The Influence of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak* Learning on Enhancing Understanding of Religious Moderation

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of integrated learning in the subjects of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak* on enhancing students' understanding of religious moderation at MTs Nurul Falah Bandung. Using a mixed-method sequential explanatory approach, data were collected through Likert-scale pre-tests and post-tests as well as semi-structured interviews. The results of the paired t-test showed a significant increase in the average scores of religious moderation understanding: cognitive dimension rose from 3.05 to 3.98, affective from 3.18 to 4.04, and conative from 3.13 to 4.00, with $p < 0.001$. Regression analysis indicated that the intervention contributed $\beta = 0.62$ with $R^2 = 0.58$. Qualitative findings revealed that the integration of historical narratives and moral values strengthened students' tolerant, empathetic, and reflective attitudes toward differences. The study concludes that contextually integrated SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* learning is effective in fostering the values of religious moderation and can serve as a character education model in madrasahs.

Keywords: *Aqidah Akhlak*, Integrated Learning, Islamic Cultural History, Madrasah Education, Religious Moderation

1   Introduction

Religious moderation has become a strategic issue in Indonesian education [1], particularly amid the growing potential for intolerance and religious identity-based conflicts in schools. Although reports from the Ministry of Religious Affairs indicate a positive tren such as an increase in the Religious Harmony Index from 76.02 in 2023 to 76.47 in 2024 field observations still reveal discriminatory practices and intolerant behavior that undermine the values of diversity[2]. One such example is the imposition of religious dress codes in public schools, which contradicts the foundational principles of Pancasila and the right to religious freedom [3].

The gap between macro-level index achievements and micro-level practices in schools highlights the need for more transformative educational approaches [4]. Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), as Islamic secondary educational institutions, hold significant potential in shaping a generation with moderate and inclusive worldviews [5]. Curriculum plays a crucial role, especially in value-laden subjects such as Islamic

Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak*. SKI introduces the dynamic history of Islam, rich with examples of tolerance and intergroup dialogue, while *Aqidah Akhlak* instills values of faith and morality aligned with principles of justice, balance, and respect for diversity [6].

Unfortunately, many prior studies focus on only one aspect of religious moderation education either the historical aspect through SKI or the normative aspect through *Aqidah Akhlak* without integrating both into a unified and measurable learning model. For instance, Desnita [7] shows the effectiveness of *Aqidah Akhlak* in building moderation values at the elementary madrasah level, but the study is limited to textual analysis. Meanwhile, other research such as that of Umarita & Nurhadi analyzed the integration of tolerance, justice, and anti-violence values in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) textbooks at the junior high level, aligning with the national moderation framework. However, their focus was limited to content analysis without testing the impact of instruction on students' understanding in real classroom interactions (HTS Teologiese Studies). Additionally, Mulyana [8] explored a team-teaching model across religions in Austrian secondary schools, finding that interfaith teacher collaboration can enhance students' critical and reflective awareness of religious diversity but this context lies outside the unique framework of Islamic madrasahs in Indonesia.

These studies emphasize the importance of not only embedding values in textbooks but also applying them through active and reflective teaching practices. At the MTs level, students possess a more mature cognitive and emotional foundation than those at junior high, requiring pedagogical approaches that are not only informative but also dialogical and contextual.

In this context, the current study addresses the gap by introducing an integrated learning intervention in SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak*, specifically designed for MTs students. It incorporates components such as historical narrative, personal reflection, social simulation, and moral discussion. This initiative responds directly to the cognitive and emotional complexity of MTs students, demanding learning activities that involve deeper analysis, evaluation, and value internalization.

By aligning with the findings of Umarita & Nurhadi, who called for expanded moderation content in PAI textbooks, and drawing from active interreligious models like those of Malina et al. (mdpi.com), this study seeks to apply a contextual and dialogical approach to Islamic education at the MTs level. Preliminary results show that this approach not only significantly improves students' understanding across cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions, but also requires higher reflective engagement than interventions at the junior high level [9].

This study aims to bridge the identified gap by designing and empirically testing an integrated learning model that combines SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* to improve students' understanding of religious moderation. This intervention unites both the historical and ethical dimensions of Islam and applies them in an active, reflective learning context through discussion, case studies, and social simulations. Evaluation is conducted using a mixed-method design that integrates statistical tests (pre-test–post-test) with narrative analysis of student and teacher experiences throughout the learning process.

The novelty of this research lies in its pedagogical integration of two core Islamic subjects into a systematic and measurable religious moderation learning framework. Conceptually, it offers a holistic approach that links historical awareness with the strengthening of religious morality. Methodologically, it combines quantitative and qualitative evidence to provide a comprehensive picture of changes in student attitudes. Practically, it delivers a replicable learning model and evaluation instrument for other madrasahs aiming to strengthen character education based on moderate Islamic values.

2   Method

This study employed a mixed-method sequential explanatory approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in a sequential manner. This approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of integrated learning between the subjects of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak* on students' understanding of religious moderation. Quantitative data were used to statistically measure the effect of the intervention, while qualitative data explored the internalization process of moderation values from the perspectives of both teachers and students [10].

The quantitative design used was a pre-test–post-test one-group design, in which a single group of students was assessed before and after the intervention. The study population comprised all students of MTs Nurul Falah Bandung, totaling approximately 180 individuals. A purposive-stratified sample of 60 students was selected, taking into account gender balance and variation in baseline understanding of religious moderation [11].

The main instrument for quantitative data collection was a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire adapted from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Indonesia's Religious Moderation instrument (2019). The questionnaire covered three main dimensions: *tawasuth* (moderation), *i'tidal* (justice/balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance). Content validity was reviewed by three experts in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) and research methodology, with all items meeting a Content Validity Ratio (CVR) ≥ 0.80. The instrument's reliability was tested on 30 students from another MTs, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency [12].

The intervention was conducted over eight weeks, with two 90-minute sessions per week. The learning sessions were designed integratively, combining historical narratives from SKI with normative values from *Aqidah Akhlak* through discussion, case studies, moral reflection, and role-play simulations. The pre-test was administered before the first session, and the post-test was conducted two weeks after the intervention ended to assess the sustainability of learning effects.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Shapiro–Wilk normality test, paired t-test to identify differences between pre- and post-test scores, and multiple regression analysis to determine the contribution of the intervention to changes in religious moderation understanding, controlling for gender, age, and frequency of religious practice [13].

Meanwhile, the qualitative approach involved semi-structured interviews with 15 students and 10 teachers, selected purposively based on their moderation scores (high, moderate, low) and active involvement in the learning process. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic content analysis, including stages of familiarization, open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Data credibility was ensured through inter-coder reliability using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa \geq 0.70$) and member checking with participants. The qualitative findings were then integrated with quantitative data to construct a comprehensive narrative explaining how the SKI–*Aqidah Akhlak* intervention transformed students' understanding and attitudes toward religious moderation..

3 Results

3.1 Quantitative Data Analysis of SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* Learning in Enhancing Understanding of Religious Moderation

The quantitative findings of the study indicate that the integrated learning intervention combining Islamic Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak* significantly improved students' understanding of religious moderation. Measurements were conducted using a Likert-scale questionnaire covering three core dimensions: cognitive, affective, and conative. Prior to the intervention, the overall average scores were categorized as moderate, suggesting that students' understanding of *tawasuth* (moderation), *i'tidal* (justice/balance), and *tasamuh* (tolerance) had not yet been fully developed.

After eight weeks of implementation, post-test scores showed a significant increase: the cognitive dimension rose from an average of 3.05 to 3.98, the affective dimension from 3.18 to 4.04, and the conative dimension from 3.13 to 4.00. This improvement demonstrates the impact of the integrated learning model, which not only delivered theoretical content but also connected it with historical and moral contexts relevant to students' lives.

Paired t-test results revealed p-values < 0.001 across all three dimensions, indicating statistically significant differences between pre- and post-test scores. This suggests that the score changes were not due to chance but rather a result of the structured and systematic intervention. The integration of historical narratives with moral value reinforcement effectively enhanced students' comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, multiple regression analysis was used to determine the extent of the intervention's contribution to changes in moderation scores. The analysis showed a significant effect of the intervention, with a beta coefficient of 0.62. Control variables such as gender, age, and frequency of religious practices were also included in the model, but their contributions to score changes were relatively minor compared to the learning intervention itself.

The R-squared value reached 0.58, meaning that 58% of the variance in the increase in religious moderation scores can be explained by the integrated SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* learning intervention. This is a substantial figure for an experimental study in

the field of education, indicating that the instructional design employed was robust in facilitating student transformation.

Beyond the statistical analysis, post-test score distributions showed that nearly all students experienced improvement across all three dimensions. Increases were observed not only among students with initially low scores but also among those with already high levels of religious moderation. This suggests that the implemented learning model was effective not only for students needing cognitive support but also in deepening understanding among more advanced learners.

Item-level analysis of the questionnaire revealed that statements related to appreciation of differences, fair attitudes toward other groups, and willingness to engage in interfaith dialogue showed the highest score increases. This affirms that contextually grounded learning, combining historical content and moral values, is highly effective in shaping a more inclusive worldview.

Overall, the quantitative findings suggest that the integrated SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approach significantly and measurably improves MTs students' understanding of religious moderation. With holistic gains in knowledge, attitude, and behavioral intention, this intervention proves to be an effective instructional strategy for strengthening moderate character education in Islamic schools.

3.2 Qualitative Data Analysis of SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* Learning in Enhancing Understanding of Religious Moderation

The qualitative findings provide an in-depth portrayal of how the integrated learning process of SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* influences students' understanding and attitudes toward religious moderation. Based on semi-structured interviews with students and teachers, it was revealed that the internalization of moderation values occurred not only through content delivery but also through interactive experiences, moral reflection, and open discussions guided by teachers throughout the learning process.

Students reported that SKI sessions presenting historical narratives of Islamic figures who upheld tolerance and justice offered them a new perspective on diversity within Islam. Stories about past scholars engaging in dialogue across sectarian differences and contributing to inclusive civilization building broadened students' insights into the importance of maintaining social harmony. One student shared, "Learning about Islamic history made me realize that Muslims have always been diverse, but unity was still possible."

Meanwhile, *Aqidah Akhlak* sessions served as a space for personal reflection, allowing students to grasp the importance of fairness, patience, and mutual respect. Teachers employed group discussions and morally relevant case studies from students' daily lives to provoke thoughtful contemplation. Many students expressed that the lessons encouraged them to reconsider judging peers with different viewpoints or religious practices. As one participant reflected, "I used to think friends who prayed differently were wrong, but now I try to listen first to understand their reasons."

Teachers interviewed noted that this integrated approach enabled them to teach religious content in a rational and applicable manner, rather than in a dogmatic fashion. They observed that students became more inquisitive, more engaged in discussions, and

even respectfully critical of the content. This process reflected the emergence of critical thinking, rooted in both historical understanding and the consistent instillation of moral values.

In terms of social interaction, several students reported noticeable changes in how they related to peers with differing views. They claimed to be more patient, more willing to listen, and more thoughtful when facing differences. A particularly interesting finding emerged from a student's experience in a religious conflict simulation role-play, where they took on the role of a mediator something they had never attempted before.

Affectively, students showed a strong emotional engagement with the material. Some were moved when learning historical facts about differences being reconciled through dialogue rather than violence. These positive emotional responses helped reinforce the internalization of moderation values, not just as abstract concepts but as something deeply felt and believed.

Interviews also highlighted the synergy between the historical content in SKI and the normative content in *Aqidah Akhlak*, which together fostered a more comprehensive understanding. Teachers noted that teaching tolerance without historical context often led to rote memorization without true understanding. Conversely, historical narratives without moral relevance felt abstract. The integration of both created more concrete and meaningful learning experiences.

Finally, both students and teachers appreciated the presence of safe and open discussion spaces during the intervention. A classroom environment that encouraged openness and shared reflection cultivated a healthy and humanistic learning climate. This became a critical foundation for nurturing moderate attitudes as part of students' contextual Islamic identity, not merely normative behavior.

Overall, the qualitative findings support the quantitative results by showing that integrated SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* learning not only improves students' comprehension scores but also facilitates the real internalization of moderation values in their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors

4   Discussion

This discussion outlines how the integrated learning intervention of SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* effectively reinforced religious moderation among students at MTs Nurul Falah Bandung, examined from both theoretical and empirical perspectives. The significant increase in cognitive dimension scores indicates that historical narratives presented in SKI provided new insights into pluralism and tolerance in Islamic civilization. This finding aligns with Munawir's study, which emphasizes the strategic role of SKI in fostering moderate attitudes through contextual understanding of religious history[14].

In the affective domain, the rise in average scores demonstrates students' growing empathy and openness to differences. This supports Kinanthi's research, which found that strengthening moderation values through Islamic Religious Education (PAI) enhances ukhuwah Islamiyah, or brotherhood and tolerance among students in Islamic senior high schools (MAN and MA)[15].

The notable improvement in the conative dimension suggests that the learning model not only fostered understanding but also encouraged genuine intentions and actions rooted in moderation. These results resonate with Ahmad Syafii's findings that the internalization of moderation in PAI learning translates values into student behaviors [16].

Regression analysis shows that the intervention had a strong impact ($\beta = 0.62$) on students' understanding, confirming the importance of integrating these two subjects holistically. This supports Pora's study, which concluded that embedding moderation content into the PAI curriculum leads to deeper understanding [17].

Qualitative data revealed that learning experiences involving role-play, case studies, and discussions significantly enhanced students' moral reflection. This supports Nur Yaqin, who highlighted the active role of *Aqidah Akhlak* teachers as conservers, innovators, transmitters, and organizers in reinforcing values such as tasamuh, tawazun, and i'tidal [18].

Teachers reported that the integrated method allowed students to absorb historical narratives while connecting them with moral attitudes. This is consistent with the relational approach proposed by Munawir which suggests that blending historical and moral contexts facilitates holistic internalization of religious moderation[14]

Student participation levels increased post-intervention, evident in their enthusiasm for discussion and Q&A sessions. This aligns with Nur Kafid's research, which argues that socializing and institutionalizing moderation values require active interaction for those values to be embodied in the public classroom sphere [19]

Both students and teachers mentioned that SKI learning helped dismantle stereotypes about other religions, resulting in more positive student attitudes. This reflects findings from a study at MTs As'adiyah Uloe, which concluded that history-based and visual learning media can strengthen narratives of religious moderation.

Students' emotional engagement during moral reflection sessions shows that moderation values are not merely cognitively understood but are also affectively experienced. Kinanthi also noted that emotional reinforcement in PAI learning fosters ukhuwah Islamiyah as a manifestation of moderation values[15].

The historical relevance was personally resonant with students, as one student stated, *"Learning Islamic history made me realize Muslims have always been diverse yet united."* This closely reflects Munawir et al.'s (2023) finding that historical reflection can build inclusive awareness from an early age [14].

Challenges encountered included limited instructional time and variations in students' initial understanding, which can be addressed through concept-mapping and scenario-based modules. Pora also emphasized the need for modular curricula to ground moderation values effectively in classroom settings[17].

This study also found that improving teachers' digital literacy is essential to present SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* content in more contextual and relevant ways. This finding aligns with research [20] [21], which identifies digital literacy as a key factor for effective moderation in the digital era.

Furthermore, integrating SKI and *Aqidah Akhlak* offers a dual frameworkhistorical dimensions provide context, while normative dimensions offer a moral foundation for action. This synergy directly aligns with the theory of value transformation described

by [22], which highlights the interplay of media, strategy, and socialization in embedding moderation values in PAI.

Overall, this study demonstrates that the integrated SKI *Aqidah Akhlak* learning model significantly enhances students' understanding of religious moderation. These findings expand the empirical discourse and offer a contextual, integrative, and applicable model for religious education.

5   Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that integrated learning between the subjects of Islamic Cultural History (SKI) and *Aqidah Akhlak* significantly enhances students' understanding of religious moderation at MTs Nurul Falah Bandung, across cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions. The integration of historical and moral content within a single instructional model has proven effective in shaping a more open-minded, tolerant, and reflective perspective toward diversity. Therefore, it is recommended that madrasahs begin developing integrative curricula grounded in moderation values, using contextual and practical approaches. Additionally, teachers should be provided with training to enable them to facilitate learning that goes beyond content delivery to foster attitude formation. Future research should expand to include other madrasah contexts and employ longitudinal designs to examine the long-term impact of such interventions on student character development

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