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Religious Moderation Literacy Index of PTKIN Students in Aceh: Analysis of Islamic Knowledge and Understanding

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Abstract: *Religion should be a guideline for life and a filter against deviations in society. However, currently there is a growing understanding that leads to excessive and extreme religious practices, which are contrary to the essence of religious teachings themselves. To overcome this, the Ministry of Religion issued a policy on Strengthening Religious Moderation in PTKIN, which aims to be a space for sowing, educating, mentoring, and strengthening the religious moderation movement in the campus environment. This study uses a Mixed Methods approach with a survey to compile the components of the Religious Moderation*

Literacy Index (ILMB) based on a study by the Ministry of Religion. The research sample consisted of 100 PTKIN students in Aceh selected purposively with a 10% margin of error. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and questionnaires, then analyzed inductively based on the theory of religious moderation literacy and Islamic values. The results showed that the religious moderation literacy index of PTKIN students in Aceh was 50.48, which is relatively low. The basic understanding value of 57.67 and advanced understanding of 37.97 indicate that understanding of religious moderation needs to be improved. The students' knowledge of religious moderation that is not yet optimal shows the need for synergy between stakeholders and the use of social media. Strengthening religious moderation literacy in Aceh requires a comprehensive approach, including the integration of Islamic values in education and the use of digital media.

Keywords: *Literacy, Religious Moderation, PTKIN Students, Aceh, Islamic Knowledge and Understanding.*

A. Introduction

The world today faces various complex challenges related to social, political, and religious dynamics. In the context of increasingly rapid globalization, these changes not only bring positive impacts, such as technological advances and openness of information, but also leave fundamental problems, such as the emergence of identity conflicts and clashes of values. Amidst the diversity of cultures and beliefs, issues such as radicalism, extremism, and intolerance are increasingly apparent, both at the international and national levels. This phenomenon demands serious attention from various parties to analyze the root of the problem and formulate appropriate solutions to maintain harmony and stability in society.

The emergence of intolerant and extreme religious beliefs recently, which aim to replace the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) with the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII), as happened in Iraq and Syria with the presence of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria), has given birth to terrorism and suicide bombings in several regions of this country. This phenomenon is evidence of new challenges that are increasingly complex and massive. According to Azhari, the challenges that need to be watched out for at this time are

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the mushrooming of intolerance, radicalism, and extremism accompanied by the spread of fake news and hate speech. This is often affiliated with certain values, such as religion, tribe, ethnicity, or other ideologies.¹

Misunderstanding of religious teachings is one of the root problems that triggers the birth of intolerance and extremism.² Narrow and biased interpretations of religious texts are often used as justification for acts of violence and human rights violations. This is further exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the historical and social context of the religious teachings themselves, so that the true values of peace and tolerance are neglected. As a result, religions that actually teach peace are instead misused to divide society, create fear, and give birth to prolonged conflict.³ Therefore, a comprehensive, moderate, and social harmony-oriented understanding of religion is needed to overcome this challenge.

Ideally, the presence of religion has function as a guideline and filter against various potential deviations that can occur in society. However, in reality, religion often becomes a source of conflict. In essence, religion should be used as a guideline that is able to balance and regulate various human welfares, both on a micro and macro scale. This guideline is not only related to family matters, but also includes social ethics and national life.⁴

To anticipate and overcome the problems of religious life and democracy in Indonesia, such as intolerance, extremism, and terrorism, the Ministry of Religion has formulated concrete steps to prevent divisions between religious communities in Indonesia. One of

¹ Azhari, “*Urgensi Moderasi Beragama*” (Materi Diklat Terpadu Dasar (DTD) Raya Pimpinan Wilayah Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Provinsi Aceh, Kementerian Agama Banda Aceh, June 16, 2023).

² Benny Sumardiana, “Efektifitas Penanggulangan Ancaman Penyebaran Paham Ekstrim Kanan yang Memicu Terorisme oleh Polri dan BNPT RI,” *Law Research Review Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (May 31, 2017): 109–128, <https://doi.org/10.15294/snh.v3i1.20927>.

³ Jamaluddin el-Banjary, *Agama Cinta: Memasuki Kedamaian Islam dari Lorong Tasawuf* (Jakarta: Elex Media Komputindo, 2019), 15; See also Widodo, *Guyon Cara Gus Dur* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Nauli Media, 2017), 33.

⁴ Abdul Jamil Wahab, Farhan Muntafa, and Raudatul Ulum, *Wajah Kesalehan Umat* (Jakarta: Puslitbang Bimas Agama dan Layanan Keagamaan Badan Litbang dan Diklat, 2023), 12–13.

these steps is through the “Religious Moderation” program. This concept is not intended to moderate religion itself, but rather to moderate the way of understanding and practicing religious teachings in the context of living together in a pluralistic society.⁵ Various discussions regarding religious moderation finally gave birth to a white paper entitled Religious Moderation, which was compiled as a guideline in efforts to strengthen religious moderation.⁶

Furthermore, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin explained that religious moderation is not an ideology. Religious moderation is a perspective related to the process of understanding and practicing religious teachings so that their implementation remains on a moderate path. Moderate, in this case, means not being excessive or extreme. Therefore, what is moderated is the way of practicing religion, not religion itself, including Islam.⁷

Religious moderation can be interpreted as an attitude that is in the middle between liberal and extreme religiosity. Those who are liberal tend to be loose in practicing religious teachings, while those who are extreme tend to be very strict and rigid in understanding religious texts. Groups with extreme views often cite texts and classical works as the basis for their thinking textually without considering the broader context.⁸

Understanding the concept of religious moderation is very important since religious moderation is a process of understanding and practicing religious teachings in a fair and balanced way in order to avoid extreme or excessive attitudes in their implementation.⁹

⁵ Tim Kelompok Kerja Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama RI, *Peta Jalan (Roadmap) Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Tahun 2020-2024* (Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI, 2020), 1.

⁶ Saiful Rahmat Dasuki, *Buku Putih Moderasi Beragama, Wawancara dengan Wakil Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia di Kantor Kementerian Agama Lapangan Banteng Jakarta*, Agustus 2023.

⁷ Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, “*Konsep Moderasi Beragama Bagi PTKI*” (Materi Workshop Penulisan Buku Moderasi Beragama Bagi Dosen Tahun 2024, Pusat Kerohanian dan Moderasi Beragama (PKMB) UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, June 16, 2023), 1–2.

⁸ Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 18.

⁹ Samsi Selvia, Munawar Rahmat, and Saepul Anwar, “Tingkat Pemahaman Moderasi Beragama Mahasiswa di Perguruan Tinggi Umum dan Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri,” *Intizar* 28, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 4.

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Extremist attitudes in religion not only have a negative impact on the existence of adherents of other religions, but also harm religion itself. As an effort to seek goodness, brotherhood, and welfare, religious moderation is a solution in dealing with various differences.¹⁰ To support this, the Ministry of Religion has formulated a strategy for implementing Strengthening Religious Moderation, especially in educational institutions, by strengthening moderate religious perspectives, attitudes and practices.

To implement the strengthening of religious moderation, the Ministry of Religion issued a policy through Circular Letter Number B-3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019 concerning the establishment of Religious Moderation Houses (RMB) in all State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN). RMB is designed as a space for education, mentoring, and strengthening the religious moderation movement in the campus environment. This policy is reinforced by the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 897 of 2021 which regulates the technical instructions for its implementation. RMB functions as a center for education and research to prevent potential vulnerabilities related to religious issues.¹¹

Strengthening Religious Moderation in PTKIN is a priority of the Ministry of Religion with the aim of instilling the values of religious moderation in the younger generation, especially students, as successors and spearheads in maintaining harmony and the integrity of the nation in the future. The House of Religious Moderation on PTKIN campuses has the main task of being a center for strengthening and disseminating moderate religious discourse in society and being the vanguard in overseeing religious moderation thoughts and movements.¹² This is becoming increasingly important because the younger generation, especially students, are highly vulnerable to exposure to radicalism, extremism and terrorism.

¹⁰ Acep Rahmat, "Internalisasi Moderasi Beragama dalam Pendidikan Agama Islam," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 1, no. 2 (2022): 56.

¹¹ Kasron Nasution and Laila Rohani, *Eksistensi Rumah Moderasi Beragama di PTKIN* (Jambi: PT. Sonpedia Publishing Indonesia, 2023), 81.

¹² Dede Hidayat, *Moderasi Beragama untuk Kehidupan* (Jawa Barat: Penerbit Adab, 2024), 29.

The results of a survey conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) UIN Jakarta in 2020 showed that extremism among the younger generation is increasingly worrying. Conservative narratives dominate social media and cyberspace, while the younger generation tends to use cyberspace as the main guide in religion.¹³ In 2021, the PPIM UIN Jakarta survey also revealed that symptoms of violent extremism in Islamic religious universities were confirmed to have re-emerged. This indicates the need for institutional intervention, one of which is through optimizing the role of RMB.¹⁴

PTKIN as a higher education institution based on Islamic values has a strategic role in forming a moderate young generation. PTKIN students, especially in Aceh as a region that formally implements Islamic law, have a great responsibility in understanding and practicing moderate Islamic values. However, the challenges of modernity and globalization often cause distortions in the understanding of Islamic values, which have the potential to affect the level of religious moderation of students.

Aceh, with its status as a region that officially implements Islamic law, presents a unique context in the study of religious moderation. PTKIN students in Aceh are not only required to understand Islamic values textually, but also contextually. Therefore, this study aims to measure the religious moderation literacy index of PTKIN students in Aceh, focusing on their knowledge and understanding of Islamic values. This index is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the extent to which students are able to internalize and practice religious moderation in their lives.

Given the above conditions, extremism and radicalism among the young generation are serious challenges that require anticipation through Strengthening Religious Moderation (PMB) at PTKIN. The Ministry of Religion has encouraged the implementation of PMB

¹³ Tim Peneliti PPIM Jakarta, *Konservatisme di Dunia Maya: Bagaimana Mencegahnya Menjadi Ekstrimisme?*, Policy Brief (Jakarta: PPIM Jakarta dan Meirit Indonesia, 2020), 2.

¹⁴ Tim Peneliti PPIM Jakarta, *Potret Moderasi Beragama di Kalangan Mahasiswa Muslim: Kasus Tiga Kampus Islam (Jakarta, Bandung, Yogyakarta)* (Jakarta: PPIM Jakarta, 2021), 11.

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through the establishment of Religious Moderation Houses or Centers in every PTKIN, including in Aceh. This step aims to protect students from the influence of extremism and intolerance. However, observations show that until now there has been no research that specifically measures the level of students' understanding of religious moderation. In fact, this level of literacy or understanding is very important, because it influences their attitudes and behavior in practicing the values of moderation in accordance with the principles of justice, balance, and tolerance mandated by the government.

This research is a relatively new study, although there have been several previous related studies, such as that conducted by Putri who studied digital literacy and radicalism attitudes. The results of her study showed that a higher level of digital literacy has a positive effect on the moderate attitudes of students, who tend to avoid radicalism.¹⁵ In addition, Maizuddin et al. studied the moderation policy at PTKIN Aceh, with research results showing that PTKIN in Aceh has implemented a religious moderation policy through the establishment of the Religious Moderation House (RMB), although some institutions face obstacles in its establishment. Some RMBs have been active, while others carry out moderation activities through other units. Although the implementation of moderation in the tridharma of higher education has not been fully implemented, the leaders of PTKIN Aceh have begun planning concrete steps to realize it.¹⁶

In contrast to previous studies, this study focuses on the religious moderation literacy index of students at PTKIN Aceh, especially regarding their knowledge and understanding of moderate Islamic values. This study places more emphasis on measuring the level of religious moderation literacy among PTKIN students, which involves analyzing how deeply they understand and practice the values of

¹⁵ Nina Eka Putri, "The Effect of Student Digital Literacy on Radicalism Attitudes at PTKIN in Aceh," *Journal of Education and Teaching Learning (JETL)* 5, no. 1 (January 22, 2023): 31, <https://doi.org/10.51178/jetl.v5i1.1057>.

¹⁶ Maizuddin, Dedy Sumardi, and Zulihafnani, "Implementasi Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama pada Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri (PTKIN) Aceh," *Al-Adyan: Jurnal Studi Lintas Agama* 18, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 271, <https://doi.org/10.24042/al-adyan.v18i2.16292>.

religious moderation in their daily lives, including aspects of tolerance, balance, and justice in religion. The importance of this study lies in its ability to provide a clearer picture of how religious moderation literacy can influence students' attitudes and behavior in avoiding radicalism and intolerance. By understanding the extent to which students internalize the values of moderation, this study can provide a strong basis for more effective policies in strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN, especially in Aceh, which has its own challenges in maintaining harmony between religious communities.

Through this study, it is expected to obtain a real picture of the religious moderation literacy index score in each PTKIN in Aceh, so that it can be a concrete step for PTKIN in mainstreaming religious moderation. We must realize that until now, evaluation efforts on the implementation of religious moderation in PTKIN Aceh are still limited. Therefore, this study is very important. This study is a step to describe the extent to which religious moderation literacy has been understood by PTKIN students in Aceh. It is hoped that the results of this study can help in mitigating if there are concepts or understandings that have not been understood by the academic community, both lecturers, students, and other components in PTKIN, to be strengthened later.

The approach used in this research is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, known as *Mixed Methods*.¹⁷ This study is a survey of the Religious Moderation Literacy Index (ILMB) in five districts/cities in Aceh Province: Meulaboh, Banda Aceh, Lhoksemawe, Langsa, and Takengon. The compilation of ILMB components refers to a study conducted by the Ministry of Religion regarding religious moderation, with dimensions of basic knowledge and advanced knowledge about religious moderation. The population in this study were students at five PTKIN in Aceh totaling 33,505 people. Sampling was carried out using a purposive sampling technique with an error rate of 10%, so that the number of

¹⁷ Read more in: Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Mixed Methods Research: Merging Theory with Practice* (New York: Guilford Press, 2010), 3; See also John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (California: Sage Publications, Inc., 2007), 5.

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representative samples for this study was 100 respondents. Data collection techniques used observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Data processing involved the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.¹⁸ The conclusions in this study are drawn inductively through data analysis that is adjusted to theories related to religious moderation literacy and Islamic values.

B. Religious Moderation Index at PTKIN in Aceh

The Religious Moderation Index at PTKIN in Aceh is a measuring tool used to assess the extent to which the values of religious moderation are applied in the campus environment. In Aceh, which is known as a province with a Muslim majority population, religious moderation is very important as an effort to prevent the development of radicalism and intolerance among students. In this context, PTKIN in Aceh plays a strategic role in developing a religious moderation index that covers various aspects of students' knowledge, attitudes, and behavior towards moderate Islamic principles.

In general, the development of the Religious Moderation Index at PTKIN Aceh aims to map students' understanding of moderate Islamic values, including attitudes of tolerance, balance, and justice. This index is expected to provide a clear picture of the level of students' religious moderation literacy, which not only includes knowledge of Islamic teachings, but also how students apply these teachings in their daily lives. One of the main indicators in measuring the religious moderation index is the level of students' openness to differences, as well as their ability to maintain harmony between religious communities, which is very important in Aceh as a province with social and cultural diversity.

In an effort to strengthen religious moderation, PTKIN in Aceh has taken concrete steps by establishing the Religious Moderation House (RMB) as part of a national program initiated by the Ministry of Religion. The idea of religious moderation was officially launched in the 2020-2024 National Medium-Term Development Plan

¹⁸ Sugiyono, *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif Dan R &*, Cet. Ke-14 (Bandung: Alfabeta, 2014), 247.

(RPJMN) through Presidential Regulation Number 18 of 2020. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religion issued a policy through Circular Letter Number B-3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019 which instructed all PTKIN rectors to establish and organize the Religious Moderation House. This house aims to be a space for sowing, educating, mentoring, and strengthening the religious moderation movement in the campus environment.¹⁹ This step was taken considering that there is still a problem of intolerance in the realm of higher education, as expressed in various events and studies that show the need for serious handling of this issue.

The House of Religious Moderation is expected to become a center of education and dialogue for students, which functions not only as an academic space, but also as a forum for increasing moderate religious awareness.²⁰ The existence of RMB at PTKIN Aceh plays an important role in providing education based on the values of moderation, as well as teaching students to understand and practice Islamic teachings wisely, in balance and in tolerance.

Although most PTKIN in Aceh have established RMB, its implementation still faces several challenges. Some of the existing RMB are still in the early stages and have not been fully active in running various religious moderation programs. Meanwhile, several other PTKIN have succeeded in implementing various activities that encourage understanding of religious moderation, such as seminars, workshops, and regular discussions involving lecturers and students. However, the biggest challenge faced is how to make religious moderation a culture that is inherent in campus life, and ensure that the values of moderation are not only understood theoretically, but also applied in daily actions by students.

The importance of measuring the Religious Moderation Index at PTKIN Aceh is to ensure that the programs to strengthen religious moderation that have been implemented have a positive impact on students' attitudes and behavior. By using this index, PTKIN can

¹⁹ Hidayat, *Moderasi Beragama Untuk Kehidupan*, 23.

²⁰ Muhammad Zulfikar Yusuf and Destita Mutiara, "Diseminasi Informasi Moderasi Beragama: Analisis Konten Website Kementerian Agama," *Dialog* 45, no. 1 (June 29, 2022): 127–137, <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v45i1.535>.

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evaluate the effectiveness of policies and activities carried out, and identify aspects that need to be improved. In addition, this index is also the basis for formulating more targeted policies, which can strengthen religious moderation in the higher education environment, especially in Aceh which has unique challenges in maintaining diversity and social harmony.

Overall, the Religious Moderation Index at PTKIN in Aceh provides an important foundation for efforts to improve understanding and application of religious moderation values among students. Through strengthening religious moderation, it is hoped that a generation can be formed that not only understands Islamic teachings correctly, but is also able to live side by side with other religious communities in harmony and mutual respect. Therefore, to assess the extent to which the understanding of religious moderation literacy has been implemented by PTKIN in Aceh in protecting the younger generation from intolerance, this study was conducted at five PTKIN in Aceh: STAIN Meulaboh, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, IAIN Lhokseumawe, IAIN Langsa, and IAIN Takengon. The number of respondents taken was 100 people, consisting of 15 students from STAIN Meulaboh, 30 students from UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, 20 students from IAIN Lhokseumawe, 20 students from IAIN Langsa, and 15 students from IAIN Takengon.

Based on the results of processing research data from questionnaires distributed to all respondents, the following Religious Moderation Literacy Index scores were obtained at PTKIN in Aceh:

1. Student Religious Moderation Literacy Index Per Dimension

Based on the data obtained, there are three main dimensions that measure the religious moderation literacy of students at PTKIN in Aceh: Basic Understanding of Religious Moderation Literacy, Advanced Understanding of Religious Moderation, and the overall Religious Moderation Literacy Index. All of these dimensions obtained scores that were included in the low category, indicating that students' understanding of the concept of religious moderation in Aceh is still inadequate.

The dimension of basic understanding of religious moderation among PTKIN Aceh students obtained a score of 57.67 with a low category. This shows that although students have basic knowledge of religious moderation, their understanding of fundamental concepts such as tolerance, balance, and justice in religion is not yet fully in-depth. This condition requires special attention in the implementation of guidance and education regarding the basic values of religious moderation from an early age, so that students can better understand and practice religious teachings with a moderate approach.

The advanced understanding dimension of religious moderation scored 37.97 in the low category. A lower score on this dimension indicates that students tend to be less in-depth and understand the more complex aspects of religious moderation, such as the application of moderation values in social life, politics, and interactions between religious communities. This advanced understanding is very important, because students at PTKIN are expected not only to understand religious teachings theoretically, but also to be able to apply them in a broader social context. This low score indicates the need for more in-depth curriculum development regarding religious moderation, as well as more intensive counseling, both inside and outside the classroom.

The religious moderation literacy index dimension scored 50.48 in the low category. This low score indicates that overall, the level of religious moderation literacy of students at PTKIN Aceh is still inadequate. This reflects a fairly large gap in the understanding and practice of religious moderation values among students, which in turn has the potential to give rise to attitudes of intolerance and radicalization. This low literacy index is an important signal for PTKIN and the Ministry of Religion to immediately take concrete steps to improve and strengthen religious moderation programs on campus.

Overall, the data shows that although religious moderation is the focus of policy at PTKIN Aceh, students' understanding of this concept is still limited. Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen more structured education and counseling programs to improve students' basic and advanced understanding of religious moderation. Improving

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the quality of teaching and student involvement in activities such as seminars, workshops, or regular discussions is very important, including through the Religious Moderation House (RMB). The low religious moderation literacy index should be a reflection for PTKIN to evaluate and design more effective policies, as well as an integrated program-based approach to ensure that religious moderation is embedded among PTKIN students in Aceh.

2. Religious Moderation Literacy Index of Students at PTKIN in Aceh

The religious moderation literacy index of students at each PTKIN in Aceh shows that the religious moderation literacy scores of students at all PTKIN studied are in the "Low" category. Although there are variations in scores between PTKINs, these results indicate significant challenges in implementing and internalizing the values of religious moderation among students in Aceh. This is important considering that religious moderation plays a crucial role in maintaining harmony between religious communities, especially in provinces with homogeneous religious backgrounds such as Aceh. The following is the score data obtained from each PTKIN:

The results of the research data show that STAIN Meulaboh obtained a score of 48.69 which is considered low. This shows that although students at this institution have a basic understanding of religious moderation, they still do not fully understand the deeper values of moderation. Several factors that influence this low score include the limited number of programs or activities that integrate the concept of religious moderation in learning and extracurricular activities, as well as the lack of more in-depth training or teaching on how to apply the values of moderation in everyday life.

UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, as one of the largest and most well-known PTKIN in Aceh, scored 59.93, which is higher than other institutions. However, this score is still categorized as "Low." This shows that although UIN Ar-Raniry has better resources and more programs related to religious moderation, students' understanding of the principles of religious moderation is still limited. UIN Ar-Raniry has great potential to strengthen the implementation of religious

moderation, especially through a more integrated curriculum and increased student participation in activities based on moderation values, such as seminars, discussions, or training on interfaith tolerance.

The scores of IAIN Lhokseumawe (55.76) and IAIN Langsa (57.21) reflect a similar situation to other PTKIN in Aceh. Both of these universities scored slightly higher, but remained in the "Low" category. These low scores indicate that despite efforts to teach religious moderation, students' understanding of advanced concepts, such as the application of moderation in social life, politics, and interactions between religious communities, is still very limited. One of the causes is the lack of integration of aspects of religious moderation in daily learning, as well as the lack of activities that introduce students to diverse social realities. Activities that prioritize interfaith dialogue or differences in beliefs in Acehese society need to be intensified to strengthen students' understanding of religious moderation.

The score obtained by IAIN Takengon (48.12) is the lowest, almost similar to STAIN Meulaboh. This shows that students' understanding of religious moderation at IAIN Takengon is still not optimal. There is a big gap in the implementation of religious moderation education that needs to be fixed immediately. One of the causes is the limited facilities and programs that study religious moderation, both academically and non-academically. Further research is needed to identify specific factors in the field that influence the low literacy of religious moderation at IAIN Takengon, including awareness of the importance of religious moderation in maintaining social harmony and diversity.

Overall, the low scores obtained by all PTKIN in Aceh indicate that although religious moderation is the focus of the policy, its implementation at the student level still requires more serious efforts. Strengthening education, structured religious moderation programs, and active involvement of students in religious moderation-based activities are very important to improve the understanding and application of religious moderation among PTKIN students in Aceh.

3. Basic Understanding Index of Religious Moderation of PTKIN Students in Aceh

The index of basic understanding of religious moderation of PTKIN students in Aceh shows quite significant variation in scores between universities, with most institutions in the "Medium" category and several others in the "Low" category. These results indicate differences in basic understanding of religious moderation among PTKIN students in Aceh, which require special attention in the development of curriculum and education programs based on religious moderation.

The results of the research data show that both STAIN Meulaboh and IAIN Takengon obtained scores of 56.71 and 54.96 respectively, which are included in the "Low" category. This indicates that students' basic understanding of religious moderation in both institutions is still limited. To improve this score, STAIN Meulaboh and IAIN Takengon need to strengthen educational materials related to religious moderation in their curriculum and increase student involvement in various activities that support strengthening the understanding of religious moderation. Emphasis on the integration of religious moderation in learning and the development of more structured programs is essential to improving students' basic understanding in both universities.

UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, IAIN Lhokseumawe, and IAIN Langsa, although each obtained a better score compared to STAIN Meulaboh and IAIN Takengon, are still in the "Moderate" category with scores of 68.04, 64.71, and 61.25 respectively. These scores indicate that although students' basic understanding of religious moderation at the three campuses is quite good, there is still significant room for improvement. With greater resources and a stronger reputation, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, as well as the potential of IAIN Lhokseumawe and IAIN Langsa, these three institutions should be able to further strengthen students' understanding of religious moderation. The development of a more integrated curriculum, as well as the implementation of academic and non-academic activities based on the values of religious moderation, are very important to make this happen. Overall, although the scores

obtained reflect a better understanding compared to several other PTKINs, these three campuses need to continue to develop more structured and intensive religious moderation programs so that the quality of understanding and application of religious moderation values among students continues to increase.

Referring to the research data above, the scores obtained indicate that most PTKIN students in Aceh have a basic understanding of religious moderation that is still limited, with most institutions in the "Medium" category and some in the "Low" category. This indicates that although religious moderation has become the focus of policy, its implementation at the student level still requires more serious attention and strengthening. More structured and comprehensive efforts are needed to improve the understanding and application of the values of religious moderation. With a better basic understanding, students are expected to become agents of change who are able to spread the values of religious moderation in the wider community, as well as maintain social harmony and diversity in the context of Aceh, where the majority of the population is Muslim.

4. Advanced Understanding Index of Religious Moderation of PTKIN Students in Aceh

Referring to the research data obtained, it is known that the scores obtained by STAIN Meulaboh (33.79), IAIN Takengon (35.43), and IAIN Lhokseumawe (39.14) indicate that students' advanced understanding of religious moderation in the three institutions is in the "Low" category. This indicates that although students in these institutions have a basic understanding of religious moderation, they have difficulty applying these values in more complex contexts, such as interactions between religious communities in social and political life. The cause of this low advanced understanding is most likely related to the lack of programs that specifically discuss topics of religious moderation in depth, both in the curriculum and extracurricular activities. Therefore, efforts need to be made to introduce advanced topics on religious moderation in learning and provide space for more intensive discussions, both in and outside the classroom, in order to broaden students'

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understanding of the application of moderation values in wider society.

According to the results of the research data, UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh (44.86 - Low) and IAIN Langsa (49.71 - Low) have scores that indicate that students' advanced understanding of religious moderation is still relatively low, although slightly higher compared to other universities. UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh still shows limitations in advanced understanding of the application of religious moderation values. Therefore, UIN Ar-Raniry needs to strengthen educational programs that can deepen discussions about religious moderation. On the other hand, although the score obtained by IAIN Langsa is slightly higher, this university still faces similar challenges in improving students' advanced understanding of religious moderation. For this reason, it is necessary to improve the quality of the curriculum that discusses religious moderation and organize activities that bring students together with various religious and cultural perspectives in Aceh. More intensive discussions on the application of religious moderation in everyday life need to be intensified in order to provide a deeper understanding to students at both universities.

Overall, the low scores obtained by all PTKIN in Aceh in the Advanced Understanding Index of Religious Moderation indicate that although there is a basic understanding of religious moderation, students have not been able to apply these values more broadly. Advanced understanding of religious moderation, which includes aspects of tolerance, justice, balance, and its application in social and political life, is still a major challenge. This low level of advanced understanding indicates the need to strengthen more in-depth educational programs, which not only teach the basic concepts of religious moderation, but also encourage students to engage in discussions and activities that introduce them to diverse social realities. If this advanced understanding of religious moderation can be improved, it is hoped that PTKIN students in Aceh can play an active role in maintaining harmony and harmony between religious communities, as well as creating a more inclusive and tolerant society.

5. Statistics of Information Sources on Religious Moderation Literacy among PTKIN Aceh Students

Research data shows that statistics on sources of information on religious moderation literacy for PTKIN students in Aceh provide an interesting picture of how students gain knowledge about religious moderation. The sources of literacy asked to students include social media, print media, campuses, lectures/socialization, and relatives. Based on the field data obtained, several significant trends are seen related to the preferences of information sources chosen by students and their relevance to increasing religious moderation literacy.

Social media is the main source of information on religious moderation for 52% of students, reflecting their tendency to rely on digital platforms to seek information. Despite providing fast and wide access, the credibility of information on social media is often questionable. Therefore, it is very important to ensure that information on religious moderation disseminated through social media is accurate, fact-based, and does not incite division. On the other hand, 21% of students still rely on print media, such as newspapers and journals, which are more controlled and reliable in terms of the validity of information. Therefore, campuses and related parties need to utilize print media to expand religious moderation literacy among students.

In addition, only 8% of students received information about religious moderation directly from campus, indicating that the campus is not yet optimal in providing such literacy. This indicates the need to strengthen educational programs related to religious moderation that are more structured and sustainable. As many as 10% of students received information through lectures or socialization, although the influence is still limited, and 9% of students received information from relatives. Although the family plays a role in transmitting the values of religious moderation, relying on relatives as the main source can limit a broader perspective on this topic.

Referring to the data above, overall, this study shows that PTKIN students in Aceh rely on social media as the main source of information related to religious moderation literacy. Although social media provides fast access to information, greater attention is needed

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to the quality and accuracy of the information disseminated through this platform. Campuses, which should be the main source of religious moderation literacy, are still relatively low in providing education related to this topic (only 8%). Therefore, there is an urgent need to increase the role of campuses in introducing, educating, and guiding students about religious moderation through various academic and non-academic activities. Strengthening education and understanding of religious moderation needs to be done in a more structured and sustainable manner in all sources of information, both digital, print, and through direct interaction on campus.

C. Religious Moderation Literacy Index of PTKIN Students in Aceh: Analysis of Islamic Knowledge and Understanding

Religious moderation is one of the main concepts in maintaining religious harmony, especially in Indonesia which is known for its diversity.²¹ In the Aceh region, which formally implements Islamic law,²² religious moderation has an important role in ensuring that religious values are not only understood textually but also contextually. According to Siswadi et al., religious moderation is an approach that encourages an attitude of tolerance, balance, and respect for diversity.²³ Therefore, measuring the religious moderation literacy index of PTKIN students in Aceh is a strategic step in understanding the extent to which these values are internalized by the younger generation.

This study aims to identify the level of knowledge and understanding of students towards moderate Islamic values. Based on the initial survey, it is known that most students have basic

²¹ Gede Agus Siswadi, et al., “Membangun Nilai-nilai Moderasi Beragama di Tengah Masyarakat Plural: Sebuah Pendekatan Filsafat Agama,” *Widya Aksara: Jurnal Agama Hindu* 29, no. 2 (September 2, 2024): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.54714/widyaaksara.v29i2.280>.

²² Hudzaifah Achmad Qotadah, et al., “Problems with the Implementation of Qanun Aceh Number 6 of 2014 Concerning Jinayat Law,” *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 22, no. 1 (June 30, 2022): 111–132, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v22i1.6556>; See also Putri Maulina, et al., “Identitas, Fesyen Islam Populer, dan Syariat Islam: Negosiasi dan Kontestasi Muslimah Aceh,” *Cakrawala: Jurnal Studi Islam* 18, no. 2 (December 28, 2023): 62–76, <https://doi.org/10.31603/cakrawala.9419>.

²³ Siswadi, et al., “Membangun Nilai-nilai Moderasi Beragama di Tengah Masyarakat Plural,” 1–13.

knowledge about the concept of religious moderation, such as tolerance, justice, and balance. However, the implementation of these values in daily practice is often inconsistent. This is caused by various factors, including the influence of the social environment, media, and educational patterns that still focus on normative aspects without explicitly integrating moderation values.

Islamic values related to religious moderation teach Muslims to live their lives with the principles of balance, tolerance, and justice in all aspects of life. One of the main values is *tawassut*, which encourages people to avoid extreme and excessive attitudes in religion, and to maintain balance in the practice of worship and social interaction.²⁴ *I'tidal*, or justice in action, teaches the importance of being fair without being excessively partial, both in social and political contexts.²⁵ In addition, tolerance (*tasamah*) in Islam invites people to respect religious and cultural differences, while social justice (*al-'adl*) is also a basic principle in religious moderation, which requires Muslims to treat every individual fairly, without discrimination.²⁶ By practicing these values, Islam not only teaches a peaceful and harmonious religious life, but also forms a people who can make a positive contribution to wider social life.

As a center for religious higher education, PTKIN has a big responsibility in forming students who are able to become agents of change in society.²⁷ In this case, PTKIN students should not only

²⁴ Yesi Arikarani et al., "Konsep Pendidikan Islam dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama," *Edification Journal: Pendidikan Agama Islam* 7, no. 1 (July 31, 2024): 71–88, <https://doi.org/10.37092/ej.v7i1.840>.

²⁵ Suaidi, "Sikap Moderat Pengamalan Ajaran Agama Menumbuhkan Moderasi Beragama Sikap Toleransi dan Kecintaan terhadap Kehidupan Bernegara," *Mandub: Jurnal Politik, Sosial, Hukum Dan Humaniora* 2, no. 1 (January 4, 2024): 400–417, <https://doi.org/10.59059/mandub.v2i1.989>.

²⁶ Mochammad Novendri S, Hidayatullah Ismail, and Dasman Yahya Maali, "Reaktualisasi Moderasi Islam terhadap Problematika Syariah pada Era 4.0," *An-Nida'* 46, no. 1 (September 21, 2022): 26–47, <https://doi.org/10.24014/an-nida.v46i1.19227>.

²⁷ Hanif, et al., "The Impact of the Existence of Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung on the Economy of the Surrounding Community According to Maqasid Al-Shari'ah Perspective," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 23, no. 1 (June 7, 2023): 137–160, <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v23i1.19295>; See also Ahmad Syaiful, "Peran Mahasiswa sebagai Agen Perubahan di Masyarakat," *Journal of Instructional and Development Researches* 3, no. 1 (February 28, 2023): 29–34, <https://doi.org/10.53621/jider.v3i1.102>.

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understand religious teachings theoretically, but also be able to apply them in a harmonious life amidst diversity. In the context of Aceh, moderate Islamic values can be the key to preventing potential social conflicts that arise due to exclusive or extreme religious views.

The results of the study showing the varying levels of religious moderation literacy among PTKIN students in Aceh reflect the importance of implementing Islamic values in religious moderation. Students with moderate understanding are in line with the principle of *tawassut*, which teaches balance and avoids extreme attitudes in religion. However, the tendency towards exclusivism in some students indicates a gap in internalizing values such as *tasamah* (tolerance), which encourages Muslims to respect differences and bring peace to all people. This phenomenon also indicates the need to strengthen the value of *shura* (deliberation) to create an inclusive dialogue space, as well as *al-'adl* (social justice) which ensures that every individual is valued without discrimination. Therefore, increasing religious moderation literacy needs to be emphasized more on strengthening moderate Islamic values, so that symptoms of intolerance can be minimized and a harmonious life in diversity can be created.

One of the factors that influences the religious moderation literacy index is the lack of integration of moderation values in the learning curriculum. Based on the survey conducted, most students stated that discussions on religious moderation were more often conducted outside the classroom through extracurricular activities or seminars. In fact, the integration of religious moderation values in compulsory courses can have a more significant impact on students' understanding. Religious moderation should not be taught as a separate course, but rather these moderation values need to be internalized in courses included in the religious group, such as fiqh and ushul fiqh.²⁸

The Religious Moderation House (RMB) at PTKIN Aceh has become one of the important initiatives in promoting religious

²⁸ Rahma Khoirunnissa and Syahidin, "Urgensi Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama sebagai Upaya Menangkal Radikalisme di Kalangan Mahasiswa," *Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Islam* 10, no. 2 (April 5, 2023): 186, <https://doi.org/10.36667/jppi.v10i2.1276>.

moderation. RMB is designed as a center for education, research, and dissemination of the values of moderation in the campus environment. Based on the RMB report of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, various activities, such as focus group discussions, tolerance training, and anti-radicalism counseling, have been carried out with quite positive results. However, the scope of these activities needs to be expanded in order to reach more students from various study programs.

In addition, social media is a significant factor in shaping students' religious views. Conservative and extreme narratives often dominate the digital space, which can influence how students understand religious teachings. The results of the study showed that as many as 52% of students admitted that they get more religious information from social media than from formal educational institutions. This finding highlights the need for a more creative and innovative approach in utilizing digital media to spread the values of religious moderation.

On the other hand, the role of lecturers as agents of change is also very important. Lecturers who have a moderate understanding can be role models for students in implementing the values of religious moderation.²⁹ However, training for lecturers to understand and teach this concept is still limited. Therefore, the Ministry of Religion needs to improve training programs for PTKIN lecturers so that they can integrate the values of religious moderation into their teaching.

The strong socio-cultural context of Aceh with Islamic values presents its own challenges. On the one hand, Acehnese society is known for its commitment to Islamic law, but on the other hand, rigid interpretations of the law can trigger resistance to the values of moderation. Therefore, a local culture-based approach needs to be implemented to ensure that religious moderation can be widely accepted. One strategy that can be done is to integrate the values of

²⁹ Rinda Fauzian et al., "Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Berbasis Kearifan Lokal dalam Upaya Membentuk Sikap Moderat Siswa Madrasah," *Al-Wijdan Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 6, no. 1 (June 27, 2021): 7, <https://doi.org/10.58788/alwijdn.v6i1.933>.

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moderation into campus religious activities, such as Islamic studies, halaqah, and student organizations. This can create a more inclusive discussion space and encourage students to understand the values of moderation in depth. Students who are active in campus religious activities tend to have a better understanding of moderation compared to those who are passive.

In addition, digital literacy is also an important aspect in supporting the strengthening of religious moderation. Amid the rapid development of social media, students need to be equipped with critical skills to sort out circulating information, especially those related to religious issues. Digital literacy training based on religious moderation can be an effective solution to counteract the influence of extreme narratives that often appear in cyberspace. Islamic values such as *tawassut* (balance) and *tasamah* (tolerance) are very relevant to be applied in digital literacy, which encourages students to avoid extreme attitudes and be wiser in disseminating information. Thus, digital literacy based on religious moderation will help students become agents of change who are able to manage information wisely and promote a harmonious and tolerant social life.

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that strengthening religious moderation at PTKIN Aceh requires a holistic and sustainable approach. This does not only involve the integration of moderation values into the curriculum, but also the empowerment of the Religious Moderation House, training for lecturers, and the use of digital media as a means of education. As an institution responsible for shaping the younger generation, PTKIN in Aceh must continue to innovate by creating programs that are relevant to the needs of students. Thus, the values of religious moderation will not only be a theoretical concept, but also an integral part of the identity of PTKIN students. Through synergistic collaboration between the government, academics, and society, it is hoped that PTKIN Aceh students can become agents of change who promote Islam as a peaceful, inclusive, and moderate religion.

D. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that the religious moderation literacy index of students at PTKIN in Aceh as a whole reached a value of 50.48, which is included in the low category. The basic understanding literacy value of 57.67 and the advanced understanding literacy of 37.97 indicate that in-depth understanding of religious moderation among students still needs to be improved. This reflects that students' knowledge of religious moderation, which should be in line with moderate Islamic values, such as *tawassut*, *tasamah*, and *rahmatan lil-alamin*, has not been properly internalized. Therefore, it is important to build synergy between stakeholders in socializing religious moderation. In addition, effective use of social media can expand the reach of information to the millennial generation and Gen-Z as agents of change in strengthening religious moderation. Thus, strengthening religious moderation literacy in Aceh requires a more comprehensive approach, which includes the integration of Islamic values in various educational programs as well as the use of digital media that can reach a wider audience.

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