

Strengthening Character Education in Indonesia: Implementing Values from Moderate Islam and the *Pancasila*

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Abstract

This study aims to describe which Islamic *wasathiyah* (moderate) and *Pancasila* (Indonesia's foundational philosophical theory) values can be implemented, how those values are implemented, and why *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values are implemented at three madrasahs to strengthen their students' characters. This study is qualitative research that applies the descriptive method. Data were collected through interviews, documentation, and observation. The data were then analyzed through reduction, presentation, and conclusion. The research reveals that the three madrasahs have applied *Wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values in order to strengthen their students' characters: First, Madrasah Amsilati Bangsri promotes a character that is religious, patriotic, socially caring, and tolerant. Next, Madrasah Darul Falah builds a character that is religious, patriotic, and helpful. Finally, Madrasah Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an encourages a character that is religious, deliberate, cooperative, and tolerant. The implementation of values takes place through various academic and non-academic activities, such as diligently praying five times daily, holding regular activities such as flag-raising and memorial day ceremonies, helping through the *infaq* and *shadaqah* movements, teaching cleanliness and health, promoting moral attitudes and behaviors for living with a good conscience, and conducting religious and ritual activities. Implementing *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values has three outcomes: (i) Students in the three madrasahs gain a balanced understanding of the practice of religion that covers all aspects of life, both worldly and unworldly. (ii) Students in the three madrasahs learn to recognize and respect differences, both in terms of religious aspects and various other aspects of life. (iii) Students become accustomed to dealing with problems through deliberation and reaching a consensus under the principle of placing the common good above all else.

Keywords: *Islamic wasathiyah values, Pancasila, character education*

Introduction

There are certain values that are fundamental to people's lives and religion as they search for happiness, both in this world and the hereafter. One such universal value among social life is moderation. Moderation (or *washathiyah* in Islamic terms) has become an important issue since the emergence of fundamentalism, radicalism, and even terrorism, which are concerns both domestically and internationally (McCluskey & Kim, 2012; Rose et al., 2019). The word "moderate" has a number of meanings in the English language, but the most relevant of them in

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this context is to refer to something that is not characterized by extreme political, religious, or social views. In the vocabulary of Arabic, meanwhile, the concept is referred to as *al-wasāt* (*wasatan*) or *tawassut* (*middle*), *al-qistoral-tawāzun* (*justice*), *al-I'tidal* (*harmony*), and *tasamuh* (*tolerance*). A moderate interpretation of Islam goes against the radical violence that has spread since the September 11 al-Qaeda attack on the World Trade Center (Rose et al., 2019).

The presence of moderate Islamic values is characterized by various societal conditions in Islamic education, such as where there is intolerance to anything from outside a group (Hamidah, 2019). Moderate Islam could be understood as occupying a middle position between two extreme poles inherited from al-Qur'an values and the Prophet's traditions. Such thinking is therefore neither too strict nor overly flexible, so it could be considered a better choice (Abidin et al., 2018).

In Islam, there are also values and teachings that emphasize the importance of maintaining balance rather than taking an extreme position, such as in the understanding and practice of Islamic *wasathiyah*, which teaches middle-way, non-fanatical, reasonable thinking and action (Suharto, 2017; Djamal, 2017). Islamic moderatism also teaches inclusiveness, brotherhood, tolerance, and peace, as well as expressing Islam as a blessing of *al-amin*. Through moderation, Muslims are viewed as religious *wasathan* who love peace, dislike violence, and tolerate others (Solichin, 2018). Understanding the *isathiyah* emphasizes the need for achieving balance rather than adopting extreme polarities, both in terms of Islamic understanding and practice, because of the movement's focus on respecting the existence of others (Haris, 2015; James, 2019).

In the Quran, moderatism is generally identified with the term "*al-Wasathiyah*" to understand and express moderate interpretations in Islam with a moderate understanding of the current context (Zamimah, 2018). Moderation is a core value in Islamic teachings and represents part of the solution for addressing a wide range of issues in today's globalized world, such as religious radicalism and blind fanaticism (*at-ta'shshub al-a'mâ*), because these certainly warrant a measured attitude that can be found in concepts like *wasathiyah* (Zamimah, 2018).

Many Islamic-based schools are more focused on a moderate education to achieve this goal in Indonesia. Moderatism in Islamic educational institutions is cultivated through curriculum-based learning in a school or madrassa, extracurricular learning, hidden curricula, and local wisdom (Solichin, 2018). Educational institutions like schools and madrassas can be a very effective medium for instilling the values of a *tawasuth* character, meaning neither side dominates, and this refers to maintaining balance and harmony, having tolerance, deliberating, and acting fairly.

Characters are built based on an internal understanding of the nature and structure of human personality. Therefore, the human virtue of piety forms part of the spiritual quotient for an ideal human image. Such spiritual intelligence should be emphasized, especially in education (Hamidah, 2019).

Pancasila comprises five pillars that act as the basis for the ideology of the Indonesian state and people. It was proposed by the nation's founders for building the character and culture of the nation under the assumption that homogeneous ideologies would create stability and strengthen cohesion in Indonesian society. These values can be summarized as belief in God, humanitarianism, unity, society, and justice. The spirit of *Pancasila* is in line with the vision of a moderate, tolerant, and egalitarian, and *rahmatanlil-'alamin* (a mercy to all creations) society without needing to become an Islamic state. *Pancasila* values are therefore in harmony with a moderate Islamic education (Priatmoko, 2018).

In connection with strengthening these values in the character of the Indonesian people (Kosim, 2011). Subaidi (2019) classifies the nation's cultural values as religious and *Pancasila*. Religious values reflect the religious nature of the Indonesian people, so the lives of people, communities, and nations are rooted in religious teachings and beliefs. Based on this, character-education values should be based on the values and rules of religion (Subaidi, 2019). A school or madrasa, as an educational institution, therefore teaches character to its students, and it can play a very important role in correcting people's misunderstandings of terms like jihad and radicalism.

Some researchers have explored moderatism in universal and Islamic education. For example, it was explored as a concept by Buseri (2015), McCluskey and Kim (2012), and Sharia et al. (n.d.). In addition, McCluskey and Kim (2012), Micocci (2007), and Sayektiningsih et al. (2017) explored moderatism in the context of societies with different settings and perspectives. Zamimah (2018), meanwhile, explored Islamic moderatism in the context of cohesion through a study of a moderate Islamic interpretation of Muhammad Quraish Shihab's books. The above studies all concluded that Islamic moderation has long been present in Islamic traditions, defying the notion that Islam teaches intolerance and violence. Solichin (2018) investigated moderate Islamic education in a local setting by exploring moderate Islam as a response to radicalism in Indonesia, ultimately concluding that educational institutions can potentially act as an antidote to radical Islamic teaching by promoting the concepts of *al-is* (justice), *al-tawazun* (equilibrium), and *al-tasamuh* (tolerance).

Some researches into *wasathiyah* values have already been conducted. For example, Adiong, et al (2018) wrote *Islam in International Affairs: Politics and Paradigms*. This study reviews the need for militant moderatism from economic and political perspectives. Burhani (2012), meanwhile, explored the NU Islamic movement's adoption of moderatism in Indonesia, focusing on why intellectuals and activists from the same religion, but coming from different locations and contexts, respond to moderate Islam differently. In another study, Hamidah (2017) explored how character values in a traditional Islamic boarding school can be strengthened by explaining social learning and moderate Islam. Abidin (2018), meanwhile, wrote about a Javanese interpretation of moderatism based on understanding *Syaria* and *Mu'amalah* from an interpretation of the *Al-Ibriz* book. Bestari et al. (2019) explored Islam and moderatism based upon the marriage law, non-marital children, and a formulation based upon the principle of justice in Indonesia. Rosyd (2019), meanwhile, presented a paper about moderatism among the Baha'i Muslim community, focusing on moderate practices by the Baha'i members of the NU community in the village of Cibolek in the Pati Regency in Central Java. Moderatism in advocacy groups' ideology in Newspapers was explored by McCluskey and Kim (2015). Finally, Hadi (2018) wrote a paper titled "Internalizing *Wasathiyah* Islamic Values and Nationality Insights among *Santri* in Lasem." The formation of students' identity with a religious-nationalist character in MA Al-Hidayat Lasem was found to succeed through the use of social spaces that encompass the entire flow of processes and students' socio-religious dynamics in the performance of educational institutions.

This study explores the implementation of Islamic *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values within three madrassas for strengthening their students' character education. It explores which values are implemented, how they are implemented at the madrassas, and why these values are implemented within these formal Islamic schools.

Methods

This research has a qualitative descriptive nature and takes a field research approach by researching subjects in the field (Cohen, 1999). Exploration on how modern Islam values was implemented at three Secondary Islamic schools was conducted based on the direct observations and in-depth thematic analyses were identified in narrative ways. Qualitatively, this study approached the themes and practices on the implementation of moderate Islam through the logical fitness between students' practices at schools, the rules of Islamic orientation at schools and policy the schools

implemented. The participating schools were Madrassa AmsilatiBangsri, Jepara;Madrassa Darul Falah, Sirahan, Cluwak, Pati; and MTs Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Holy Qur'an, Kudus. Data were collected in the form of the transcripts of in-depth interviews, madrassas documents, and observation notes in order to explore which *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values are implemented, how they are implemented, and why *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values are employed at these three madrassas to strengthen their students' characters. The informants are therefore the principals, teachers, and students of the madrassas. More specifically, data were collected from the three madrassas' principals, three vice-principals, the teachers of Islamic subjects, and student representatives.

Data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations followed the activities of the boarding school that were directly related to learning activities and daily behavior, both in the boarding and off-boarding environment, that played an important role in social interactions, discipline, performance, and so on (Moleong, 2001). Data analysis took the form of interactive data analysis that was continuously performed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and the extraction and verification of conclusions (Silverman, 1998; Sugiyono, 2013; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Adapting Miles & Huberman (1994) data analysis was started from the data collection stages by which observation, interview and field notes were done by the researcher. In the data reduction, selection, categorization and classification of practices in the *wasyathiyah* at three schools were developed. In the reduction process, Islamic practices that indicated fitness and disharmony between moderate Islam and *Pancasila* values were sorted and values whose characteristics were relevant to the research questions of this study were used. Data display revealed that data representing fitness and disharmony were presented in the quotes and tables. Finally, through multiple crosscheck data were verified through multi-site triangulation and theory triangulation to achieve the final conclusion of the data analysis (Miles & Huerman, 1994; Sugiyono, 2013).

Results and Discussion

Below are the results of this research's investigation into the use of Islamic values to strengthen students' character education at Madrassa Amsilati Bangsri, Madrassa Darul Falah, and Madrassa Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Holy Qur'an.

Implementation of Islamic *wasathiyah* values at Madrassa Amtsilati Bangsri, Jepara, Central Java

This study found that Madrassa Amtsilati Bangsri instills *wasathiyah* values through a number of regular activities, including flag-raising and memorial day ceremonies, help through the *infaq* and *shadaqah* movements, and the teaching of cleanliness and health.

The moderate character built by the madrassa aims to embody a state of equilibrium in adhering to Islamic teaching (*ukhrawi*) and building patriotism through activities like the flag-raising ceremony. This represents a moderate attitude (*wasathiyah*), because it is a comprehensive and integrated approach that can help solve people's problems and teach the Islamic blessings *oflil'amin*. It is rooted in the notion that any understanding and practice of the Islamic religion must have *tawazun* (balance), meaning that it is a balanced understanding that covers all aspects of life, both worldly and unworldly. In addition, the *wasathiyah* Islamic practices are characteristic of a *tahadhdhur* civilization, which upholds moral character, identity, and integrity in the spiritual community of humanity and civilization (Amar, 2018; Aini, 2018).

The students at Madrassa Amtsilati practice the values of the first principle of the *Pancasila*, namely "*Ketuhanan Yang Maha Esa*" (belief in the almighty God). This is reflected in how students diligently pursue religious activities, such as praying five times a day.

In addition, they also internalize the second value, namely a just and civilized humanity. All the students at Madrassa Amtsilati are aware of their attitudes and behaviors in accordance with their moral values, and they live together based on building a good conscience. This second value also requires that all students are treated equally in their religious and ritual activities in accordance with their dignity. This parallels the concept of humanity in the teachings of egalitarian Islam, where all people are equal before God.

Madrassa Amtsilati develops a character that is religious, disciplined, democratic, and patriotic. As part of their religious behavior, students practice religious teachings, pray five times daily, and perform in congregations. Their habits demonstrate an orderly and obedient behavior in accordance with a variety of rules and regulations. In this context, students are happy to organize and perform the ceremonial and worshiping activities that are set by Madrassa Amtsilati. This religious character reflects faith and piety toward almighty Allah. This circumstance is brought about by the compulsory five hours of prayer for the madrassa's students.

A democratic character is also developed at the madrassa through the essence and meaning of students' activities at the madrassa. This results in a way of thinking and acting that respects the rights and obligations of others. The purpose is to shape the personalities of the students, so they will become good citizens.

The character of Indonesian unity is developed through the flag-raising ceremony, and students are encouraged by the madrassa to express thoughts, actions, and visions that place the interests of the nation above the self or the group. Similarly, a love of the homeland is also developed through ceremonial and religious activities, and in their way of thinking and behaving, students demonstrate a high degree of loyalty, concern, and appreciation for the physical, social, and cultural environment of the nation.

Islamic *wasathiyah* values are implemented in the madrassa as a way of balancing the individual aspects of the daily essentials in the madrassa environment, as well as paying attention to collective aspects of the community through the practice of *berinfaq* and *shadaqah*, so that they may later practice moderate Islam within the community. Students are not just concerned with personal interests but also tend to think about social concerns, thus following the logic of Buseri (2015) in serving individual (*syakhsiyah*) and social (*ijtima'iyah*) interests. In other words, students are trained to practice moderation and adopt the middle ground between individual and social worship, thus building individual and social morals that are referred to as "*wasatan faith*."

Characters developed through these activities are religious and social in nature. This means students practice *infaq* and *shadaqah* religious teachings, such as by helping their sick friends, especially those who are hospitalized, while also practicing self-help (*ta'awun*).

The strengthening of a socially caring character means that the students have adopted attitudes and actions where they are always willing to help others in the community who are in need. In this context, they are trained to take practice this once a week, and they are given an example by the caregivers of the institution, which distributes financial assistance to the *fuqara* and *dhuafa* in the community around the institution every month.

Aside from these activities, there is also some community service in the Bangsri District of Jepara in the form of a "prosperous mosque." Students are not only educated in science—they are also provided with a balanced understanding of knowledge (*wasath*), specifically with regards to religion and general science, the world of science, and the science of science. The knowledge they consequently gain is therefore not only useful in the classroom but also relevant for practice in the

field. The moderate character built by Madrassa Amtsilati is based on teaching students the value of balance, so they can apply knowledge both inside the classroom and outside the classroom in the community environment.

Madrassa Amtsilati introduces its students to mosques and *mushalla* as a form of social decency that is balanced by social exclusion, especially with regards to the prosperity of mosques and *mushalla* for the sake of Islamic sanctity. It establishes an attitude of tolerance in the students. Tolerance is therefore one of the Islamic values expressed in the educational environment of Madrassa Amtsilati. One of the educational units that is managed by the madrassa indirectly strengthens and reinforces the tolerant character of its students.

Madrassa Amtsilati is able to teach Islamic *wasathiyah* attitudes through the students' collective experience of the plurality of Indonesian tribes, cultures, and local wisdom that exists in the madrassa's neighborhood. The hospitality of the madrassa is colored by *wasathiyah* values, meaning that the large family of the madrassa implements moderate values in everyday life. In other words, *Aswaja* Islamic teachings are very tolerant of the pluralism that is practiced at Madrassa Amtsilati. The world of education should therefore be able to reflect on the question of pluralism by transmitting values that will foster moderate, tolerant, open, and independent attitudes in students.

In line with Buseri's (2015) assertion that diversity is a trust that contains purpose, Allah asserts that diversity is a testament to the greatness and manifestation of His sovereignty as stated in Alquran 30:22 (Departemen Agama, 2010) such that people are in a process of forming a human brotherhood based on mutual recognition defined in Alquran 49:13 (Departemen Agama, 2010). In the context of secularism, Muslims occupy the middle ground in their religious devotion, and they should not be at either of the two extreme positions (i.e., too fanatical or liberal). In this context, Muslims are urged to develop and exemplify tolerance (*tasamuh*), which is reflected in a willingness to openly accept differences and have an attitude of mutual respect for other parties (Buseri, 2015 Carr & Incetas, 2018).

The results of the interviews show that the students have a tolerant attitude, meaning that the attitude and actions of the madrassa's students show how they appreciate differences in race, ethnicity, opinions, attitudes, and actions from different people. In addition, this also helps build friendly, communicative characters. In other words, the students' actions demonstrate that they are happy to talk, interact, and cooperate with others.

Implementation of Islamic *wasathiyah* values at Madrassa Darul Falah, Sirahan, Cluwak, Pati

The implementation of values happens through various activities, such as prayer before and after lessons in the respective classes. This reflects the Islamic value of *haswasathiyah* practice. The madrassa's teachers deliver a learning process to students that are not just aimed at enhancing their intellectual and cognitive abilities but also training their spiritual intelligence through the practice of prayer. The teachers therefore deliver balance in the pursuit of knowledge by earnestly studying spiritual approaches through both early and late prayer.

The development of a school culture at the center of learning activities is achieved through self-development activities, and these represent a regular and consistent form of activity for students. These include holding school ceremonies, commemorating both Islamic and national holidays, performing body hygiene checks, holding class pickups and congregational prayers, queuing up for classes, scouting, praying before and after class, and saying farewell when separating from teachers and friends (Kusmira, 2018).

Islamic education develops human potential in terms of the human soul or spirit, the mind, taste, imagination, intuition, and the physical self, thus helping students to develop a comprehensive personality, because intelligence without a noble character has no value. Islamic education does not allow one or more of the above abilities to grow beyond the others. When the madrassa's students possess both knowledge and wisdom, they will become rounded human beings who can better spread the Islamic teachings of *lil'alamin* (Buseri, 2015).

A religious character is developed, and this entails strengthening the students' attitudes and actions in the madrassa to reflect faith and devotion to almighty Allah. This goal is realized through religious teaching and routine prayer before and after classroom lessons. In this context, the teacher invites the students to pray before beginning diligent study to seek the blessing of God, considering that character education is a process of helping students to build a full personality with qualities in all dimensions of the heart, mind, body, and will.

The cultivation of Islamic *wasatiyyah* values also takes place through extracurricular activities that emphasize them. Students develop a character based on a love for their homeland, meaning teachers give a moral message to students based on preserving the school culture and honoring the heroic service of fellow Indonesians by singing national songs.

Aside from these activities, the madrassa also strives to educate students to cherish human values, as embodied in the *Pancasila*. This strengthens students' attitudes toward togetherness, volunteerism, and unity, and they consequently help each other in various activities within the madrassa environment. In order to be useful to other students, it is not possible for an individual to conduct activities alone at the madrassa. Instead, they need to become more inclusive, so their peers can accept them. Islam teaches the value of *ta'awun* (help), *al-ittihad* (association), *al-ukhuwwah* (loyal friends), and togetherness in all aspects of life.

Multicultural Islam emphasizes a willingness to accept other groups regardless of their culture, ethnicity, gender, language, or religion (Dimiyati, 2017; Raza, 2018). This has been implemented in the madrassa through extracurricular activities in the field of scouting. Madrassa Aliyah Darul Falah also emphasizes the value of the third pillar of the *Pancasila*, which conveys that Indonesian unity is prioritized over the interests of various tribes and groups within society. This concept of unity agrees with the teachings of Islam, because Allah commanded it in the Quran Surah Ali Imran verse 103 (Departemen Agama, 2010).

Implementation of Islamic *wasathiyah* values at Madrassa Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an, Kudus

The Islamic value of *sacrifice* is practiced at this madrassa, and the principle of God's strength is a very basic tenant, but this institution is also committed to the rule of government, specifically the curriculum set by the ministry of religion. This leads us to the understanding that moderate values (*wasathiyah*) are practiced very strongly for man attaining balance in life while keeping in line with worldly rules. Shiva is directed and guided to build a religious character, and all students at the madrassa recite the values of Islamic-based character building, especially Islamic *wasathiyah* values.

The strengthening of students' religious character is emphasized in the madrassa. Students practice prayer before learning, and the board of teachers (*asatidz*) invites the students to also pray after the lesson, thus combining learning with seeking the guidance of almighty Allah (*ibtighāan mardlātillah*).

In addition, the values of the first pillar of the *Pancasila* are also rooted in the madrassa, such as in the attitude of the students as they perform the obligatory prayer and recite the Quran. The values contained in this first pillar help form a system that is unified, hierarchical, and systematic, and it does not separate because it has meaning as a whole. These essential values, when examined

and analyzed in depth, show the spirit of the *Pancasila* is in line with the moderate Islamic vision of tolerance, egalitarianism, and the blessing of *lil'alamin*.

In addition to establishing Islamic values, the madrassa also conducts activities according to the madrassa's motto: "Forming Intellectual and Intelligent Scholars." In this era of globalization, it is necessary to teach students the resources that will be especially valuable in the field of communication. In this regard, English plays a very important role in both mastering communication technology and interacting directly. As a means for global communication, English must be actively practiced, in both verbal and written forms, by students in the madrassa environment. English is a global language, so it plays a key role in enabling different peoples around the world to interact and communicate. In addition, English has become a key skill in various aspects, whether they be business, political, social, or cultural in nature (McKinney, 1983). Students develop characters based on deliberation and cooperation. For example, students in the Arabic and English language programs cooperate to complete group tasks. In these activities, teachers encourage students to exchange ideas and propose various solutions to their problems.

It is also clear that the madrassa promotes a character of tolerance and equality in its students. In the Arabic and English language programs, teachers form groups of students with different backgrounds and apply the same treatment to all students without discrimination.

Conclusion

Referring to the research results, we can conclude that an Islamic *wasathiyah* education can prevent students becoming radical, because the graduates of the madrassas studied here have a moderate understanding that accepts differences in religion and belief systems and appreciates the value of other people. Such Islamic values emphasize the need for balance, both in the understanding and practice of Islamic teachings. In addition, it is also clear that the spirit of the *Pancasila* agrees with the balanced Islamic vision, which is moderate, tolerant, egalitarian, and representative of the blessings of *lil'alamin*. These three madrassas have implemented *wasathiyah* and *Pancasila* values to strengthen their students' characters. The madrassas implement these in different ways, though: i) Madrassa Amsilati Bangsri builds a character that is religious, democratic, patriotic, socially caring, and tolerant. ii) Madrassa Darul Falah, meanwhile, builds a character that is religious, patriotic, and helpful. Finally, iii) Madrassa Tahfidz Yanbu'ul Qur'an promotes a character that is religious, deliberate, cooperative, and tolerant.

The promotion of values takes place through various academic and non-academic activities, such as diligent prayer five times a day, regular activities like holding flag-raising and memorial day ceremonies, helping through the *infaq* and *shadaqah* movement, teaching cleanliness and health, promoting moral attitudes and behaviors for living with a good conscience, and holding religious and ritual activities.

These three madrassas implement both the values of *wasathiyah* (Islamic moderatism) and Indonesia's *Pancasila* to achieve three reasonable objectives: i) Students at the three madrassas gain a balanced understanding of religious practice that covers all aspects of life, both worldly and unworldly. ii) Students at the three madrassas recognize and respect differences, both in religious aspects and the various other aspects of life. Finally, iii) the students become accustomed to dealing with problems through deliberation and reaching a consensus under the principle of prioritizing the common good above all else.

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