



کنزل

JOURNAL OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC STUDIES

<https://ejournal.iainpalopo.ac.id/index.php/jiis/>

Integrating Character Values, Religious Moderation, and Local Wisdom in Islamic Religious Education: A Conceptual Analysis

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Articles

Information

History:

Received April
Approved April
Publish April

Keywords: character education, religious moderation, local wisdom, Islamic Education

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education (IRE) learning. This research employs a qualitative approach using library research, focusing on the analysis of relevant literature related to character education, religious moderation, and local wisdom. Data were collected from scientific journal articles, academic books, and supporting documents, and analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify key themes and patterns. The findings reveal that character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom are interconnected elements that play a significant role in strengthening Islamic Religious Education. Character values function as the moral foundation in shaping students' behavior, while religious moderation promotes balanced, inclusive, and tolerant attitudes. Meanwhile, local wisdom provides contextual relevance that connects learning materials with students' social and cultural environments. The integration of these three aspects contributes to the development of students' moral character, social awareness, and ability to live harmoniously in a multicultural society. This study concludes that an integrative approach combining moral, religious, and cultural dimensions is essential to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education in addressing contemporary challenges. However, this study is limited to a conceptual analysis based on secondary data. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine the practical implementation of this integrative model through empirical studies.

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Introduction

Education in Indonesia is currently facing increasingly complex challenges, particularly in the context of globalization, rapid technological advancement, and dynamic socio-cultural changes. These developments have significant implications for students' character formation, as reflected in the growing issues of moral degradation, intolerance, and radicalism (Muafiq & Muali, 2025). In this context, education is not only expected to transfer knowledge but also to play a strategic role in shaping students who possess noble character, are tolerant, and are capable of living harmoniously in a multicultural society.

Character education has been widely recognized as a fundamental approach to addressing these challenges. The integration of character values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, and cooperation is essential in fostering students' moral awareness and behavior (Wibowo, 2022). Furthermore, character education cannot be separated from the socio-cultural context in which students live. The incorporation of local wisdom into the educational process enables learning to become more contextual and meaningful, as it reflects values that are deeply rooted in society, such as mutual cooperation, tolerance, and social harmony (Iryani et al., 2024).

In addition, religious moderation has emerged as a crucial concept in maintaining social cohesion within Indonesia's pluralistic society. Religious moderation emphasizes balanced, inclusive, and non-extremist attitudes in understanding religious teachings (Yahya, 2023). However, in practice, Islamic Religious Education (IRE) in schools often remains normative and less connected to students' social realities. As a result, the values of moderation are not optimally internalized (Afifah et al., 2025). This condition indicates the need for a more contextual and integrative approach in religious learning.

Local wisdom also plays a significant role as a cultural foundation in education. It provides contextual values that connect religious teachings with students' real-life experiences. The integration of local wisdom in learning has been shown to strengthen character formation and support the development of social awareness (Arifin, 2025; Huda & Abid, 2024). Therefore, local wisdom can function as a bridge that links religious values with social realities, enabling students to understand and practice religious teachings in a moderate and humanistic manner.

However, existing studies tend to examine character education, religious moderation, and local wisdom as separate domains. There is still limited research that systematically integrates these three aspects within Islamic Religious Education learning. This fragmentation results in the absence of a comprehensive framework that connects moral, religious, and cultural dimensions in a holistic manner.

Based on this gap, this study aims to analyze the integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education learning. This study also seeks to explore how these three elements can be integrated to support the development of students' character, tolerance, and multicultural awareness. The novelty of this study lies in its effort to offer an integrative perspective that combines these dimensions within a unified educational framework.

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach using library research to examine the integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom in Islamic Religious Education (IRE). Library research is considered appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of conceptual frameworks, theoretical perspectives, and findings from previous studies relevant to the research topic.

The data used in this study consist of secondary sources, including scientific journal articles, academic books, and relevant policy documents. The selected sources focus on three main themes: character education, religious moderation, and local wisdom in education. To ensure relevance and quality, the sources were selected based on the following criteria: (1) publications related to Islamic education or value-based education, (2) studies discussing character education, religious moderation, or local wisdom, and (3) publications from the last 5–10 years, except for seminal works that are still relevant to the discussion.

The data collection process was conducted through systematic searching, identification, and selection of relevant literature. In the identification stage, the researcher explored various academic databases and references cited in previous studies. Subsequently, the selected sources were reviewed and classified based on their relevance to the research focus.

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative content analysis. This process involves several stages, including data reduction, data categorization, and interpretation. In the data reduction stage, relevant information from the selected sources was identified and extracted. In the categorization stage, the data were grouped into key themes, namely character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom. Finally, in the interpretation stage, the relationships among these themes were analyzed to develop an integrative understanding of their role in Islamic Religious Education.

To ensure the validity of the findings, this study applies source triangulation by comparing and synthesizing information from various references. This approach aims to enhance the credibility and consistency of the analysis results.

Results

The findings of this study are organized into three main themes based on the analysis of relevant literature, namely: (1) character values in Islamic Religious Education, (2) religious moderation in educational contexts, and (3) the role of local wisdom in learning. These themes represent key components that can be integrated to support effective Islamic Religious Education.

1. Character Values in Islamic Religious Education

The analysis indicates that character education is a central component in Islamic Religious Education. The literature consistently highlights that values such as honesty, responsibility, discipline, respect, and cooperation are essential in shaping students' moral behavior (Wibowo, 2022; Muafiq & Muali, 2025). These values are not only taught as theoretical concepts but are expected to be internalized through daily practices and learning activities.

Furthermore, character education in Islamic contexts emphasizes the integration of cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. This means that students are not only expected to understand moral values but also to apply them in real-life situations. The findings show that effective character education requires contextual learning approaches that connect moral values with students' experiences.

2. Religious Moderation in Islamic Education

The findings reveal that religious moderation is increasingly recognized as a key element in Islamic education, particularly in multicultural societies. Religious moderation refers to a balanced and inclusive understanding of religious teachings, avoiding extreme or rigid interpretations (Yahya, 2023).

The literature shows that the lack of religious moderation in educational settings may lead to intolerance and exclusivism among students (Nasution, 2023). In contrast, the integration of moderation values in learning can promote tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. These values are particularly important in diverse social contexts where students interact with individuals from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

In practice, religious moderation is implemented through learning approaches that emphasize dialogue, critical thinking, and openness to different perspectives. However, the findings also indicate that its implementation in schools is still not optimal and often remains at the conceptual level (Afifah et al., 2025).

3. The Role of Local Wisdom in Education

The findings also highlight that local wisdom plays a significant role in supporting value-based education. Local wisdom refers to cultural values, traditions, and social practices that are embedded in the community and passed down through generations.

Studies show that integrating local wisdom into the learning process can make education more contextual and meaningful (Iryani et al., 2024; Arifin, 2025). Values such as mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), tolerance, and social harmony are examples of local wisdom that can strengthen students' character.

Moreover, local wisdom provides a bridge between abstract religious teachings and students' real-life experiences. By connecting learning materials with local cultural contexts, students are better able to understand and apply values in their daily lives (Huda & Abid, 2024).

4. Patterns of Integration in Islamic Religious Education

The analysis further identifies that the integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom has the potential to create a more holistic learning approach. These three elements are interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Character values provide the moral foundation, religious moderation ensures balanced understanding, and local wisdom offers contextual relevance. However, the findings indicate that in many educational practices, these elements are still implemented separately rather than as an integrated framework.

This lack of integration suggests the need for a more systematic approach in designing Islamic Religious Education that combines moral, religious, and cultural dimensions simultaneously.

Discussion

1. Integration of Character Values, Religious Moderation, and Local Wisdom

The findings of this study demonstrate that character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom are interconnected elements that collectively contribute to the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education. The integration of these three aspects is essential in responding to the increasingly complex social realities faced by students in the modern era.

Character education serves as the moral foundation that shapes students' behavior and attitudes. However, without a balanced understanding of religion, character education may become normative and less responsive to diversity. This is where religious moderation plays a crucial role, as it promotes inclusive, balanced, and contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings. The integration of local wisdom further strengthens this process by providing culturally relevant contexts that make learning more meaningful and applicable.

From an Islamic perspective, this integration is consistent with the fundamental teachings of Islam that emphasize harmony, balance, and mutual understanding. This is reflected in the Qur'anic verse (Q.S. Al-Hujurat: 13):

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

This verse highlights the concept of *lita'arafu* (mutual understanding), which underscores that diversity is a natural and intended aspect of human existence. In the context of education, this principle supports the development of tolerance, respect, and social harmony among students from diverse backgrounds.

2. The Role of Religious Moderation in Addressing Multicultural Challenges

The results indicate that the lack of religious moderation may lead to rigid and exclusive attitudes among students. This condition often arises from textual and partial understandings of religious teachings without considering broader social contexts. Therefore, integrating moderation values into Islamic education is essential in preventing intolerance and fostering inclusive perspectives.

Religious moderation encourages students to engage in dialogue, think critically, and respect differing viewpoints. This aligns with the broader goals of Islamic education, which aim not only to develop religious knowledge but also to cultivate ethical and social responsibility. In this sense, moderation functions as a bridge between religious teachings and multicultural realities.

3. Local Wisdom as a Contextual Learning Approach

The findings also emphasize the importance of local wisdom in making Islamic education more contextual and relevant. Local wisdom provides practical examples of values such as cooperation, tolerance, and social harmony that are embedded in students' daily lives.

By integrating local wisdom into the learning process, abstract religious concepts can be translated into concrete practices. This approach enhances students' understanding

and facilitates the internalization of values. Furthermore, local wisdom strengthens students' cultural identity while simultaneously promoting openness to diversity.

4. Implications for Islamic Religious Education

The integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom has significant implications for the development of Islamic Religious Education. First, it highlights the need for a holistic learning approach that combines moral, religious, and cultural dimensions. Second, it emphasizes the importance of contextual and student-centered learning strategies that actively engage students in the learning process.

In addition, educators play a crucial role in facilitating this integration. Teachers are expected not only to deliver content but also to guide students in understanding and applying values in real-life contexts. This requires pedagogical competence, cultural awareness, and the ability to adapt learning approaches to diverse student needs.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the integration of character values, religious moderation, and local wisdom constitutes a holistic approach in strengthening Islamic Religious Education in the context of contemporary societal challenges. These three elements are not independent components but are interconnected dimensions that collectively contribute to the development of students' moral character, inclusive attitudes, and social awareness.

The findings indicate that character values provide the ethical foundation, religious moderation ensures balanced and inclusive understanding, and local wisdom offers contextual relevance in the learning process. The integration of these aspects enables Islamic education to move beyond normative teaching toward a more meaningful and applicable learning experience that aligns with students' real-life contexts.

Furthermore, this study highlights that the challenges of intolerance, moral degradation, and social fragmentation cannot be effectively addressed through partial approaches. Instead, they require an integrative educational framework that combines moral, religious, and cultural dimensions simultaneously.

However, this study is limited by its reliance on library research, which focuses on conceptual analysis rather than empirical data. Therefore, future research is recommended to employ empirical approaches, such as field studies or experimental designs, to examine the practical implementation of this integrative model in educational settings.

In addition, this study implies the need for educators to develop innovative, contextual, and inclusive learning strategies. Strengthening teachers' competencies and integrating these values into the curriculum are essential steps to ensure that Islamic Religious Education remains relevant and responsive to the demands of a multicultural and dynamic society.

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