

Revitalizing the Value of Religious Moderation in Realizing Peaceful and Inclusive Education to Prevent Extremist Behavior Among Students

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and analyze the implementation of religious moderation values in realizing peaceful and inclusive education, as well as the active role of students in preventing the potential development of extremism within the campus environment. The revitalization of religious moderation values is essential not only to prevent extremist behavior but also to shape individuals who possess a holistic understanding of diversity, enabling them to contribute positively to national and civic life. This study employs a case study design with a qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The findings indicate that the revitalization of religious moderation values can be carried out through various strategies, such as integrating moderation principles into the educational curriculum, strengthening character development through extracurricular activities, optimizing the use of social media, collaborating with multiple stakeholders, and conducting regular monitoring and evaluation of student activities. Furthermore, the role of lecturers in modeling exemplary behavior and reinforcing moderation narratives is highly influential in fostering a peaceful and harmonious academic atmosphere. Therefore, continuous efforts to revitalize religious moderation values within the campus environment are necessary as part of strengthening national identity grounded in the principles of Pancasila and *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*.

Keywords: Revitalization, Religious Moderation Values, Extremism, Wasathiyah.

1. Introduction

Extremist behavior among university students has increasingly attracted attention in recent years, both in Indonesia and in many other countries. As agents of change and the next generation of the nation, students possess substantial potential to influence the social, political, and cultural dynamics of society (Nurhalimah and Mulyani, 2022). However, alongside rapid social transformations, technological advancements, and global challenges, students are not exempt from the threat of radicalization and extremist behavior, which can endanger social cohesion and national stability.

Extremist behavior among students often manifests in the form of involvement in movements or organizations with radical ideological orientations, whether rooted in religion, politics, or certain groups that promote violence as a means to achieve their objectives (Amit and Kafy, 2022). Several factors motivating such behavior include dissatisfaction with socio-political conditions, economic marginalization, and a sense of injustice experienced by some students. Likewise, reports from Tempo indicate that disparities within Islamic educational institutions can contribute to the emergence of extremism (Tempo.Co, 2018). In addition, the influence of social media and online networks, which frequently disseminate radical ideologies, further increases students' vulnerability to invitations or indoctrination that may lead to extremist actions.

One important aspect to consider today is that students are at a vulnerable stage of life, in which they are searching for identity and meaning, conditions that often make them more susceptible to the influence of radical ideologies. This aligns with the statement of Ridlwan Habib, a terrorism observer at the University of Indonesia, reported by VOA Indonesia (Indonesia, 2022), who asserts that students are highly vulnerable to exposure to radicalism or radical ideological narratives. However, such ideologies also have the potential to spread across all societal groups (Tung, Chang, and Lin, 2022). This vulnerability arises partly because many students are still seeking new paradigms for understanding religion, while university curricula, particularly in public universities are often insufficient to fully address their intellectual and spiritual curiosity.

On the other hand, the tension between idealism and existing socio-political realities can trigger frustration and disappointment, which are then exploited by extremist groups to mobilize support (Kambo, 2022). Activities that initially arise from social dissatisfaction or a desire for change can easily be redirected into more radical forms, including the use of violence or actions that contradict democratic principles.

This phenomenon demands serious attention, as students who are future leaders of the nation, bear significant responsibility in fostering a peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive society (Sugiarti and Roqib, 2021). Therefore, comprehensive prevention and response efforts are crucial, particularly through educational initiatives, intergroup dialogue, and the strengthening of national values and tolerance. With the implementation of appropriate approaches, it is expected that extremist behavior can be mitigated and that students can resume their role as members of civil society who contribute to the nation's progress in a peaceful and constructive manner (Suharto, 2021).

Amid increasingly complex global dynamics, revitalizing the values of religious moderation is essential for preserving peace and harmony in Indonesia. As a country with the world's largest Muslim population and a rich mosaic of religions and cultures, Indonesia faces significant challenges in sustaining interreligious tolerance and social cohesion.

In recent years, however, radicalization and intolerance carried out in the name of religion have increasingly threatened social stability and long-standing national values (Tanamal, Baralaska, and Siagian, 2020).

Religious moderation, which emphasizes the principles of balance, tolerance, and respect for diversity, serves as a key approach to preventing extremism that threatens national unity (Nurlaili et al., 2024). However, in the midst of globalization, the rapid flow of information, and the growing influence of radical ideologies, the values of religious moderation, long regarded as the foundation of religious life in Indonesia have shown signs of decline. Therefore, revitalizing the understanding and practice of these values is essential so that religion can function not only as a source of peace and tranquility but also as a force that strengthens national unity (Subakir and Dodi, 2020).

Revitalizing the values of religious moderation involves efforts to restore a balanced and inclusive understanding of religious teachings by emphasizing tolerance, mutual respect, and the prioritization of interfaith dialogue. These efforts are crucial to prevent society from adopting narrow, exclusionary, or even radical interpretations of religion that may lead to conflict. In this context, moderate and inclusive religious education at all levels is essential for shaping a younger generation that is deeply aware of the importance of peaceful coexistence within a diverse society (Prasetiawati, 2017).

Revitalizing religious moderation is not only the responsibility of the government or religious institutions but also requires the active participation of communities, academics, and various other social groups (Ainah, Said, and Iderus, 2023). By strengthening these values, Indonesia is expected to remain an example of a nation with a harmonious, peaceful, and tolerant religious life one that is capable of facing contemporary challenges without losing its identity as a country that upholds pluralism and diversity.

Several previous studies on the revitalization of religious moderation values have been extensively conducted, including Revitalization of Religious Moderation Values in Bugis Philosophy: Sipakatau, Sipakalebbi, and Sipakainge (Hamzah and Marwati, 2023); Revitalizing Religious Moderation on Social Media: Promoting Moderated Content to Build Harmony (Hamdi, Munawarah, and Hamidah, 2021); The Paradigm of Religious Moderation: Revitalizing the Function of Islamic Education in a Multicultural Context from the Perspective of Imam al-Ghazali's Thought (Nasri and Tabibuddin, 2023); Revitalizing the Development of Religious Moderation in the Digital Era in Indonesia (Agung and Maulana, 2021); Revitalizing the Inclusive Islamic Education Paradigm as a Strengthening of Religious Moderation in Islamic Boarding Schools (Shidiq and Nugroho, 2022); and Religious Moderation: Efforts to Revitalize Pancasila Values from the Perspective of the Qur'an (Haris and Pratama, 2024).

In addition, previous research related to efforts to prevent the emergence of extremist behavior has also been conducted, including Deradicalization in the Family to Prevent Extremism and Radicalism in Students (Asmuni, 2022); Islamic Religious Education Teachers' Strategies in Preventing the Growth of Radicalism at MA Darullughah Wadda'wah in Raci Village, Bangil District, Pasuruan Regency (Verdy, Mansur, and Imam, 2023); Civic Education as an Effort to Internalize the Value of Tolerance in Preventing Potential Radicalism at the Indonesian University of Education (Muhamad, Al Muchtar, and Anggraeni, 2021); Integration of Batang Santri Community Communication in Preventing Religious Intolerance (Aris Yusuf, 2022); and Digital Transformation and Religious Moderation: Strengthening the Wasathan Ummatan in Indonesia (Fadli,

2023).

IAD Probolinggo is a university under the auspices of Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah, a moderate Islamic organization that upholds the principle of *wasathiyyah* (the middle path) in preaching, education, and social life. As part of Muhammadiyah's philanthropic and educational initiatives, IAD Probolinggo is strongly committed to developing Islamic education that is tolerant, inclusive, and grounded in universal humanitarian values. This aligns with the focus of the present research, which aims to examine how the values of religious moderation are implemented within the realm of higher education. In addition, IAD Probolinggo has implemented several programs that support the strengthening of religious moderation, such as expert lectures on religious moderation and collaborations with the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, interfaith leaders, the Indonesian Ulema Council, and the Muhammadiyah Council for Higher Education, Research, and Development since 2022. These initiatives provide a strong empirical foundation for examining the effectiveness and revitalization of moderation values in educational practices at Islamic universities, particularly within East Java Province.

According to internal academic data (LPM IAD, 2024), students at IAD Probolinggo come from various regions in the "*Tapal Kuda*" area of East Java—such as Situbondo, Bondowoso, Lumajang, and Banyuwangi, which are sociologically known for their cultural diversity and high levels of religiosity. This composition positions the IAD campus as a miniature pluralistic society, where cross-cultural interactions and variations in religious understanding create social dynamics that are important to examine in the context of strengthening the values of religious moderation.

Based on the review of previous studies, no research has been found that specifically examines the revitalization of religious moderation values in preventing the emergence of extremist behavior among students. Therefore, the researcher considers it important to conduct a study on this topic. Through this research, it is expected that students will gain a more comprehensive and profound understanding of the concept of religious moderation, its practical implementation, and its relevance to daily life. Consequently, concrete efforts are needed to promote the values of religious moderation among students so that they can play an active role in fostering a more tolerant and harmonious society.

2. Methods

This study seeks to examine the revitalization of religious moderation values in realizing peaceful and inclusive education at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute in Probolinggo. A descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subjects holistically and descriptively in the form of written and spoken narratives (Waruwu, 2023). Informants were selected using purposive sampling, consisting of the rector, vice rector, and the dean of the Faculty of Islamic Education and Teaching. These individuals were selected because they possess credible and comprehensive information related to initiatives for revitalizing religious moderation values on campus. The qualitative approach was chosen because issues concerning religious moderation and extremist tendencies involve complex social, cultural, and psychological dimensions that cannot be sufficiently captured through numerical or statistical data.

Qualitative methods enable researchers to explore participants' meanings, interpretations, and lived experiences in depth, thereby providing rich contextual insights into how moderation values are internalized within the campus environment. Meanwhile, the case study design facilitates a focused and intensive examination of the specific context of the Ahmad Dahlan Institute, where religious, educational, and social interactions uniquely shape student behavior. Furthermore, this study aims to explore how the revitalization of religious moderation values contributes to the realization of peaceful and inclusive education in preventing the emergence of extremist behavior among students at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute in Probolinggo. The stages of data analysis include data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to produce a comprehensive understanding (Khadavi, Gafur, and Anam, 2024). The analytical process is illustrated in the chart below:

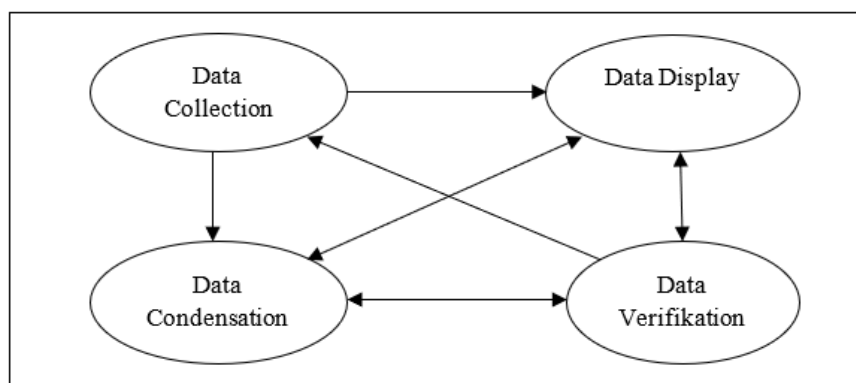


Figure 1. Data Analysis Visualization

Data validity was assessed using four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Based on these criteria, this study aims to provide an authentic and rigorous understanding of the relationship between Islamic spirituality and students' psychological readiness, both in existential and contextual dimensions.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Concept of Revitalizing the Values of Religious Moderation

Revitalization is an effort to restore a situation, value, or structure that has experienced a decline in function or relevance. It is carried out to return something to a more optimal and meaningful condition in accordance with contemporary needs. The goal is to enhance the effectiveness, relevance, and appeal of the value or object being revitalized. Several important aspects that must be considered in the revitalization process include restoring function, improving effectiveness, adapting to new developments, and modifying existing approaches (Wang et al., 2023).

Meanwhile, the value of religious moderation refers to a concept that encourages individuals or groups to practice their religious life in a balanced manner (*tawazun*), with justice (*i'tidal*), and with tolerance (*tasamuh*) (Lutfi, Norfaridatunnisa, and Siregar, 2021). Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of a *wasathiyah* (middle-way) attitude that rejects extremism in any form, whether radicalism or excessive liberalism (Yusriyah

and Khaerunnisa, 2023). By upholding the values of religious moderation, individuals become more open to differences, more respectful of the rights of others, and more resistant to attitudes that may trigger conflict or violence. Religious moderation encompasses several core values (Gunawan, Ihsan, and Jaya, 2021), namely:

1. **Tolerance** refers to an attitude of respecting differences in others' beliefs and religious practices (Fuad and Masuwd, 2023). Religious moderation encourages individuals to acknowledge and accept diversity in religion, culture, and perspectives, recognizing that such differences are an integral part of social dynamics. Through tolerance, individuals are able to live peacefully alongside others without feeling threatened by the beliefs held by followers of different religions.
 2. **Wasathiyah (Balance)** is a concept that emphasizes the importance of adopting a moderate attitude in practicing religion, in which individuals avoid both extreme conservatism and excessive liberalism (Ahmad, 2021). Achieving this balance requires a deep understanding of religious teachings and their social context, ensuring that religious principles are not interpreted in a narrow or exaggerated manner. A moderate attitude encourages individuals to act wisely and prevents them from falling into forms of fanaticism that neglect human values and social harmony.
 3. **Justice (I'tidal)** refers to the value of acting fairly toward all parties, including in the implementation of religious teachings. A moderate individual demonstrates fairness not only toward fellow believers but also toward those of different faiths (Kollar and Fleischmann, 2022). This value of justice emphasizes refraining from imposing one's personal beliefs on others and encourages objective judgment without discrimination on the basis of religious background or belief.
 4. **Respect for Culture and Human Rights** highlights the importance of acknowledging cultural diversity and upholding human rights, including the right to freedom of religion and the freedom to practice one's faith according to personal beliefs. By respecting culture and human rights, moderate individuals avoid interfering with or violating the rights of others to practice their religion (Marjani, 2023). This value underscores that every person has the right to live peacefully and free from discrimination or intimidation.
 5. **Dialogue and Cooperation** emphasize that religious moderation prioritizes dialogue as a primary means of resolving differences of opinion or conflicts related to religion (Yana et al., 2024). Through open and constructive dialogue, moderate individuals can calmly discuss differing perspectives and seek mutually beneficial solutions. This approach also facilitates interfaith and intrafaith cooperation to achieve shared goals, such as promoting peace, social justice, and societal well-being.
 6. **Rejection of Extremism and Violence** refers to the value within religious moderation that firmly opposes extremism, radicalism, and all forms of violence committed in the name of religion. Extremism frequently arises from narrow interpretations or excessive fanaticism, both of which contradict the fundamental principles of religion that emphasize peace (Olurokan, Akwaki, and Shok, 2023). Religious moderation rejects coercion or threats used to impose beliefs on others and instead prioritizes peaceful, persuasive approaches.
 7. **Compassion and Humanity** represent universal values taught by all religions and form the core of religious moderation (Kamal, 2024). By prioritizing compassion
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and human dignity, individuals are encouraged to avoid behaviors that may harm others, whether physically or psychologically. Such an attitude contributes to the creation of a harmonious and supportive environment, allowing religious moderation to play a vital role in fostering a peaceful and constructive social climate.

By understanding the values of religious moderation described above, students play a crucial role in revitalizing these principles, which may be diminishing due to the emergence of various new ideologies and societal movements. Without adequate efforts to filter and critically evaluate these ideologies, there is a significant risk that extremist behavior may arise in different contexts. Therefore, revitalizing the values of religious moderation becomes essential in preventing the development of extremist tendencies among students.

3.2. Strategies to Prevent the Emergence of Extremist Behavior at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute

According to the results of the researcher's interview with Benny Prasetya, as Chancellor of the Ahmad Dahlan Institute, Probolinggo, he stated that:

"Recently, there have been reports in print and online media showing that some students are exposed to various ideologies that have the potential to lead to intolerant or extreme behavior in various settings. This phenomenon motivated us in the rectorate to initiate a revitalization of religious moderation values to mitigate the emergence of such behavior within the Ahmad Dahlan Institute Probolinggo. This process is crucial because it aims to build a wasathiyah (moderate) character and strengthen students' understanding of the realities of religious diversity and tolerance within the academic community."

Alfi Syahrin, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, expressed a similar opinion, saying that:

"Revitalizing the value of religious moderation is an effort by the Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Probolinggo (IAD) to foster tolerance and inclusivity among its students. This is expected to prevent the emergence of extremist behavior early on. Furthermore, the revitalization will also create a conducive, peaceful, and inclusive campus environment, fostering respect for differing religious views among students."

Efforts to prevent the emergence of extremist attitudes among students at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute (IAD) in Probolinggo are carried out through various comprehensive approaches. The results of observations and interviews conducted by the researcher regarding the process of revitalizing religious moderation values indicate that IAD implements the integration of these values into the curriculum and learning activities. Courses related to religion and morality are adapted to include material on tolerance, justice, and respect for differences. In addition, students are encouraged to discuss contemporary issues related to diversity so that they can understand the importance of adopting a moderate attitude in responding to various challenges. Strengthening the understanding of moderate religious perspectives is one of the main focuses of the curriculum. Religious and

ethics courses on campus are designed to introduce concepts of moderation such as tolerance, justice (i'tidal), balance, and respect for diversity. Learning is not limited to theory alone but also includes discussions and case studies that enable students to understand the dangers of extremism and its negative impacts on social harmony. The integration of religious moderation values into the curriculum is oriented toward developing an open and balanced mindset among students, allowing them to distinguish between moderate beliefs and attitudes that lead to extremism. Thus, this understanding is expected to protect students from the influence of radical ideologies.

Meanwhile, the revitalization of religious moderation values is also reflected in character development initiatives carried out through extracurricular activities, student organizations, community service programs, and interfaith discussions, which serve as platforms for internalizing these values. Through these activities, students have the opportunity to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to become accustomed to respecting differences and fostering a tolerant attitude. Interfaith-based programs, such as dialogue sessions and community service, help students develop empathy and a sense of brotherhood with others regardless of their religious background. Furthermore, extracurricular activities at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute in Probolinggo also play a significant role in shaping student character, such as the Hadrah al-Mujaddid. These activities encourage students to view diversity as an asset rather than a threat, thereby reducing the tendency to adopt exclusive or intolerant attitudes.

To mitigate the emergence of extremist behavior among students, the role of lecturers at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute (IAD) in Probolinggo is crucial in guiding students to understand and practice the values of moderation. Lecturers act as mentors and role models, demonstrating moderate and balanced attitudes in religious practice. This aligns with the statement of Ulil Hidayah, a lecturer in Islamic Religious Education, who explained that:

“As lecturers here, in addition to being role models for students, we always strive to guide students at every opportunity, both during class and during discussions with members of the student association (HIMAPRODI), to always internalize and practice the values of religious moderation. We consistently emphasize the importance of respecting various differences, from ethnicity, religion, culture, to socio-religious organizations, such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). These differences train us to become more mature individuals and able to think carefully before taking action. Therefore, extremist and radical behavior can be prevented early.”

Providing guidance and supervision is essential to ensure that campus activities are not influenced by extreme or radical views. The campus actively facilitates dialogue forums that address contemporary and “sensitive” issues related to religion, politics, and social dynamics, which may trigger radicalism if not properly understood. In these dialogue sessions, students are encouraged to express their opinions openly while maintaining respect for differing viewpoints. This form of guidance has proven effective in reducing the potential for extremism at an early stage by providing a safe space for students to ask questions and gain clarity on complex issues. Through this approach, students also receive direct mentorship from lecturers with broad knowledge and moderate perspectives, allowing them to serve as role models of rational and balanced thinking.

On the other hand, optimizing social media as an effective medium for socialization has become an important strategy in revitalizing the values of religious moderation, especially considering that most students actively use digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and others. The Ahmad Dahlan Institute in Probolinggo utilizes these platforms to disseminate messages of moderation, including tolerance, unity, and anti-violence principles. The content shared on social media is designed in an engaging and easily understandable style, allowing it to serve as a counter-narrative to the extremist content that frequently circulates online. Through this approach, IAD strives to raise students' awareness of the dangers of extremism and provide guidance on how to respond to negative or radical narratives they may encounter in the digital space. This strategy aims to strengthen students' resilience against extremist influences by consistently exposing them to peaceful and moderate messages. In this way, content promoting extreme behavior on social media can be mitigated, and students can be better guided in addressing information that has the potential to provoke intolerance.

Participating in interfaith and cultural activities is also an effective way to introduce students to the values of moderation. IAD students actively participate in the annual cultural parade that involves the entire Probolinggo City community. Through these activities, students gain firsthand experience in working with individuals from diverse backgrounds, which helps foster empathy and respect for diversity. Such experiences are expected to shape students' inclusive and tolerant character, enabling them to serve as safeguards against exclusive or extremist ideologies. The Ahmad Dahlan Institute of Probolinggo also collaborates with the local government, interfaith organizations, and the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) to strengthen its campus moderation programs. This collaboration includes seminars, training sessions, and outreach activities involving experts in the field of religious moderation. These initiatives enrich the learning materials and perspectives provided to students and further reinforce the campus's role as a safe environment for preventing the influence of extremism.

After implementing the approaches mentioned above, it is equally important to monitor and evaluate all ongoing programs to ensure their effectiveness. Surveys and interviews with students are conducted to assess their understanding of and attitudes toward the values of religious moderation. The evaluation results are then used to improve existing programs and identify challenges encountered in instilling moderation. To monitor the development of students' understanding and attitudes, the Indonesian Advocates Association (IAD) conducts regular evaluations of the implemented programs. These surveys and interviews help determine the extent to which students understand the values of religious moderation and reveal changes in attitudes after participating in these programs. The monitoring results serve as an important basis for refining program designs to increase their effectiveness in preventing the emergence of extremism. The IAD also collaborates with psychologists and counselors to identify students who may show early signs of exposure to extreme ideologies. Through counseling, these at-risk students can be guided back toward a moderate and balanced understanding of religion. For more clarity, see the chart below:

Therefore, the Ahmad Dahlan Institute continues to strive to develop programs related to the revitalization of religious moderation. Although the potential for extremist behavior among students cannot be completely eliminated, the approaches described above are expected to provide new insights for the academic community and emphasize

the importance of maintaining unity and harmony, particularly within educational environments. In addressing issues related to extremism and radicalism, cultivating a moderate and inclusive character remains essential for fostering a peaceful and harmonious atmosphere.

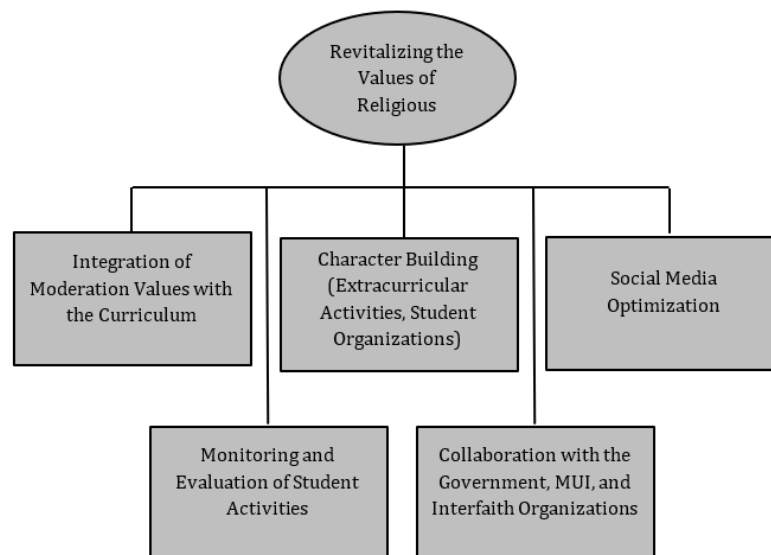


Figure 2. Revitalizing the Value of Religious Moderation at IAD Probolinggo

4. Conclusions

Based on the discussion above, this study concludes that the revitalization of religious moderation values in realizing peaceful and inclusive education among students at the Ahmad Dahlan Institute in Probolinggo has been effectively implemented as a preventive measure against the emergence of extremist attitudes within the academic environment. Its theoretical contribution lies in strengthening the conceptual framework of religious moderation education as a multidimensional construct that integrates cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains in higher education. Meanwhile, its practical implications include campus policies that emphasize the need for institutional programs integrating moderation values into the curriculum, co-curricular activities, and digital engagement through campus media. Furthermore, character development and comprehensive, continuous evaluation are essential to maintaining student commitment to the values of *wasathiyah*, tolerance, and inclusivity. The findings of this study reinforce the need for a holistic learning model based on religious moderation to be implemented in all Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia. The revitalization of religious moderation values is carried out by providing student discussion spaces, both within the learning process and through discussions with student organization administrators, involving external parties competent in the field of religious moderation. This has proven effective in preventing extremist tendencies and, at the same time, serves as a strategic foundation for building a resilient, dialogical, and peace-oriented academic culture in accordance with the principles of sustainable development (SDGs 4 and 16).

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