

## RELIGIOUS MODERATION FOR INDONESIAN MUSLIMS IN DIASPORA: The *Pojok Moderasi Beragama* of the Indonesian School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

*This article deals with the establishment of the Pojok Moderasi Beragama at the Indonesian School in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, as part of its efforts to promote religious moderation among the Indonesian diaspora in the region. The initiative is driven by concerns over the vulnerability of the diaspora community to radical Islamic ideologies, such as Wabbabism and other transnational Islamic movements prevalent in the Middle East. As such, the establishment of the Pojok Moderasi Beragama at the Indonesian School in Riyadh represents a strategic preventive measure. Employing an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, this article explores the implementation of “moderate” programs aimed at establishing the Pojok Moderasi Beragama. Initially, all teachers underwent comprehensive training to enhance their understanding of religious moderation and its practical application in the school setting. Simultaneously, mentoring activities facilitated the gradual development of religious moderation, ultimately leading to the creation of the Pojok Moderasi*



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*Beragama by leveraging the school's existing assets. This article argues that teachers have significantly improved their understanding of religious moderation, encompassing pluralism, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue. Furthermore, it captures the progressive development of the Pojok Moderasi Beragama, which effectively utilizes the school's resources, including the library, school website, and social media platforms.*

*[Artikel ini mengkaji pendirian Pojok Moderasi Beragama di Sekolah Indonesia di Riyadh Arab Saudi dalam upayanya mempromosikan moderasi beragama di kalangan masyarakat Indonesia yang berdiaspora di sana. Hal demikian dilatarbelakangi oleh adanya kerentanan pengaruh ideologi Islam radikal seperti Wahabi dan gerakan Islam transnasional lainnya di Timur Tengah. Sehingga keberadaan Pojok Moderasi Beragama di sekolah Indonesia di Riyadh merupakan langkah preventif yang tepat. Artikel ini dengan menggunakan pendekatan Asset-Based-Community Development (ABCD), menelisik bagaimana implementasi program-program “moderat” yang goalnya adalah pendirian Pojok Moderasi Beragama. Semua guru—pada mulanya—menerima pelatihan komprehensif untuk meningkatkan pemahaman mereka tentang moderasi beragama dan bagaimana praktiknya di sekolah. Pada saat yang sama, kegiatan pendampingan memfasilitasi pengembangan moderasi beragama secara bertahap, dan menghasilkan pembentukan pojok moderasi dengan memanfaatkan aset sekolah yang ada. Artikel ini berargumen bahwa para guru di sana akhirnya memiliki pemahaman yang jauh lebih baik tentang moderasi beragama; tentang kemajemukan, toleransi, dan dialog agama. Artikel ini juga berhasil memotret geliat progresivitas dalam pengembangan pojok moderasi dengan memanfaatkan aset yang dimiliki sekolah: perpustakaan, situs web sekolah, dan media sosial.]*

**Keywords:** *Pojok Moderasi, Indonesian School Abroad, Diaspora, Indonesia*

## Introduction

The issue of moderation is always worth-discussing and studying more deeply because the problem of moderation is an issue that exists in the regional, national, and international spheres.<sup>1</sup> This is due to the

<sup>1</sup> Syaifudin Zuhri, “Religious Moderation in An Eastern Javanese Town: A Survey Report,” *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 18, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2023.18.1.1-25>; Khalimatu Nisa, “Humour as a Counter Islamist Discourse: NU Garis Lucu’s Online Activism,” *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 18, no. 1 (2023), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2023.18.1.1-25>.

distribution of intolerance problems that are also found in various layers of society.<sup>2</sup> In response to the surge of radicalism in the name of religion, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has swiftly devised a countermeasure in the form of religious moderation. Religious moderation involves attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors prioritizing balance, the middle path (*washatiyyah*), and tolerance in adhering to religious teachings.<sup>3</sup> Given its significance, religious moderation has become a priority program in the national development plan. As mandated by the National Medium-Term Development Plan (*Rencana Pengembangan Jangka Menengah Nasional/RPJMN*) 2020-2024, strengthening religious moderation is expected to fortify tolerance, social harmony, and cohesion. The reinforcement of religious moderation is crucial not only within religious institutions such as places of worship or study circles but also in other public institutions.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, strengthening religious moderation has predominantly occurred within the domestic context. On the international stage, religious moderation remains relatively unfamiliar, particularly for Indonesian citizens (WNI) living abroad. According to Migrant Care, WNI abroad are, in fact, more susceptible to exposure to radicalism and extremism. Various factors contribute to this vulnerability, including low levels of digital and religious literacy.<sup>5</sup> Even the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) has confirmed the involvement of approximately 1,500 WNI

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<sup>2</sup> M. Khusna Amal & Norshahrir Saat, "Tolerance Without Liberalism: The Local Nahdlatul Ulama and Intolerance Politics in Contemporary East Java, Indonesia," *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 16, no. December (2021): 167–89, <https://doi.org/10.21274/epis.2021.16.2.167-189>.

<sup>3</sup> Mujamil Qomar, "Islam Nusantara: An Indonesian Translation to Practice Islam," *Epistémé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman*, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Presiden Republik Indonesia, "Peraturan Presiden Republik Indonesia Nomor 18 Tahun 2020 Tentang Rencana Pembangunan Jangka Menengah Nasional 2020-2024" (2020).

<sup>5</sup> Ayumi Amindoni, "Buruh Migran Indonesia 'Rentan' Terkena Paham Radikal," BBC NEWS INDONESIA, 2017.

in radical and extremist activities overseas.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, instilling religious moderation is of utmost importance for WNI to provide them with immunity against the virus of radicalism.

Among the various countries hosting Indonesian nationals, Saudi Arabia stands out as a particularly intriguing subject for the study of religious moderation due to several reasons. First, Saudi Arabia is a home to the second-largest population of Indonesian nationals after Malaysia. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs data in 2022, approximately 665,552 individuals seek their livelihood in this oil-rich nation.<sup>7</sup> Second, Saudi Arabia is often associated with Wahhabism, an Islamic section widely considered an ideological source of radical and extremist movements. The exclusive, rigid, and militant characteristics taught in Wahhabism are deemed capable of inspiring actions against those who differ, whether Muslim or non-Muslim.<sup>8</sup> Third, Saudi Arabian education has faced issues with radicalism in recent years. Research by the Center for Religious Freedom of Freedom House and the Institute for Gulf Affairs indicates that Saudi Arabian school curricula are dominated by fundamentalist teachings and intolerance. Textbooks in schools contain content promoting hatred and hostility towards religions or groups different from their own.<sup>9</sup>

Although there is no precise data to date on the involvement of Indonesian nationals (WNI) in Saudi Arabia in radicalism, the likelihood of WNI becoming radical, even at the level of ideology, remains wide open. This assumption is grounded in the prevalence of Wahhabism,

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<sup>6</sup> Komjen Boy Rafli Amar, "BNPT Sebut 1.500 WNI Terlibat Aksi Terorisme di Luar Negeri," *CNN Indonesia*, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Kemlu RI, "Data Statistik Kepegawaian dan Data Statistik WNI di Arab Saudi," Kementerian Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 2022.

<sup>8</sup> Hasbi Aswar, "Politik Luar Negeri Arab Saudi dan Ajaran Salafi-Wahabi di Indonesia," *Jisiera: The Journal of Islamic Studies and International Relations* 1, no. 1 (2016): 15–30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4606669>.

<sup>9</sup> Nina Shea and Ali Al-Ahmed, "Saudi Arabia's Curriculum of Intolerance with Excerpts from Saudi Ministry of Education Textbooks for Islamic Studies," in *Center for Religious Freedom* (Washington, 2006).

often considered a root of global radicalism, deeply ingrained within Saudi society. Without a strong foundation in religious understanding and exposure only to the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, Indonesian individuals may succumb to actions such as excommunication, blame-shifting, and condemning others. On the other hand, as stated by Badrus Sholeh, the Cultural and Educational Attaché of the Republic of Indonesia for Saudi Arabia, some students in Indonesian schools in Saudi Arabia are descendants of WNI born and raised in Saudi Arabia. They lack direct experiences with Indonesia, obtaining information solely through word of mouth or the internet. Incomplete knowledge about Indonesia is concerning, as it may breed doubts and even cynicism, eroding their love for their ancestral homeland. Therefore, preventive measures are essential to build the resilience of students, ensuring they are not easily influenced by radicalism and fortifying their sense of nationalism.

In this regard, Indonesian educational institutions in Saudi Arabia need to play a role in strengthening religious moderation. This is crucial to establish the foundation of moderate attitudes and behaviors while fortifying the school community against potential radicalism that can infiltrate various sources.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the reinforcement of religious moderation is integral to character education, as the essence of religious moderation lies in a religious attitude that upholds the values of tolerance and respect for differences.<sup>11</sup> Through the enhancement of religious moderation, schools are expected to mold students with moderate, tolerant, and nationalist characters.

On the other hand, the Religious Moderation Strengthening Program in Indonesian schools in Saudi Arabia also aligns with the

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<sup>10</sup> Umar Al Faruq and Dwi Noviani, "Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama Sebagai Perisai Radikalisme Di Lembaga Pendidikan," *TAUJIH: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 1 (2021): 59–77.

<sup>11</sup> Abdul Azis and A. Khoirul Anam, "Moderasi Beragama Berdasarkan Nilai-Nilai Islam" (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Kementerian Agama RI, 2021).

roadmap of the Saudi Arabian Government 2030, which focuses on building a moderate, inclusive, and modern education system. In this context, the Saudi Arabian Government has reformed the curriculum across all levels, emphasizing creativity and critical thinking, and establishing a more inclusive and moderate education system.<sup>12</sup>

This program also supports the initiatives of the Indonesian Attache Ministry of Education and Culture (Atdikbud RI), which is currently upgrading the religious understanding of teachers towards a more moderate direction, especially Islamic teachers in Indonesian schools in Saudi Arabia.<sup>13</sup> The reason is, that the concept of religious moderation, which is currently being actively promoted in Indonesia, has not been fully understood and implemented by teachers in Indonesian schools in Saudi Arabia. This religious moderation strengthening program anticipated that teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of religious moderation and capable of designing the development of religious moderation in their respective schools.

Building on this foundation, this article implemented a community service program focused on strengthening religious moderation among teachers in Indonesian schools in Saudi Arabia, in collaboration with the Indonesian School in Riyadh (SIR). SIR was selected as a partner due to its favorable academic, environmental, socio-cultural, and facility resources, which support the development of religious moderation. This program utilizes the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach, which emphasizes leveraging local resources and community strengths for empowerment.<sup>14</sup> By identifying existing assets within the Indonesian

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<sup>12</sup> Najah Al-Otaibi, "Vision 2030: Religious Education Reform in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," *Riyadh: King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS)*, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Atdikbud KBRI Riyadh, "Wamenag RI Sosialisasi Moderasi Beragama di Arab Saudi," Atdikbud-Riyadh.Kemdikbud.Go.Id, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Nurdyanah Nurdyanah, "Panduan Pelatihan Dasar Asset Based Community-Driven Development (ABCD)" (2016); Yuan Badrianto and Muhamad Ekhsan, "Strategi Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia Melalui Pemberdayaan dan Peningkatan Kualitas Lingkungan Desa Cikedokan," *KOMMAS: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 1, no. 1

School in Riyadh, the approach fosters sustainable initiatives led by the school community to strengthen religious moderation. The program was conducted through training and mentoring sessions designed to enhance teachers' understanding of religious moderation. The training aimed to deepen their conceptual knowledge, while the mentoring process utilized the *Pojok Moderasi* as a dedicated space for the SIR community to explore, apply, and foster religious moderation within the school environment.

Several studies have examined strategies for strengthening religious moderation in education. Herdiana et al.,<sup>15</sup> explored efforts to promote religious moderation among youth in Bandung, highlighting increased awareness and tolerance. Hanik et al.,<sup>16</sup> analyzed the Living Values Education Program at *Pesantren* (Islamic Boarding School) Achsaniyah, demonstrating its effectiveness in fostering moderation through value-based activities. Widiyono<sup>17</sup> investigated the internalization of *Aswaja*-based character education in an Islamic elementary school, emphasizing religious culture, integrated values, and collaboration. While sharing a focus on religious moderation, this article differs in its context, examining an Indonesian school in Riyadh and introducing the *Pojok Moderasi* as a novel approach.

This article identifies a research gap in the limited exploration of religious moderation in Indonesian educational institutions abroad,

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(2020): 168–175; Fatmawaty Mallapiang et al., “Pengelolaan Sampah dengan Pendekatan Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) di Wilayah Pesisir Bulukumba Sulawesi Selatan,” *Riau Journal of Empowerment* 3, no. 2 (2020): 79–86, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.31258/raje.3.2.79-86>.

<sup>15</sup> Dian Herdiana, Aqshal Septiano Baroga, and Ariq Putra Fauzan, “Promoting ‘Moderasi Beragama’ As A Unifying Community Value for The Youth,” *Salus Publica: Journal of Community Service*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.58905/saluspublica.v1i2.94>.

<sup>16</sup> Elya Umi Hanik, Abu Choir, and Husni Mubarak, “The Management Living Values Education Program in Improving The Character of Religious Moderation in Achsaniyah Islamic Boarding School Kudus,” *Al Hikmah: Journal of Education*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.54168/ahje.v4i2.172>.

<sup>17</sup> Aan Widiyono, “Internalizing Aswaja-Based Character Education through School Environment Design and Collaborative Strategy,” *Indonesian Journal of Islamic Education Studies (IJIES)*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.33367/ijies.v5i1.2324>.

particularly in Muslim-majority countries with distinct social and cultural dynamics, such as Riyadh. Furthermore, there is a lack of in-depth research on physical strategies, such as the *Pojok Moderasi*, for strengthening religious moderation in Indonesian schools overseas. This article addresses this gap by proposing an approach that integrates character education with the design of physical spaces to facilitate discussions on religious moderation. By combining educational values with the physical environment, this article offers an innovative strategy to enhance the understanding and practice of religious moderation in Indonesian schools outside Indonesia.

## Religious Moderation in Schools

The birth of religious moderation is a response to various issues stemming from extreme religious interpretations. Religious moderation is considered effective in creating a religious balance and steering believers away from extremist attitudes.<sup>18</sup> Religious moderation is a perspective, attitude, or behavior that take a middle, fair, and non-extreme position in religious matters.<sup>19</sup> The essence of Islamic moderation itself lies in justice, balance, and tolerance.<sup>20</sup> Operationally, moderation is depicted as a middle ground between liberalism and radicalism.<sup>21</sup>

In the Indonesian context, religious moderation encompasses four indicators, including: 1) National commitment. National commitment

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<sup>18</sup> Betria Zarpina Yant and Doli Witro, "Islamic Moderation as A Resolution of Different Conflicts of Religion," *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan Dan Keagamaan* 8, no. 1 (2020): 446–57.

<sup>19</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, "Moderasi Beragama" (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Muhammad Irfan Helmy, Ahmad Darajat Jumadil Kubro, and Muhamad Ali, "The Understanding of Islamic Moderation (Wasatiyyah Al-Islam) and the Hadiths on Inter-Religious Relations in the Javanese Pesantrens," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 337–401, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18326/ijjims.v11i2.351-376>.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of Muhammadiyah," *Studia Islamika* 25, no. 3 (2018): 433–470, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v25i3.7765>.

serves as a benchmark, as radical ideologies often advocate for a caliphate system as an alternative to democracy. 2) Tolerance. Tolerance is a key parameter of moderation, as radicalism does not tolerate differences, both interfaith and within the internal realm of a religion. 3) Anti-violence. A distinctive feature of religious moderation is the use of peaceful methods for change, eschewing violence. 4) Accommodation of local culture. Radicalism refuses to embrace local culture, considering it a stain on religion that compromises its purity.<sup>22</sup>

Given its urgency, it is not surprising that the strengthening of religious moderation has become a priority program for the government. One of the key sectors receiving primary attention in this effort is the education sector. This is because educational institutions often serve as entry points for radicalism.<sup>23</sup> A survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*/PPIM) at UIN Jakarta in 2021 also revealed that 30.16% of students in Indonesia exhibit low levels of tolerance.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, strengthening religious moderation is considered crucial in schools as a preventive measure and an effort to shield the school community from potential radicalism.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the reinforcement of religious moderation supports schools in shaping students' characters to embrace global diversity and fosters a school environment that is peaceful, friendly, and inclusive.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, "Moderasi Beragama."

<sup>23</sup> Husniyatus Salamah Zainiyati, "Curriculum, Islamic Understanding and Radical Islamic Movements in Indonesia," *Journal of Indonesian Islam* 10, no. 2 (2016): 285–308, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15642/JIIS.2016.10.2.285-308>.

<sup>24</sup> Tim PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, "Ringkasan Eksekutif Hasil Survei Nasional 'Kebinekaan Di Menara Gading: Toleransi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi,'" PPIM UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Yuliana Yuliana et al., "Moderasi Beragama untuk Mencegah Radikalisme pada Anak Usia Dini," in *Seminar Nasional Paedagogia*, 2021, 9–15, <https://doi.org/http://journal.ummat.ac.id/index.php/fkip/article/view/5601>.

<sup>26</sup> Penta Astari Prasetya, "Membangun Sikap Moderasi Beragama Melalui Pembelajaran Agama Inklusif: Studi Kasus di SMK Wira Harapan," *DIDAXEI* 3, no. 1 (2022): 356–366, <https://doi.org/http://e-journal.iaknambon.ac.id/index.php/DX/article/view/492>.

There are various ways to strengthen religious moderation in schools. Albana summarizes several strategies employed by some high schools in Indonesia, including instructional methods, extracurricular activities, and school events.<sup>27</sup> Fauzian et al. reveal in their study on reinforcement that religious moderation can also be achieved through local cultural arts.<sup>28</sup> In addition to these approaches, reinforcing religious moderation can also involve curriculum design, teaching methods, and instilling habits of tolerance and mutual respect within the school environment.<sup>29</sup>

### **The *Pojok Moderasi* at the Indonesian School in Riyadh**

The planning phase was conducted through an online focus group discussion (FGD) on October 22, 2023. The aim of this FGD was to gather initial information regarding the on-the-ground conditions and align perceptions about the upcoming community service program. The forum involved the community service team, the Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture's education and cultural attaché for Saudi Arabia, the Head of the Indonesian School in Riyadh, and representatives of teachers and educational staff from the Indonesian School in Riyadh. The education and cultural attaché for Saudi Arabia welcomed the religious moderation reinforcement program. This is because religious moderation is a national program that must be supported and successful. However, religious moderation efforts have not reached government institutions outside the country, including educational institutions. On the other

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<sup>27</sup> Hasan Albana, "Implementasi Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama di Sekolah Menengah Atas," *Jurnal SMART (Studi Masyarakat, Religi, dan Tradisi)* 9, no. 1 (2023): 49–64, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18784/smart.v9i1.1849>.

<sup>28</sup> Rinda Fauzian et al., "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Kearifan Lokal Dalam Upaya Membentuk Sikap Moderat Siswa Madrasah: Moderasi Beragama," *AL-WIJDÂN Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 6, no. 1 (2021): 1–14, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v6i1.933>.

<sup>29</sup> Athoillah Islamy, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ideologi Pancasila," *POROS ONIM: Jurnal Sosial Keagamaan* 3, no. 1 (2022): 18–30, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.53491/porosonim.v3i1.333>.

hand, the Head of the Indonesian School in Riyadh appreciated the community service team for choosing the Indonesian School in Riyadh as a program partner. The school head mentioned that the SIR community comes from diverse cultural backgrounds and regions, making it essential to introduce religious moderation to foster mutual respect among the school community.

Several important aspects discussed in this planning phase include: general information about the Indonesian School in Riyadh, the program scheme offered by the community service team to SIR, the departure and return schedule of the community service team to Saudi Arabia, the accommodation arrangements for the community service team during their stay in Saudi Arabia, and the program implementation timeframe. It was agreed upon in this forum that the community service program would be conducted for six days, starting from November 4 to November 9, 2023.

This program involves all SIR teachers to strengthen their understanding of religious moderation and equip them with the ability to implement and develop religious moderation in the school. In line with the stages of the ABCD approach, the program implementation process is carried out in the following stages. the team conducts identification related to the religious conditions of the school community while mapping out resources or assets that can be utilized for the strengthening of religious moderation in the school. This discovery stage is carried out through observation and interviews. Observation is conducted at the school to understand the actual conditions, the learning environment, and educational activities. It is also aimed at identifying the school's potential that can be developed for the enhancement of religious moderation.

The interviews were conducted with the Education and Culture Attaché of the Republic of Indonesia, the school principal, representatives of teachers, and parents of students. The interview with the Education and Culture Attaché focused on the education policies for Indonesian

citizens in Saudi Arabia and the religious conditions of Indonesian citizens, especially within the Indonesian School community in Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, the interview with the school principal centered on existing school programs and their potential for development in strengthening religious moderation. Simultaneously, interviews with Islamic Education teachers were directed toward understanding the teaching of Islamic Education at the school and the conditions of students, covering their understanding, attitudes, and practices.

The results of this activity indicate that the SIR community comprises individuals from diverse backgrounds. However, this diversity is not problematic as the school community maintains mutual respect and fosters tolerance. Nonetheless, Islamic Education teachers identified some students with relatively extreme religious perspectives, possibly influenced by religious content encountered on the internet. On the other hand, the school principal revealed that some students were born and raised in Saudi Arabia. Since childhood, they have been exposed solely to the teachings and religious practices of the Saudi Arabian community. They are unfamiliar with the diverse religious practices of the Indonesian society. Without an introduction to religious moderation, there is a concern that they might succumb to fanaticism towards the religious doctrines prevalent in Saudi Arabia, potentially blaming differing religious practices.

From this discovery stage, the assets owned by the SIR have been identified. Academically, SIR possesses a significant asset in the form of well-qualified teaching resources. The teachers at SIR are graduates of renowned universities in Indonesia, selected through a national selection process conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture. In terms of religious knowledge, both teachers and education staff have a foundation of religious understanding acquired through their studies in Indonesia. Regarding facilities, SIR boasts adequate educational infrastructure, including multimedia resources and teaching aids used in the learning

process. Socially and culturally, the SIR community comes from diverse cultural backgrounds, accustomed to living alongside and respecting one another. In the realm of religion, SIR has various religious programs such as Quranic recitation (*tahsin* al-Qur'an), the practice of *Dhuba* prayer, congregational *Dhuhur* prayer, and celebrations of religious festivals.

The second stage is a dream. This involves common hopes and goals based on the potential identified.<sup>30</sup> In this regard, the team engaged with the School Principal, Vice Principal, and teachers. The discussions yielded several points of hope voiced by the school community, including the SIR community's dreams of becoming a laboratory for religious moderation, where members can learn, implement, and develop religious moderation.

First, the SIR community aspires to create multicultural awareness in the school environment, where individuals from various religious and cultural backgrounds feel accepted and valued. Second, the SIR community envisions the presence of a religious moderation development program at the school through training for students, teachers, and school staff to build a better understanding of religious moderation. Third, the SIR community hopes that teachers will not only be educators but also leaders in implementing religious moderation and creating an inclusive learning environment.

The design phase involves creating strategies to realize the dreams. Planning must be done thoroughly and systematically because a structured plan will ease the path to achieving the dream. In this stage, the team makes concrete efforts to design and formulate a scheme for the development of religious moderation, especially for teachers and generally for the school community. Students must also be involved in the program to create synergy in implementing and developing religious moderation in the school. The program design is based on on-the-ground

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<sup>30</sup> Mirza Maulana, "Asset-Based Community Development : Strategi Pengembangan Masyarakat," *Empower : Jurnal Pengembangan Masyarakat Islam* 4, no. 2 (2019): 259–78, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24235/empower.v4i2.4572>.

facts, existing assets, and the shared dreams of the school community. The design of this program involves the entire school community to ensure its effective implementation.

The result of the program design is the establishment of a religious *Pojok Moderasi* that serves as the center for the study and development of religious moderation at the school. To implement the program, a team is formed to manage the religious *Pojok Moderasi*. From this design, it is agreed that three aspects will be developed: the enhancement of the school library, the development of the school website, and the use of school social media for the promotion of religious moderation.

The team determines the form of activities, including training and mentoring. The training will focus on the concepts of religious moderation and the development of religious moderation in schools. Meanwhile, mentoring will concentrate on establishing a religious *Pojok Moderasi* involving both teachers and students.

In addition to determining the activities, the community service team, along with the school principal, formed a team to manage the religious *Pojok Moderasi*. The result was an agreement on the composition of the *Pojok Moderasi* management team, consisting of the School Principal, the Vice Principal for the curriculum, and several teachers selected based on their expertise and roles in the school. These teachers include those specializing in Islamic Religious Education, Civic Education, Indonesian Language, Arts and Culture, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and the student council advisor. The coordinator role is assumed by the Islamic Religious Education teacher, considered the most competent in religious knowledge.

Afterward, the destiny involves concrete actions by providing training and mentoring to teachers and students to strengthen the foundation of understanding and values of religious moderation, as well as strategies for developing religious moderation in the school for all SIR teachers. The training focuses on two main aspects. First, the concept

of religious moderation, including understanding, foundations, urgency, and values of religious moderation. Second, strategies for implementing and developing religious moderation through school culture, classroom culture, and extracurricular activities.

The training took place on November 6, 2023, in the SIR auditorium after school hours for a duration of 4 teaching hours or 4 sessions of 45 minutes each. All 23 SIR teachers, including the school principal and vice principal, participated in the training. To assess the training results, the team conducted pre-tests and post-tests on religious moderation on November 7, 2023. The team also provided mentoring in the establishment of the religious *Pojok Moderasi*. Ten teachers participated as the *Pojok Moderasi* management team.

The mentoring focused on three main aspects. First, optimizing the library as a religious *Pojok Moderasi*. Teachers were educated about the fundamental idea that the library is not just a reading space but can also serve as a place for religious studies, discussions, and sharing experiences related to religious moderation practices in the school. Second, developing the school's website to publish content with a religious moderation theme. This content could include articles, poems, short stories, or reports on activities related to religious moderation. The aim was to revitalize the school's website with educational content. Third, optimizing social media. The understanding of religious moderation acquired by SIR teachers was disseminated through the school's social media platforms with religious moderation-themed content. This content aimed to reach the school community to protect them from radical narratives circulating on social media.

Additionally, on November 8 and 9, 2023, the team provided mentoring to the student council (OSIS) to motivate, socialize, and build synergy between the *Pojok Moderasi* management team and the students. Teachers and students collaborated to plan the *Pojok Moderasi* program, allowing students to develop their potential. During this mentoring,

talent mapping was conducted to empower students in writing, graphic design, public speaking, and video editing. Subsequently, students were encouraged to contribute according to their abilities.

Reception of Religious Moderation

To assess the effectiveness of the religious moderation strengthening training, teachers were given pre-tests and post-tests. The tests comprised 20 questions about religious moderation, covering five themes: understanding, foundations, urgency, values, and strategies for strengthening religious moderation in schools. Each question carried 5 points, resulting in a maximum test score of 100 points.

The results of the pre-tests and post-tests were then analyzed using the Normalized Gain (N-Gain) test to determine the level of effectiveness of the provided training. Below are the N-Gain values for the religious moderation strengthening training for teachers at the Indonesian School in Riyadh:

Table 1. N-Gain Analysis Results

Respondent	Pretest Scores	Post-test Scores	N - G a i n Scores	N-Gain Score %	Category
M	65	90	0,71	71	High
RA	65	85	0,57	57	Moderate
ADA	70	90	0,67	67	Moderate
HB	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
MW	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
SAN	60	90	0,75	75	High
CR	60	80	0,50	50	Moderate
S	55	80	0,56	56	Moderate
RZ	55	80	0,56	56	Moderate
IM	65	90	0,71	71	High
KSF	65	85	0,57	57	Moderate
NA	50	75	0,50	50	Moderate
RR	65	90	0,71	71	High
FNR	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate

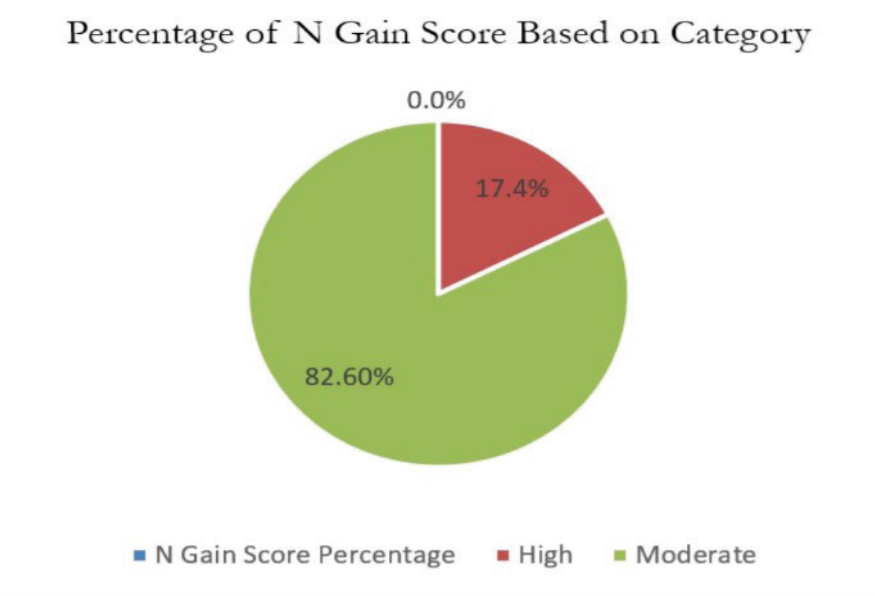
HK	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
RHS	55	75	0,44	44	Moderate
KM	70	95	0,83	83	High
NA	55	75	0,44	44	Moderate
SKD	70	90	0,67	67	Moderate
H	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
WS	60	80	0,50	50	Moderate
SS	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
EM	60	85	0,63	63	Moderate
Average	61,09	84,57	0,61	61	

From the table, it is observed that the lowest N-Gain score is 0.44 or 44%, while the highest score is 0.83 or 83%. The average N-Gain score for all teachers is 0.61 or 61%. Referring to the score distribution formulated by Meltzer,<sup>31</sup> The average falls into the moderate category. This indicates that the improvement in teachers’ understanding of religious moderation is substantial. It is noteworthy that teachers already possess a basic foundation of moderate attitudes acquired during their time in Indonesia, making the training a reinforcement of their existing understanding.

Furthermore, based on the categorization of N-Gain Score by Hake,<sup>32</sup> it can be concluded that the training for religious moderation is quite effective, as the average percentage of N-Gain score is 61%. The calculation of N-Gain scores for all teachers, expressed as a percentage according to Meltzer’s criteria, is as follows:

<sup>31</sup> David E. Meltzer, “The Relationship between Mathematics Preparation and Conceptual Learning Gains in Physics: A Possible ‘Hidden Variable’ in Diagnostic Pretest Scores,” *American Journal of Physics*, 2002, <https://doi.org/10.1119/1.1514215>.

<sup>32</sup> Lina Fauzi’ah and Artina Diniaty, “The Effect of Tutoring For National Exam Preparation Towards Try Out’s Score by Drill and Practice Method At MAN Pakem,” *Jurnal Pendidikan Sains*, 2016.



**Figure2.** The percentage of N-Gain score based on categories

From the above figure, it can be concluded that the N-Gain scores obtained by teachers in the training range between moderate and high, with a moderate percentage of 82.60% and a high percentage of 17.4%. None of the teachers scored in the low category. This reaffirms that the training for religious moderation attended by SIR teachers is quite effective in enhancing their understanding of religious moderation.

**Establishment of the *Pojok Moderasi***

Following the agreement reached in the Define phase, the *Pojok Moderasi* will be led by a specialized team tasked with managing and implementing programs within the *Pojok Moderasi*. The team is headed by a teacher of Islamic Education, supported by several teachers selected based on their respective fields and expertise. As an initial step, the specialized team has identified the initial focus areas for running the *Pojok Moderasi*, emphasizing the optimization of the library, website development, and

social media optimization for the *Pojok Moderasi*. Therefore, the mentoring activities are directed towards these three aspects.

### *Optimizing the School Library*

The library at SIR is considered quite adequate, with spacious and comfortable rooms. While the book collection is substantial, there is room for improvement. In practice, the library at SIR has been more commonly used as a gathering space for students, sometimes for reading or casual conversations. The school itself rarely utilizes the library as a communal space for scholarly activities. Therefore, through mentoring activities, the specialized team managing the *Pojok Moderasi* decided to optimize the library as a hub for the study and development of religious moderation in the school. This effort also aims to revitalize the library to become a source of knowledge in the school. The library plays a crucial role in stimulating creativity and innovation by providing access to various knowledge resources. As a rich source of information and knowledge, the library can facilitate the growth of creativity and innovation by providing space for learning, sharing ideas, and developing new skills.<sup>33</sup>

As an initial step in optimizing the library, additional religious books emphasizing the values of religious moderation have been added to the collection. The outreach team also contributed several books and religious texts authored by Indonesian scholars. Furthermore, for the development of religious moderation in the school, regular religious studies have been organized in the library. These studies, conducted once a month, are led by the Islamic Education teacher as the head of the *Pojok Moderasi* team, involving both teachers and students. Additionally, efforts to optimize the library will include discussions on contemporary themes, idea-sharing sessions, dissemination of works, and other school activities. These activities are planned to be carried out incidentally,

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<sup>33</sup> Muhammad Yusuf, "Implementasi Makerspace Sebagai Pusat Kreativitas dan Inovasi di Perpustakaan Perguruan Tinggi," *IJAL (Indonesian Journal of Academic Librarianship)* 6, no. 3 (2023): 41–51, <https://doi.org/http://www.journals.apptisjatim.org/index.php/ijal/article/view/135>.

involving the *Pojok Moderasi* management team, teachers, student council (OSIS), and students.

### *Developing the School Website*

The use of a website in schools has become a common practice nowadays. Having a website provides convenience for school members and the community to access information about the school. School websites also play a role in publicizing various school activities and developments. Moreover, a school website can serve as a platform to present educational content accessible to the public.<sup>34</sup>

The use of a school website is also implemented at SIR. This website is managed by the IT teacher who is specifically assigned by the school principal to oversee the website. However, the SIR website has mainly been filled with information about the school, such as the academic calendar, exam schedules, or news about student activities. There is no specific menu or content related to scholarly and religious matters. Additionally, the website's activity in publishing content appears to be quite low. Content uploads are only performed if there are significant events or moments, leading to periods of inactivity.

Despite having academically proficient teaching staff at SIR with adequate writing skills and digital technology proficiency, the website has not been fully utilized for educational and religious content. Teachers at SIR have previously produced compilations of writings, such as anthology books containing contributions from various teachers. Similarly, some students at SIR possess interests and talents in writing, and the school has successfully published anthologies of student writings.

Therefore, one of the mentoring focuses provided to the *Pojok Moderasi* management team at SIR is the development of the school website. Through this mentoring, it is hoped that the *Pojok Moderasi*

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<sup>34</sup> Rifqi Hammad et al., "Pembuatan Website Sekolah Sebagai Media Informasi dan Promosi," *Bakti Sekawan : Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat* 2, no. 1 (2022): 22–26, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.35746/bakwan.v2i1.216>.

management team can utilize the website facility to disseminate positive content containing educational writings and narratives of peace. This is also intended to increase website activity by actively uploading content.

The mentoring resulted in an agreement to add a specific section to the school website as a platform for the *Pojok Moderasi*. This space will serve as a media outlet for the *Pojok Moderasi* management team to publish content related to religious moderation, nationalism, or cultural diversity. In its management, the *Pojok Moderasi* team does not have to create and publish works on their own; they can collaborate with teachers or students to produce articles, poetry, short stories, or anything that embodies the values of religious moderation.

### *Utilizing the School Social Media*

In addition to the school website, social media also needs to be empowered to run the *Pojok Moderasi*. Utilizing social media as an educational platform in the era of the fourth industrial revolution is a very appropriate choice because it is easily accessible to various groups. Social media is a new technology that makes communication more effective and efficient in building relationships with students, parents, and the wider community. Social media can also be used as an effective educational marketing tool.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, mentoring is also conducted to optimize social media as a platform to disseminate positive content, especially related to religious moderation and national insight.

SIR itself has several social media accounts, including *Facebook*, *Instagram*, and *YouTube*. These platforms are managed by one of the teachers appointed by the School Principal. Similar to the school website, social media is used only for posting information about school activities. There is no content related to education, knowledge, or religion. However, the school's *Facebook* and *Instagram* accounts appear to be more active, with almost monthly content uploads featuring photos of activities or

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<sup>35</sup> Anjali S Bal et al., "Engaging Students With Social Media," *Journal of Marketing Education* 37, no. 3 (2015): 190–203, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475315593380>.

school-related information. In contrast, the SIR *YouTube* channel seems to have infrequent uploads.

As an initial step in optimizing social media for the campaign on religious moderation, the *Pojok Moderasi* management team collaborates with students to organize a podcast with the theme of strengthening religious moderation in school. The team members themselves act as the speakers, guided by a host from the student council (OSIS). This podcast will then be publicized on the school's *YouTube* channel and *Instagram*.

The evaluation and follow-up activities of the program are conducted online. In this regard, the partner institution takes concrete steps gradually with online mentoring, both synchronously and asynchronously. To facilitate coordination, the service team sets up a *WhatsApp* (WA) group for the school, allowing for intensive communication. Through this WA group, the service team asynchronously evaluates the progress of the *Pojok Moderasi*. Additionally, asynchronous mentoring is conducted through the WA group via chat or voice notes. Synchronous coordination is carried out bi-weekly to discuss program developments and address challenges through online meetings.

## **Conclusion**

Schools, as agents of social change, play a vital role in efforts to improve societal conditions through education. However, in their journey, schools sometimes struggle to fulfill their role effectively. Schools, which should be a platform for disseminating values of peace and a center for instilling attitudes of tolerance, nationalism, anti-violence, and appreciation for local cultures, may face challenges. Strengthening religious moderation in schools serves not only as a remedy for radicalism but also as a foundation for school communities to create an inclusive, friendly, and peaceful environment.

In the Indonesian School in Riyadh (SIR) context, the outcome of strengthening religious moderation includes an enhancement in teachers'

understanding of religious moderation and its development strategies within the school. Based on the N-Gain analysis, this improvement is categorized as moderate, indicating that the training can be considered quite effective. Furthermore, the promotion of religious moderation is realized through the establishment of a religious *Pojok Moderasi* as a space for the school community to study and develop religious moderation. To support this religious *Pojok Moderasi*, the initial steps involve optimizing the school library, developing the school website, and utilizing the school's social media.

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