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# The Role of Student Organization and Islamic Education in Cultivating Religious Moderation among Students

**[1]Giyono*, [2]Suyitno**
Corresponding Author: *giyono.s.ag.1964@gmail.com
[1] Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam* or PAI) teachers foster students' attitudes toward religious moderation as a unifying force for the nation. The study concludes that students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus Gunungkidul, Indonesia (a private junior high school) actively participate in Rohis (Islamic Student Organization). This engagement is attributed to the students' educational backgrounds, as most are graduates of elementary schools in Gunungkidul, where mandatory programs include religious activities both in schools and their local communities. PAI teachers play a pivotal role in cultivating students' understanding and practice of religious moderation through both instructional and extracurricular Islamic activities. Under the guidance of these teachers and through the platform of school-based Islamic organizations such as Rohis, students engage in activities such as religious studies, social outreach programs, and initiatives to promote national unity and patriotism. These efforts serve as a foundation for fostering cohesion and solidarity among the nation's youth.

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## Introduction

Islam emphasizes the principle of *tawasuth*, which refers to maintaining balance and moderation, avoiding extremes, and fostering inclusivity [1]. This principle is a core aspect of religious moderation that must be instilled in students to develop a moderate attitude in their lives as citizens and members of society [2]. Religious moderation is essential to be taught to students to cultivate individuals who promote peace, compassion, and tolerance in the future. The role of Islamic Education (*Pendidikan Agam Islam* or PAI) teachers in imparting an understanding of *tawasuth* is vital and must be emphasized [3]. The content of Islamic religious education should prioritize values of love, mutual respect, and cooperation in goodness, enabling students to practice these virtues in their daily lives.

Religious education serves as a fundamental aspect of shaping students' thinking in addressing various aspects of life, including values, ethics, and human resource development [4]. However, there has been a concerning shift in the goals of education, as evidenced by the persistence of intolerant religious attitudes, which have triggered interfaith tensions in several regions [5]-[7]. Incidents such as the burning of mosques, attacks on churches, violence against religious figures, suicide bombings under the guise of religion, and acts of vandalism and discrimination based on religious and ethnic sentiments often dominate national news.

These challenges underscore the need for a comprehensive understanding to counter ideologies that threaten the common good and the continuity of harmonious interfaith relations. Planned and deliberate efforts are required from multiple stakeholders to address and resolve religious violence effectively. One of the most suitable platforms for fostering tolerance among students in dealing with various issues is the Islamic Student Organization (*Kerohanian Islam* or Rohis).

The presence of Rohis in schools has proven to have a positive impact in addressing the risks of religious radicalization [8]. It is hoped that through Rohis, students can develop attitudes of tolerance when faced with challenges related to religious or social issues. Conceptually, Islamic education for students is not limited to formal education but can also be enhanced through participation in religious organizations, such as Rohis.

This study aims to explore the significant role of Islamic Education teachers in fostering students' understanding and attitudes toward religious moderation through both classroom instruction and participation in Rohis activities. The research highlights how Rohis at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus Gunungkidul, Indonesia contributes to shaping students' balanced and moderate perspectives, promoting unity, and strengthening national solidarity.

## Literature Review

### A. Rohis: A Platform for Religious and Personal Development

Rohis, an Islamic spiritual organization, serves as an extracurricular activity designed to deepen and strengthen students' understanding of Islam. Rohis provides a platform for sharing Islamic knowledge through forums, teaching sessions, and *dakwah* (Islamic propagation) [9]. By joining Rohis, students can build stronger connections and friendships with fellow Muslim peers within the school environment. Various activities in Rohis aim to enhance students' faith in Allah SWT and promote a sense of community [10].

Historically, Rohis emerged in the late 1980s as a response to the need for more comprehensive Islamic education among students, as formal religious lessons were deemed insufficient. Since then, Rohis has been widely established in schools, offering students a medium to supplement their religious knowledge. According to Indonesia's Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation No. 62 of 2014 on extracurricular activities, such programs aim to develop students' character by expanding their potential, interests, abilities, and interpersonal skills. Through Rohis, students gain leadership skills, teamwork experience, public speaking abilities, broader social networks, and a deeper understanding of religious and secular knowledge.

Rohis also plays a strategic role in mitigating religious radicalization among students. By promoting peaceful and constructive conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation skills, Rohis empowers students to embody tolerance and harmony in their interactions [9]. Educational approaches integrated with school curricula help establish a balanced and comprehensive understanding of religion. This framework ensures students are equipped with a broad and inclusive religious perspective, reinforcing the importance of peace and mutual respect in a multicultural society.

### B. The Role of Teachers in Shaping Religious Moderation

Islamic Education teachers hold a critical role in guiding students toward an ideal, balanced position in their religious practices—neither leaning toward extremism nor liberalism [11]. This middle path allows students to be exemplary figures who are respected across diverse perspectives. Religious moderation, characterized by rejecting extremes, is vital for preserving civilization and fostering peace [12]. Teachers instill foundational principles of moderation in students, emphasizing balance in various aspects, such as intellect and revelation, body and soul, individual rights and communal welfare, and tradition and modernity.

Teachers act as facilitators who channel, guide, and motivate students to develop their unique potential. By embracing students' individuality, teachers encourage them to appreciate diversity and interact respectfully with others [13]. Teachers also play a vital role in imparting the concept of Islam as a *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation), promoting it as the foundation for peaceful coexistence. This requires patience and dedication from educators to cultivate an understanding of religious moderation in students.

According to Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs' *White Paper on Religious Moderation* [14], four key indicators of religious moderation are national commitment, tolerance, nonviolence, and accommodation of local culture. Nata [15] further highlights ten fundamental values of Islamic education that align with moderation, including promoting peace, respecting human rights, and fostering interfaith and intercultural friendships. This approach also balances intellectual, spiritual, and moral development, equipping students with the tools to navigate a pluralistic society while upholding ethical values. Through the combined efforts of Rohis activities and the guidance of teachers, students can develop a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation, preparing them to become agents of peace and unity in their communities.

## Material and Methods

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore the role of Rohis and Islamic Education teachers in fostering religious moderation among students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus, Gunungkidul. Data were collected through interviews with PAI teachers, observations of Rohis activities, and analysis of related documents such as lesson plans and program outlines. The study also involved student participation in both formal and extracurricular activities to gain insights into their engagement and character development. The data were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and relationships between classroom teaching, extracurricular activities, and their impact on promoting tolerance, diversity, and national unity. This comprehensive approach provided a detailed understanding of the strategies used to instill the values of religious moderation in students.

## Results and Discussion

The synergy between PAI teachers' classroom efforts and Rohis' extracurricular programs at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus Gunungkidul significantly contributes to the development of students who are tolerant, compassionate, and committed to unity. This dual approach ensures that students are well-prepared to embody and advocate for religious moderation, both within their school environment and in the broader community. The model of integrating classroom instruction with extracurricular activities demonstrates an effective

strategy for character education, particularly in fostering values essential for a harmonious and cohesive society.

## A. Student Engagement in Rohis Activities

The level of student participation in Rohis activities at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus Gunungkidul is notably high, both during online and offline settings under health protocols. This engagement demonstrates the relevance and appeal of Rohis as a platform for religious and personal development. The organization facilitates students' learning beyond the formal classroom setting, offering a space to practice and internalize the principles of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Islam as a mercy to all creation).

The involvement of students in Rohis activities highlights the effectiveness of the program in fostering a sense of community and shared responsibility as mentioned in the other research [9]. Activities such as religious studies, discussions, and collaborative projects provide students with opportunities to enhance their understanding of religious moderation [8]. Through active participation, students learn to appreciate diversity, respect differing opinions, and embody tolerance.




**Fig. 1.** Student activity in an Islamic celebration day

Incorporating methods such as group discussions, teamwork, and educational field trips, Rohis provides practical avenues for students to engage with and understand the importance of coexistence and mutual respect. For instance, group discussions encourage students to express their perspectives and listen to others, fostering a culture of dialogue [16]. Similarly, teamwork activities help students develop interpersonal skills and an appreciation for diverse viewpoints [17], while field trips expose them to real-world examples of harmonious coexistence in multicultural settings [18].



**Fig. 2.** Students act as a teacher (*da'i*) in a certain occation

The active participation in Rohis activities not only enriches students' religious knowledge but also strengthens their commitment to living in a way that respects the rights of others, including the right to worship according to one's beliefs. This aligns with the overarching goal of religious moderation, which aims to prevent division and promote unity within the community.

## B. The Role of Teachers and Rohis in Character Building

Teachers of Islamic Education play a critical role in fostering religious moderation among students at SMP Muhammadiyah 2 Tepus Gunungkidul. As educators and mentors, they are instrumental in providing a broad understanding of Islam as a religion that values compassion, tolerance, and coexistence. Their guidance is crucial in equipping students with the knowledge and attitudes necessary to navigate a pluralistic society.

In the classroom, teachers integrate religious moderation into their teaching methods. Techniques such as discussion, collaborative projects, and experiential learning are employed to help students internalize the values of diversity and mutual respect. For example, discussions on multiculturalism and religious tolerance encourage critical thinking and empathy, while collaborative projects promote teamwork and understanding of communal welfare.



**Fig. 3.** Teacher leads an activities integrating scout program

Beyond the classroom, Rohis serves as a vital extension of these efforts by offering programs that reinforce the values of moderation and national unity. Internal activities, such as religious studies that incorporate themes of moderation, provide students with a solid foundation of inclusive religious knowledge. External activities, including disaster relief efforts, charitable initiatives, and participation in youth and scouting events, enable students to practice these values in real-life contexts.



**Fig. 4.** Improving value and ethics building by student

These initiatives are pivotal in shaping students' characters, particularly in enhancing their sense of national identity and solidarity. By engaging in community-oriented activities, students develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of society and the importance of working collectively toward the common good, which aligns with the Islamic principle of *ta'awun* (mutual cooperation) as emphasized in the Quran. Rohis' focus on nation-building complements the efforts of teachers, ensuring that students are not only knowledgeable about religious moderation but also capable of applying it in their daily lives, reflecting the concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) in Islam [1],[3],[19]. This holistic approach fosters a balanced integration of faith and civic responsibility, which is central to Islamic teachings.

## Conclusion

The study underscores the significant role of Rohis and Islamic Education teachers in fostering religious moderation and character development among students. High levels of student engagement in Rohis activities, both online and offline, highlight the effectiveness of this organization as a platform for enhancing religious understanding and personal growth. Through a variety of activities such as religious studies, collaborative projects, and community service, Rohis promotes values of tolerance, compassion, and unity, which are central to the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin*. PAI teachers complement these efforts by integrating religious moderation into their teaching strategies, employing discussion, teamwork, and experiential learning methods to instill principles of diversity, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.

Their role extends beyond academic instruction, serving as mentors who guide students toward balanced and inclusive religious practices. Together, Rohis and teachers create a holistic educational environment that equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate a pluralistic society while maintaining their commitment to Islamic values. This dual approach not only strengthens students' sense of national unity but also prepares them to be agents of peace and harmony in their communities.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Authors



**Giyono** is a doctoral student in the field of Education at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, Yogyakarta where he is currently pursuing his PhD studies. With a deep interest in local wisdom, education, and religion, his academic and research pursuits are focused on exploring how cultural traditions and religious values can be integrated into modern educational practices. Giyono is passionate about preserving and promoting local wisdom as an essential component of education, believing that it can contribute to the development of a more inclusive and culturally aware learning environment. Through his studies, Giyono aspires to contribute significantly to the advancement of education that respects both modernity and tradition. (email: giyono.s.ag.1964@gmail.com).



**Prof. Dr. Suyitno** is a Professor in Automotive Engineering Education, at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, at Universitas Muhammadiyah Purworejo, Indonesia. He is currently interested in the themes of automotive engineering, education, automotive engineering, and vocational education. He currently teaches courses in technical measurement, research methodology, and training development in automotive engineering education, teacher training, and education faculties. He has published Scopus-indexed journal papers. (email: yitno@umpwr.ac.id).