moderation values in the RA curriculum as part of inclusive and adaptive character education towards diversity lies.

The RA curriculum is designed to cover three main aspects, namely religious and moral values, social emotional, and language, cognitive, and motor development. In this curriculum structure, the values of moderation actually have quite a lot of space to be integrated contextually. For example, in the aspect of religious and moral values, teachers can insert teachings about tolerance, compassion, and mutual respect among fellow human beings regardless of differences in religion or background.

Integration of moderation values in the RA curriculum does not have to be done explicitly through separate subjects, but can be inserted into thematic learning activities. Themes such as "Myself", "My Family", "My Environment", or "My Country" can be used as a means to convey messages about the importance of respecting differences, living in harmony, and rejecting extreme attitudes or violence. This approach is considered more effective because it is in accordance with the characteristics of concrete and contextual child development.

In role-playing activities, for example, children can be invited to play as characters who show tolerant, fair, and loving attitudes (Widodo et al., 2019). Teachers can design simple scenarios that show situations of difference, then invite children to respond with a moderate attitude. This kind of play is not only fun, but also leaves a mark on children's memories because it involves emotions and direct social interaction.

Illustrated stories and stories of the prophets are also very effective media for instilling the value of moderation. RA teachers can choose stories that show the prophet's wise attitude in dealing with differences, helping others, and living peacefully with people from various backgrounds. By getting children used to hearing and discussing stories like this, they will build an understanding that religious teachings bring values of peace and mercy to the entire universe.

Daily activities such as greeting friends, sharing play equipment, or waiting for turns can also be used as momentum to instill a tolerant and fair attitude. Teachers can give praise when children demonstrate behavior that reflects the value of moderation, such as helping friends of different ethnicities or calming down friends who are having a dispute. This process is a form of value integration in habituation, which will slowly shape children's characters to be more inclusive.

Instilling the value of moderation can also be done through children's songs with the theme of togetherness, friendship, and unity (Widayati & Maulidiyah, 2018). Music as a learning medium is very popular with children and is able to touch their affective side. Songs with simple lyrics that invite children to love others without distinguishing religion or ethnicity will leave a mark on their hearts and help build an open mindset.

The importance of integrating moderation values in the RA curriculum also lies in the process of interaction between teachers and students. Teachers are not only as transmitters of material, but also as role models in attitudes and actions. Therefore, the success of value integration is largely determined by the quality of the teacher's personality which is moderate, patient, and inclusive. Teachers must be able to demonstrate a tolerant attitude in every situation, because children learn a lot through observation and imitation of the adults around them.

The RA curriculum document issued by the Ministry of Religious Affairs actually contains universal values that are in line with the principles of religious moderation, such as honesty, responsibility, and tolerance. However, the challenge faced in the field is that not all RA education units understand how to implement these values concretely in the learning process. Therefore, more applicable guidelines and ongoing training for teachers are needed.

Integration of moderation values also requires synergy with school culture and the surrounding environment. Schools must create an atmosphere that is friendly to diversity, encourage cooperation, and reject violence in any form. Posters, murals, or reading corners that contain messages of peace and diversity can be part of a strategy to strengthen values in the RA physical environment. All of this will strengthen the consistency of the messages received by children both verbally and visually.

In carrying out religious activities in RA, such as praying together or celebrating Islamic holidays, teachers can also invite children to understand that even though they carry out certain rituals, out there there are other friends who celebrate different

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holidays. This attitude is important to foster respect for other religions, and emphasizes that differences do not need to be used as a reason to feel superior or inferior.

Joint project activities or intergroup collaboration can also be used to instill a spirit of mutual cooperation and respect for the opinions of others (Puldri, 2017). In projects such as making classroom decorations or environmental cleaning activities, children learn to work together with different friends, convey ideas, listen to opinions, and achieve common goals. All of these are real manifestations of the practice of moderation in children's daily lives.

In learning evaluation, teachers can assess not only academic results, but also aspects of attitude and character related to the values of moderation. Assessments such as whether children are willing to share, respect friends, or resolve conflicts peacefully can be included in the child's development report. This kind of assessment shows that character values are considered important and are an integral part of the educational process at RA.

It is also important to involve parents in efforts to instill the value of moderation. RA can hold parent meetings themed on character education or religious moderation, so that synergy is created between school and home. Children will find it easier to internalize values if they receive the same messages from the home and school environments. This will create continuity in the formation of moderate character.

The strategy of integrating moderation values must also be adjusted to the local and cultural context of each RA. In areas such as Cilacap Regency which has cultural and religious diversity, the RA curriculum can strengthen local values that are in line with the spirit of moderation, such as deliberation, mutual cooperation, and tepo seliro. Thus, moderation education is not only based on theory, but also comes from local wisdom that lives in the community.

Moderation education in RA also needs to pay attention to aspects of child development as a whole. The values instilled must be in accordance with the child's psychological development stage, both in terms of language, thinking, and understanding the world. Therefore, the approach used must be holistic, fun, and use appropriate methods such as playing, singing, storytelling, and exploratory activities.

It is also important to ensure that value integration does not stop at the planning level, but is truly reflected in learning practices. Teachers need to reflect on their teaching practices periodically to ensure that the values taught are in accordance with the goals of moderate education. Academic supervision activities from the head of RA or supervisor can help evaluate and improve the implementation of value learning on an ongoing basis.

In the long term, the integration of moderation values into the RA curriculum will form an educational culture that values diversity and avoids violence. Children who grow up with this experience will carry these values into their teenage and adult lives. They will become individuals who are able to live side by side, think openly, and contribute to creating a peaceful and civilized society.

Thus, the integration of religious moderation values into the RA curriculum is not just a temporary need, but part of a long-term strategy to build a generation that is resilient, tolerant, and able to face the complexities of the modern world. Through a curriculum that is rich in values, methods that are appropriate to the world of children, and support from all parties, RA can become a strategic initial space in producing the next generation of the nation that is moderate and loves peace.

C. Challenges and Opportunities for Implementing Religious Moderation in RA Cilacap Regency

The implementation of religious moderation in early childhood education institutions, especially Raudhatul Athfal (RA), cannot be separated from the social, cultural, and religious dynamics that surround it. In Cilacap Regency, as an area with a fairly diverse community background in terms of culture, ethnicity, and religious understanding, the implementation of religious moderation values is both a challenge and an opportunity. Like other areas in Indonesia, Cilacap has local characteristics that influence educational practices, including in terms of integrating moderation values.

One of the main challenges in implementing religious moderation in RA Cilacap is the teachers' limited understanding of the concept of moderation itself. Not all educators have adequate insight into the values of moderation such as tolerance, anti-extremism, and the importance of being open to differences (Mulya & Aditomo, 2019). This is due to the lack of training or provision that specifically discusses the theme of religious moderation in the context of early childhood education. As a result, these values have not been optimally conveyed in learning activities.

Another significant challenge is the tendency of some people to understand religion exclusively and textually. In some environments, religious teachings are often delivered rigidly without considering universal human values. When these kinds of values enter the classroom, children may receive doctrines that are not friendly to differences. RA as part of society certainly cannot be completely separated from the influence of this environment, so teachers need to be critical and wise in filtering the values conveyed to children.

The diverse socio-religious dynamics in Cilacap society can be an opportunity, but also a risk if not managed properly. For example, in a society where the majority has a conservative religious understanding, the delivery of values of tolerance and pluralism can be considered deviant. This condition requires RA to have a wise approach, namely conveying the value of

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moderation contextually and in accordance with the values of Islam which is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, so that it can be accepted by all groups.

Limited resources are also a challenge. Many RAs in this area still face obstacles in terms of access to quality teaching materials, especially those that explicitly promote the values of moderation. Children's reading books, teaching media, or educational games that support the instillation of tolerance values are still very limited. This condition certainly makes it difficult for teachers to creatively insert messages of moderation in daily learning.

Policy support is also an important factor in the implementation of moderation values. Although religious moderation has become a priority program of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, its translation into regional or educational unit level policies is still uneven. Some RAs may not have clear guidelines or directions in integrating moderation values into their curriculum. The absence of these technical guidelines makes the implementation of these values depend entirely on the personal initiative of teachers or principals.

However, Cilacap Regency also holds many potentials that can be great opportunities for the implementation of religious moderation education in RA. One of these opportunities is the existence of a relatively open community that is accustomed to living side by side with differences. This is social capital that can be utilized by RA in forming a school culture that is friendly to diversity. A supportive social environment will strengthen the messages of tolerance conveyed in the classroom.

In addition, local wisdom that lives in the midst of the Cilacap community such as the culture of mutual cooperation, deliberation, and politeness can be integrated with the values of moderation. This local wisdom is very relevant to the spirit of moderate Islam that upholds the values of togetherness and justice (Akmaliah et al., 2022). If RA is able to harmoniously combine religious teachings and local culture, then moderation-based character education will be more easily accepted by students and parents.

Support from religious leaders and local communities is also an important opportunity. If ustaz, kiai, and community leaders are involved in voicing the importance of inclusive and moderate education, then the message will gain strong legitimacy. Collaboration between RA, religious leaders, and the community will create an educational ecosystem that is conducive to the growth of values of tolerance and diversity.

Parental involvement is also a great opportunity that can be maximized. Parents are the first and foremost educators for children, so good cooperation between RA and parents will strengthen the internalization of moderation values. Through parenting activities, seminars, or informal communication, RA can convey the importance of education that is not only oriented towards cognitive intelligence, but also character formation that is able to live peacefully amidst diversity.

From an institutional perspective, RA has an advantage because it is under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion which currently emphasizes the importance of religious moderation. This opens up opportunities to obtain program support, teacher training, and relevant learning materials (Baharun & Nur Aini, 2020; Nugraha & Firmansyah, 2019). Several initiatives such as character-based curriculum development and RA teacher training on religious moderation have begun to be initiated in various regions, and can be adapted to the Cilacap context.

Another opportunity that is no less important is the development of information technology that allows RA to access various alternative learning sources. Teachers can utilize educational videos, digital platforms, and children's story books based on moderation values that are available online. With creativity and good digital literacy, the limitations of local sources can be covered by access to relevant and quality external materials.

It is also important to note that early childhood has the ability to absorb values strongly if delivered through a fun and concrete approach. This is an opportunity for RA to develop innovative learning methods that insert messages of moderation in playing, singing, and storytelling activities. The character of children who are still innocent and open makes them a very potential target in the formation of moderate attitudes.

In terms of curriculum, RA also has flexibility in compiling and adapting thematic curriculum. Teachers can insert social themes such as "differences are beautiful", "my friends from various regions", or "being friendly with everyone" which are the entry point for introducing diversity values. This flexibility is a great opportunity to adjust learning with a spirit of moderation according to the local context of Cilacap.

Supervision and monitoring from RA supervisors can also be used as an opportunity to encourage improvements in the quality of moderate learning. Supervisors can provide input, assistance, and evaluation of the implementation of value-based learning. Support from supervisors will strengthen the position of teachers in developing more moderate learning materials, as well as provide moral encouragement for the entire school community.

No less important, the implementation of religious moderation can also be a branding strength for RA. Amidst increasing public concerns about radicalism entering education, RA that is able to present itself as an institution that educates children to become tolerant and peace-loving individuals will gain more trust from the public. This trust is an opportunity to increase the number of students while strengthening RA's existence as a progressive Islamic educational institution.

Partnership programs with other institutions, both government and NGOs, are also important opportunities. Several organizations have developed tolerance education programs at the PAUD and RA levels. RA in Cilacap can collaborate to obtain

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training, teaching materials, and program support that is in line with strengthening the value of moderation. This collaboration will accelerate the transformation of RA into an institution that is responsive to the challenges of the times.

With all the challenges and opportunities that exist, RA in Cilacap Regency is in a strategic position to become a pioneer of moderate and humanist early childhood education. It takes commitment, synergy, and innovation from all stakeholders to make religious moderation not just a discourse, but a reality in the daily lives of students.

In the future, strengthening religious moderation in RA will greatly determine the direction of Islamic education at the elementary level. If children are equipped with the values of tolerance, togetherness, and love of peace from an early age, then they will grow into a generation that is able to maintain the integrity of the nation and uphold humanitarian values. This is RA's concrete contribution to building a peaceful and civilized future for Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Religious moderation is an important concept that emphasizes balance in religion, respecting differences, and rejecting extreme attitudes. In the context of early childhood education, these values are very relevant because this period is the phase of basic character formation that determines how children view the world around them. By introducing values such as tolerance, empathy, and compassion from an early age, it is hoped that children will grow into individuals who are inclusive and peaceful in diversity.

Integration of moderation values in the RA curriculum can be done through various approaches, both thematic, play activities, stories, and daily interactions. The RA curriculum has the flexibility to accommodate these noble values in learning activities that are in accordance with the characteristics of children. Teachers play a central role in conveying the message of moderation in a concrete and enjoyable way, while also being a role model for moderate attitudes in front of students.

Although the implementation of moderation values in RA Cilacap Regency faces challenges such as limited teacher understanding, minimal teaching materials, and environmental influences, there are also many supporting opportunities. Local wisdom, community support, and government policies are strong supporting factors. With synergy between schools, families, and the environment, as well as strengthening teacher capacity, religious moderation education in RA can be carried out effectively and have a long-term impact on the formation of the character of the nation's children.

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