IMPLEMENTING LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR MODERATE ISLAMIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT
Religious Moderation in education is important to implement because it can bring a deterrent effect to the students’ religious understanding and practice to avoid radicalism in higher education. The present study is aimed at investigating learning strategies to deliver Islamic Religious Education in higher education. A qualitative method with a case study approach was applied in this study. The data were collected by using interview, documentation, and observation. The results show that the university applied several learning strategies to strengthen students’ psychomotor and affective aspects in the form of experiential, habituation, emotional, functional, and rational strategies. Those strategies can be implemented by using various learning methods such as lectures, discussions, experiments, and assignments that promote moderate Islamic values and Rahmatan Li-al âmin.

Keywords: Higher Education, Learning Strategy, Moderate Islam

ABSTRAK

INTRODUCTION
In Higher education, students are taught and learn the process that aims to make them know their existence by developing mutual respect, having good morals, and doing no harm to others. However, in reality, higher education has not been successful to achieve its goals because some students exhibit radical and intolerant attitudes in university. Research results show that radicalism thrives among students, especially in State Universities. In the same vein, the head of BIN (Badan Intelejen Negara/Indonesian State Intelligence Agency) revealed that 39% of students in 15 provinces were interested to exhibit radicalism on campus (Devina & Sabrina, 2018). Responding to this trend, the Minister of Research and Higher Education Mohammad Nasir said that there are 10 universities and even Islamic universities such as UIN Jakarta and UIN Bandung where the students have been exposed to radicalism (Saleh, 2019; Abdallah, 2016; Arifianto, 2019; Fadlan & Saputra, 2017).

Religious radicalism in higher education must be prevented as early as possible so that it will not be a problem for students’ religious understanding and practices. There are many ways to prevent radicalism in higher education. One of the efforts is to strengthen students’ moderate Islamic religious education (IRE) learning in the campus environment (Suharto, 2017; Arifianto, 2017; Baidhawy, 2015). This strategy is in line with the movement promoted by the two major Islamic organizations in Indonesia that are persistent in teaching moderate Islam, namely Muhammadiyah with its *tajdid* and Nahdlatul Ulama with "moderate" Islam/*tasammuh* (Darajat, 2017; Abdullah & Syahri, 2019). Both organizations have managed to deliver and internalize their moderate religious understanding through education ranging from primary education to higher education (Suharto, 2015).

Islamic Religious Education (IRE) should be designed and implemented to promote and develop religious moderation (Suharto, 2017). This entails that IRE in Indonesia should be strengthened with moderate approach in terms of Islamic learning material, learning strategies and extracurricular activities. Researchers have investigated the issues. Abdurrohman & Syamsiar (2017) investigated teaching materials that include multicultural material, *tasammuh*, and mutual respect that are taken firmly from the Quran and Hadith. Solichin (2018) explored the issue of Moderate IRE learning in the form of local wisdom by instilling students’ moderation. This effort is integrated with the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and hidden curriculum combined with the local wisdom of Madurese culture. Some studies show that Islamic education must carry out the educational process by embedding moderate material at the elementary, secondary, or tertiary levels. This research is significant considering that radicalism is very high in universities (Ummah, 2012; Khozin, 2013; Muchith, 2016; Susanto, 2018).

Researchers have conducted studies investigating the efforts to curb religious radicalism among students in higher education. Rahmat, (2018) investigated the model to provide Peaceful, Moderate and Tolerant IRE which was carried out at one of the state universities, UPI (Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia). The results show that moderate IRE can be delivered using research approach across Islamic schools of thought, and implementing a dialogical approach. In addition, to deliver moderate IRE, the lecturers should be open, interactive and dialogical in delivering IRE learning material.

There are two Islamic organizations in Indonesia that strive to promote and develop religious moderation. Muhammadiyah and NU are two major religious organizations that always maintain diversity with a moderate attitude and Islam *rahmatan li al-ālamîn*. NU with a spiritual attitude of *i'tidāl*, *tawâṣût*, and *tawâṣzun* while Muhammadiyah with a moderate attitude of amar *ma*nîf *nabî* *munkar* (Darajat, 2017). Studies investigating the approach brought by Muhammadiyah and NU have been conducted by researchers (Alawi & Maarif, 2021; Emmerich, 2019; Imron & Syukur, 2021; Jubba, Awang, & Sungkilang, 2021). Their research served as a guideline in providing scholarly information concerning educational institution
units under the auspices of NU. Their studies show that NU using its platform *ahl as-sunnah wa al-jamaah (aswaja)* has designed and delivered moderate learning materials.

However, the previous studies on moderate Islamic education in tertiary institutions has not been widely carried out, especially in universities with NU and Muhammadiyah religious backgrounds that have been recognized as moderate Islamic organizations (Prasetiawati, 2017). They have not discussed the importance of delivering moderate IRE in universities that are very multicultural but exhibit the characteristics of moderate ideologies such as NU and Muhammadiyah. This study tries to fill the gap. The objective of the present study is to investigate Moderate Islam taught in universities under auspices of NU. One of the universities affiliated with NU is UNISMA (Universitas Islam Malang).

**METHOD**

The present study was aimed at investigating learning strategies to implement moderate Islamic IRE in Indonesian Islamic higher education. A qualitative approach with case study was used. This research is focused on the long field process to produce accurate data and it was conducted in a natural setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 2012). UNISMA was chosen because the university has a multicultural education jargon and it is affiliated with Islamic organization NU that strives to promote moderate Islam.

The data in this study were collected through interviews, observation and documentation study. Interviews were conducted with several lecturers and students. Observation was done to confirm the data from interview and documentation. Because the data is qualitative (among others in the form of statements, symptoms, nonverbal actions that can be recorded by sentence descriptions or by pictures), the present study has gone several stages to analyze the data. The following three flow activities can be carried out simultaneously to analyze the data: reduction, presentation, drawing conclusions, and verification (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study has collected the data to fulfill the objectives of the present study. They were collected from interview, observation and documentation to describe the implementation of learning strategies to deliver moderate IRE subject at Unisma. In this section the data will be organized and described to provide relevant information with the present study.

Based on documentation, this study found that IRE is offered and obligatory at the University to learn by the students. It is not given to students theoretically but it was designed to be delivered using other ways. The university considers that IRE subject has been obtained by students when they studied in the previous educational level. IRE has been designed and delivered using several learning strategies at Unisma. In general, those learning strategies have been chosen to develop students’ religious knowledge and practice in their daily lives.

**Learning Material for IRE**

The present study found data related to preparation of IRE learning material. In preparing IRE learning materials, all lecturers are guided by the material already contained in the IRE curriculum made by the university and LPIK (Lembaga Pengkajian Islam dan Keaswajaan/Research Centre for Islam and Aswaja). Likewise, the learning objectives to be achieved have been listed as competency standards that have been set. The composition of this material is essential to be more explicit, namely the first material on the doctrines of *aqīdah*, the primary sources of Islamic law to lead to Islam related to their respective majors.

In line with the data from observation concerning *aqīdah* in IRE, the data from interview explains this matter. In response to the question in interview, a lecturer explained:
"Indeed, all lecturers apply a class discussion system to students. At the beginning of the material such as *aqīdah*, there are sources of Islamic law that must be delivered as doctrine so that the students receive and develop strong religious basis. Students have their opportunity to discuss things related to detailed *fiqh*." (Anwar, Personal Communication, October 3, 2021)

In the interview, the lecturer believes that Islamic religious doctrine is only in the *aqīdah* and other part of religion belongs to *fiqh*. Islam teaches its adherent to spread the blessing. This action is strongly suggested by the speech from one of the professors at the university that not fall into radical Islam students must be taught a peaceful Islam. Suppose the doctrine is not *Islam rahmat li al-muslimin* but *rahmat li-al âmin*. In that case, students must pay attention to other beliefs as the teachings of the Prophet of Allah in the Medina charter which provide protection and rights to people and other beliefs (Sa'id, Personal communication, October 4, 2021)

**Learning Method for IRE**

The present study found data related to learning method to deliver moderate IRE at the university. Based on the observation, there are several findings to describe. Based on the observation, this study found that IRE has been delivered to students by using more frequently the discussion technique. In the classroom, some students presented their papers and assisted by the slides displayed through LCD projector learning media. It was observable that students also used IRE textbooks that had been provided by their lecturers. After the presentation was finished, the students discussed the topic studied and critically criticized the answers from the presenters. When discussion session ended, the lecturer explained the unresolved problems or corrected those that were not right from students’ opinion and understanding in the discussion. The explanations were also sometimes using the whiteboard that was already available.

With respect to learning method of discussion, other data from interviews confirm the fact. In an interview, a lecture expressed:

"About 80% of students make presentations for IRE learning activity. They are required to use power points and display their presentation material on the LCD projector screen. Some students explain their presentation using blackboard media. They use several sources from book to prepare for their papers. In addition to books, students can take references from posters and other related learning materials" (Fahmi, Personal Communication, October 8, 2021)

Referring to the observations of researchers in the classroom, the lecturer first delivered material related to the theme with a 15-minute lecture method. Then it is followed by presentations from the speakers using the lecture method along with PowerPoint slides with a duration of 20 minutes. Next a discussion between the participants and the presented presenters is held. This activity was guided by a moderator for about 30 minutes. It is followed by problem-solving and additional material from the lecturer. This activity last usually for 30 minutes.

**Learning Media for IRE**

The present study found the data related to learning media for IRE. Based on the observation, IRE teaching and learning activities at the university have been conducted using various media. This option was chosen to meet the students’ need. The university also hoped that students can choose the more comfortable learning media for them. Those learning media were used to reach the goal of IRE teaching and learning. One of its learning objectives is to internalize the teachings of Islam in students’ daily live. The learning media was also designed to achieve the emphasis on students’ affective (attitude) and psychomotor (skills) aspects.
Furthermore, cognitive study material is only given to support educational attainment, and to highlight the affective and psychomotor fields. The presentation is also equipped with the interaction between students and students when they discuss the learning material. They also deal with various learning media such as LCDs, textbooks, and blackboards.

**Learning Strategies for IRE**

The present study found data related to learning strategies for IRE at the university. Based on the observation, there were several learning strategies that emphasize affective and psychomotor aspects as follows: Experience, habituation, emotional, rational and functional strategy. The experience strategy is the provision of religious experiences to students in the context of teaching Islamic values. This strategy can be termed as experiential strategies or what can be called experiential learning. It can be carried out in the form of practice. Habituation strategy refers to activities to provide opportunities for students to consistently practice religious values. In this case, the university issue regulations how to dress, persuade students to participate in congregational prayers, to read the *Ṣalāwat of Nūr al-Anwār*, and to pray before and after learning. Third strategy is emotional strategy. This strategy refers to efforts to arouse students' emotional feelings in believing, understanding, and living Islamic values. Based on the observation, the lecturers practiced this strategy by asking students questions about the material that has been discussed. Fourth strategy is rational strategy. This strategy attempts to give a role to reason (ratio) in understanding and accepting the truth of religious values. Last strategy is Functional strategy: It is an effort to present religious values by emphasizing wisdom and benefits for students in daily life with their level of development.

Based on the observation, the university has offered several learning strategies that has been set as a reference for lecturers in teaching IRE. Some lecturers also have different approaches to streamline the teaching and learning process but their choice still refer to the learning goal achievement for IRE expected by Unisma. To apply the learning strategies, the lecturers differ and have their own choices in the use of learning methods.

Based on the interview, learning strategies can be chosen by the lecturers to achieve learning objectives in IRE. Responding to an interview, the dean of Islamic Religion Faculty of Unisma states:

“The terms or names for the learning strategy are various. Each lecturer is free to choose his or her learning strategy. The learning strategies include expository procedure, lecture, demonstration, and doctrine methods. In my opinion, there is a need for doctrine approach in IRE learning because those who have never studied *aqidah* will be at risk if they are not taught the Islamic *aqidah* Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamâh an-nabđiyah. I also use the discussion method on certain materials” (Hakim, personal communication, October 8, 2021)

Based on the data, from documentation, interview and observation, learning strategies for IRE learning can be presented in the following Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Strategy</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Habituation</td>
<td>Students familiarize themselves with campus traditions or NU traditions which are carried out with regulations such as how to dress, suggestions for participating in congregational prayers, reading Nuril Anwar’s sholawat, and prayers before and after studying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational</td>
<td>Students participate in discussion to strengthen their minds so that IRE learning is not always doctrinal in learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Students are trained with mental and emotional program in campus by participating in NU tradition with <em>da‘wah</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Strategy</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>Students apply principle of <em>da’wah bil hal</em> in learning IRE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Students are taught Islamic religious values. This strategy allows students learn IRE at Unisma with experiential strategies or what can be called experiential learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Table 1 above shows that there are several types of learning strategies for IRE learning. The strategies vary. The university provides freedom for lecturers to select and apply a particular learning strategy for teaching IRE learning as long as they do not violate Islamic values. Some lecturers may combine several learning methods like discussions, questionnaires, assignments to teach and learn a particular learning material in IRE.

**Learning Assessment for IRE**

The present study found data related to learning assessment for IRE at the university. Based on the observation and interview, there are several data to describe. To measure student learning progress, the most dominant assessment of lecturers is on the affective and psychomotor aspects, although cognitive aspects are also included in the assessment process. In other words, each aspect of students’ competence is assessed.

Based on the interview, a lecture expressed his opinion on learning assessment process. He states as follows “I have a special note about students’ progress in IRE learning, especially their efforts to apply religious values, their polite dresses, their active role in discussions, and even their regular performance for congregational prayers. Their religious activities have been recorded” (Hakim, personal communication, October 8, 2021). This assessment process deals with students’ psychomotor and affective aspect.

The present study found data related to learning assessment for students’ cognitive aspect. Lecturer measure students’ cognitive aspects when students take midterm exams, semester final exams, or exercises at the end of the lesson or chapter. Based on the interview, a lecture explained his assessment practice for students’ cognitive aspect. He expressed as follows:

“At the beginning of the lesson, I asked students about the material to be taught. I usually assess students’ cognitive aspect by asking students. At the beginning of the lesson I usually ask students. At the end of the learning session, I asked them to check their understanding on the material taught” (Dwi, personal communication, October 17, 2021).

Based on the lecturer’s responses in the interview, it can be seen that the assessment is done to encourage them to study constantly. Students’ learning motivation is also affected by the atmosphere of their friends in the class who are always diligent in discussing and studying in groups. Based on the observations, learning control can be done directly in the classroom. Since each student has a different character, some students want to learn quickly and thoughtfully, but other students always want to relax. Therefore, the lecturer must know each student’s condition to unite their thoughts and to use the methods and strategies that have been developed.

**Ḥalaqoh Diniyah**

The present study found data related to *ḥalaqoh diniyah* in teaching and learning IRE at the university. Based on the observation, the university organizes IRE learning on a large scale that is applied to *ḥalaqoh diniyah*. Unisma implements the internalization of moderate values in higher education through IRE learning and additional activities such as *ḥalaqoh*. This program is required for new students and last for one semester. As for applying IRE learning in internalizing moderate Islam to develop students’ psychomotor and affective domains, all freshmen students must take *ḥalaqoh diniyah* for one semester.
Researchers have observed that IRE learning at Unisma consists of large groups, small groups, and individuals. Large-scale group learning consisted of 25-34 students using the lecture method. At the same time, small groups are carried out when students discuss learning material. Individual tasks such as making papers or other scientific works was applied as a form of personal learning.

Unlike ḥalaqoh diniyyah, there is another type of learning IRE allowing a small group of students to learn. The form of a small group of are designed to facilitate learning the Quran. In one group, there are ten students assigned. To facilitate small group learning, sorogan method is applied. In addition to large and small group, there is an individual learning for IRE at the university. This type of learning can be conducted by the lecturer to assign individual assignments to summarize ḥalaqoh diniyyah material.

This study is aimed at investigating learning strategies to deliver moderate IRE at the university. In the previous section the data collected have been described to fulfill the objective of the present study. In this section the findings will be discussed with relevant literature and previous studies. The problem of moderate Islam will be related to the radicalism that has spread into educational institutions. To overcome this problem, Educational institutions must be extra vigilant and manage their efforts to curb radicalism (Alam, 2020; Osipov, 2020; Schmidt, 2021). Radicalism grows because of a less comprehensive understanding of Islam and even a textually understanding of Islamic teachings. It may influence the way people interact with other religion adherents. People exposed to radicalism quickly blame others and are even called other group an infidel. This may lead to violent action.

Education is expected to contribute in tackling radicalism. There are many ways that can be taken by educational institutions to prevent their students from radicalism exposure. One of the ways is to deliver moderate IRE. This action is undoubtedly can be considered as a way for educational institutions to prevent radicalism and foster moderate Islam and Islam rahmat li-al āmin (Nur, Nawawie, Fajarwati, & Chusna, 2020; Supriadi, Romli, Islamy, Parhan, & Budiyanti, 2021).

The present study investigates the efforts applied by the university to deliver moderate IRE. The university has applied several learning strategies to ensure its students achieve moderate religious understanding and practice. Educational strategy is a series of activities designed to achieve academic goals (Muhaimin, 1996; Djamarah & Zain, 2010). One of the academic goals in this present study is to achieve students’ moderate religious understanding. The university has managed a structured and systematic plan to design and apply IRE teaching and learning to improve educational outcomes or goals. The lecturers in the present study have taken into consideration learning strategies in terms of learning materials and procedures used to achieve moderate IRE (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2015).

In this study, IRE has been designed to be delivered to students to achieve several aspects that are in line the education of values (Krau, 2011; Hartley & Jobson, 2020). In that case, the educational strategy consists of four stages: (1) inculcation of values, (2) modelling values, (3) facilitating the development of values (facilitating), and (4) developing skills (skill development). IRE at the university is designed to internalize moderate religious attitude and characters.

To achieve moderate IRE, several learning strategies are needed to instil the values in students (Maksudin, 2013). According to Zubaedi (2011), the investment of strategy consists of a microsystem and a macro strategy. On a micro basis, the education strategy is carried out in four pillars, namely: integration of curriculum in learning (intracurricular), extracurricular activities, daily activities with school culture habituation (school culture), and activities at home or in the family and community environment.
Education aims to form human beings who in Islam can also be called insân kâmil or uhu al-albâb (Amrullah, 2016; Rifa’î, 2016). Education also makes a suitable means to strengthen the understanding of ideology. Meanwhile, in the realm of moderate Islam, Islamic education is the most strategic means to support moderate Islam. The application of moderate Islam in institutions can be through goals and policies, hidden curriculum/extra-curricular and teaching materials, and subject matter (Suharto, 2017).

Unisma is an institution under the auspices of NU that will automatically implement education and learning based on aswaja an-nahdhiyah with the principles of tawassuth, i`tidal, tawazzun, and tasammuh. This attitude is also shown in several research results that in Indonesia the guardians of religious moderation are NU and Muhammadiyah. The university also has a multicultural education model jargon, namely teaching Islam regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. Students’ Moderate religious understanding can be seen from several indicators. The indicators include understanding of reality (obligations and rights), priority of fiqh (fard’ 'ain, fard kifâyah, sunnah, and others), convenience to people others to worship, the text and religion as a whole, being tolerant and respectful of each other, and the sunnatullâh in every creation of Allah (Rochmat, 2018).

In this study, Unisma has managed its efforts to deliver and achieve Moderate Islamic religious education. The university has tried to achieve several indicators of moderate Islamic education namely peace education by respecting the rights of every human being, entrepreneurship education by seeking many partners, education by guarding the prophetic vision of Islamic liberation, humanization social change, and transcendence, education of diverse tolerance and mutual respect, moderate education that is not extreme, education with the integration of mind, heart, and morals, and education that produces scholars who are intellectual and intellectual who are scholars (Suharto, 2017)

The two Islamic organization namely Muhammadiyah and NU have their own definition for moderate Islamic education. Muhammadiyah organization has also set the indicators of moderate religious understanding. The organization emphasizes several indicators of moderate religious: have anticipatory competence, innovative thinking (tajdid), pluralistic attitude, independent character, and moderate attitude. Meanwhile, NU has several terms to adress moderate Islam. NU itself has embraced religious attitude, such as i`tidal (middle), tasâmmu (tolerance), tawâzûn (balanced), and tawassut. Moderate indicators, according to Rochmat (2018), are (1) understanding reality (obligations and rights), (2) understanding priority fiqh (fard’ ‘ain, fard kifâyah, sunnah, and others), (3) making it easy for others to worship (4) understanding the text and religion as a whole (5) being tolerant and respectful of each other (6) understanding the sunnatullâh in every creation of Allah.

Lecturers are important human resources to implement moderate IRE (Rahmat, 2018). They should exhibit peaceful, moderate, and tolerant character. When it comes to teaching IRE, the lecturers should be interactive, dialogical, material substance, and lecturer openness (Harahap, Dahlan, & Usiono, 2022; Muhsin, Rochmawati, & Huda, 2019).

In this study, IRE learning management strategy is moderate. The lecturer gives muqaddimah, followed by student presentations and discussions. The lecturer explains the problems in the debate. Student progress are assessed by the lecturer during their discussion session. Giving motivation is done at the beginning of learning or the meeting. The strategy of delivering learning also cannot be separated from two approaches, namely, teacher-centered and student-centered. Teacher-centered approach includes several teaching strategies in which the teacher is tasked with presenting the knowledge to be learnt and explicitly guiding the student's learning process (Appleyard & Appleyard, 2014; Azmiyah & Astutik, 2021; Llorent-Bedmar, Cobano-Delgado Palma, & Navarro-Granados, 2020). Whereas student-centered
approach allows students to have more responsibilities in constructing their knowledge. The teacher's job is to guide and facilitate learning.

In this study, IRE teaching and learning activities use several learning media. Several things should be taken into consideration namely Learning media and Student interaction with the media. The media should assist and support learning activities. Learning media includes all the resources needed to communicate with students. This can be in the form of hardware, for example, television computers, projectors, and the software used on the hardware (Purtilo-Niemen, Vuojärvi, Rivinen, & Rasi, 2021).

In this study, the university provides learning strategies to inculcate moderate Islam. IRE is designed to train students to seek, understand, and find solutions to life problems independently based on Islamic values. The are other circumstances where moderate Islam can be implemented: Placing more lecturers in the functions of mentors, caregivers, advisors, and facilitators and providing feedback; Reducing lectures and active learning models; Utilizing the class as a laboratory to implement Islamic values; Utilizing electronic media such as religious CDs as learning aids and understand life's problems (Sodikin, 2019; Sodikin & Ma’arif, 2021).

The present study has contributed to the scholarly discussion on the efforts made by the university to deliver moderate Islam to prevent radicalism. It has some limitations in terms of method. Further studies are suggested to address the issue with robust method.

CONCLUSION
The present study is aimed at investigating the learning strategies to deliver moderate IRE at Unisma. Based on the findings and discussion, several conclusions can be drawn. The university has designed learning strategies to deliver moderate IRE. It has designed learning material, learning strategies, learning assessment for moderate IRE. Strengthening moderate Islam in learning requires doctrine and teaching Islamic jurisprudence aspects of fiqh can be implemented using dialogical method. Unisma applies the philosophy and values of aswaja and the Islamic principles of rahmat li-al âmin to support the learning of Aqidah and Fiqh. IRE learning strategy that has been applied uses several methods to support the application of moderate Islam. Each strategy and method has its advantages and disadvantages. The learning strategy applied aims to shape students’ psychomotor aspects and attitudes. The procedure involved at Unisma includes experiential, habituation, emotional, functional, and rational strategies.

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