



Moderate Islamic Education: A Comparative Study of Indonesia's Insan Cendekia and Turkey's Imam Hatip Schools

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Abstract

The idea of a "Clash of Civilizations" between Islam and the West has gained traction since the events of September 11, 2001. This has created a divide between two extreme viewpoints of the world, which leads to truth claims and terrorist action. Countries like Indonesia and Turkey, with large Muslim populations, play a significant role in Islamic moderate education to counter terrorism, so recently many Muslim students from various parts of the world have started going to Istanbul and Jakarta as destinations for studying Islam and are no longer only to Cairo and Medina. This is due to the relatively safe political and security conditions, and these cities' welcoming and inclusive atmosphere makes them attractive destinations for seeking a well-rounded academic experience. This research aims to compare the values of moderation in the Islamic education curricula of IHS Fatih Sultan Mehmet (Turkey) and MAN Insan Cendekia (Indonesia), as the most excellent Islamic high school lately. Qualitative methods were used in variants of case studies, from documents, books, and interviews, and data were collected, using component analysis, and theory triangulation was used for validation. The findings reveal that both educational systems emphasize moderation, but their cultural contexts differ. In Indonesia, moderation is linked to Pancasila values, while Turkey combines secular principles with Islamic values. The result of the study shows that Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey is classified as moderate education with different parameters. The first must adapt to local wisdom, and the second must adapt to Islamic-secular identity.

Keywords: *Islamic Identity, Local Wisdom, Nationality, Education, Tolerance, Moderation*

INTRODUCTION

Islamic education plays an essential role in shaping the values and beliefs of individuals, guiding their behavior, and preparing them for personal and professional success. Beyond providing knowledge and skills, it instills moral and ethical principles that are crucial in navigating the complexities of modern society (Abidin, 2024). In the context of economic policy, education is indispensable for creating a skilled workforce that can drive growth and development. By investing in education, governments can ensure that their citizens are well-prepared to engage in the global economy and contribute to national prosperity. As such, the ongoing development of Islamic education programs is crucial for promoting understanding, tolerance, and unity within diverse communities.

Indonesia and Turkey, both home to large Muslim populations and members of the G20, have witnessed significant economic growth over the past 15 years, which has created vibrant and dynamic business markets. In both countries, the role of Islamic education has become increasingly significant, particularly in response to the challenges posed by globalization and interreligious interactions. Islamic education has emerged as a key focus for policymakers and scholars in both countries to face the world's complexities of cultural identity and religious beliefs (Suprianto, 2020). These nations, with their diverse cultural and historical backgrounds, provide unique insights into the evolving discourse on Islamic education (Amin, 2018).

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A central theme in this discourse is the moderation of Islamic education. The concept of religious moderation has sparked debates and controversies among scholars, religious leaders, and society as a whole. This concept encompasses the idea of practicing one's faith in a balanced and moderate manner, avoiding extremism and intolerance. However, the interpretation of what constitutes religious moderation can vary greatly depending on one's cultural, social, and religious background ([Shihab, 2019, p. 48](#)). Some argue that true religious moderation means accepting and respecting differences in beliefs and practices, while others believe it involves adhering strictly to a set of religious teachings without imposing them on others ([Suryadilaga et al., 2020](#)). The controversy surrounding religious moderation highlights the complex nature of religion and the challenges of finding a common ground that promotes harmony and understanding among diverse communities. As societies continue to grapple with issues of religious extremism and intolerance, the concept of religious moderation remains a crucial topic of discussion and debate ([Armita & Karuok, 2022](#)). Moderation in Islamic education involves embedding Islamic values within educational environments, but the definition of moderation can vary from one country to another.

The implementation of moderation values in any school is no less important than matters of creed and worship for maintaining peace and harmony among individuals and communities. It is also capable of combating any terrorist act more effectively than police weapons and security personnel ([Hadi et al., 2023](#)). Although this matter is very important, it has not yet become a priority in Islamic schools, and a comparative study on moderate education across countries is considered scarce. This study aims to conduct a comparative analysis of moderate Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey, focusing on MAN Insan Cendekia in Indonesia and Imam Hatip schools in Turkey. By examining their curricula and the cultural underpinnings of their educational systems, this research seeks to deepen our understanding of how local contexts shape the principles of moderation in Islamic education. MAN Insan Cendekia in Indonesia incorporates teachings on diversity and interfaith dialogue, while Imam Hatip schools in Turkey emphasize the importance of critical thinking and civic engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Moderation:

The word moderation etymologically comes from the Arabic "الوسط" ([Al-Yusuf, 2015.](#)) which has various meanings:

- 1) As a noun, meaning a place between two ends, for example, I hold the middle of this rope, and I break it in the middle of the arrow, and I sit in the middle of this house.
- 2) As an adjective meaning the best, the noblest, the finest, the most excellent, place in the middle, for example, the best pasture field is in the middle ([Hadi, 2025](#)).
- 3) It means justice. In Lisanul Arab, it is mentioned وسط الشيء, وأوسطه عدله. The middle of something, and the middle is most just ([Mukrim, 2015](#)).
- 4) It means something that is between good and bad ([Darwish, 2021](#)).
- 5) It means the highest, as mentioned in the Prophet's saying; If you ask for Paradise, then ask for Firdaus Paradise, because it is the highest Paradise ([Amrullah et al., n.d.; Nasir & Rijal, 2021](#)).

From the explanation above, it is known that the word الوسط has synonymous meanings: just, moderate, best, and highest. Meanwhile, the term "moderation" has a very diverse meaning, depending on the background of the interpreter of the word. Referring to the Quran, Sunnah, and the Salafus Soleh, moderation can be summarized as follows:

- 1) The word الوسط indicates the meaning of moderate, choosing the best opinion among several opposing opinions, and indicates the meaning of the best condition in individuals, time, and

place; خير الامور أوسطها.

- 2) Based on the explanation of the Quran and the Sunnah regarding the meaning of "الوسط" which is moderate and balanced, both in theory and practice, as practiced by the companions and the first generation of followers. In (QS,61:3):

كَبُرَ مَقْتًا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْ تَقُولُوا مَا لَا تَفْعَلُونَ

(That) is very hated by Allah if you say anything that you do not do.

- 3) The companions and the tabi'in understood the word "الوسط" with the meaning of moderation and balance in religious teachings as a whole, which includes creed, worship, sharia, and worldly affairs such as ethics and transactions ([Dawing, 2018](#)).
- 4) The word "الوسط" is a characteristic inherent in Islam that signifies perfection and the pleasure of Allah as the final religion for humanity, and the concept of Islamic teachings cannot be separated from this characteristic of moderation, as it is considered the best way to propagate Islam. In addition to the above, the word "الوسط" also becomes a character and attitude inherent in the followers of Prophet Muhammad (SAW), and this character and attitude are emphasized in the QS 2:143

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا

And thus we have made you (the Muslims) a "justly balanced" community so that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad) a witness over you.

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Concept of Moderation of Islamic Education

The concept of moderation in Islamic education is a vital principle that fosters a balanced approach to learning and personal development. It emphasizes the importance of neither extreme rigidity nor laxity in educational practices. By encouraging critical thinking, moderation allows students to engage with their faith and the world around them thoughtfully. "This balanced perspective promotes tolerance, understanding, and a harmonious coexistence among diverse viewpoints ([Rahman et al., 2022](#)). Islamic education rooted in moderation nurtures well-rounded individuals who can contribute positively to society while maintaining their spiritual integrity. Moreover, "the principle of moderation aligns with the core teachings of Islam, which advocate for compassion, justice, and respect for others ([Tzanakou & Pearce, 2019](#)). The Islamic divine book (QS,21:107) confirm:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ

And We have not sent you (Muhammad) except as a mercy for all the worlds.

The concept of moderation in Islamic education is commendable, but its application often falls short in practice. There can be a tendency for educators to interpret moderation in a way that stifles critical discourse and promotes complacency ([Nasihin et al., 2023](#)). In some contexts, this results in a watered-down curriculum that fails to engage students meaningfully with the rich intellectual traditions of Islam. Such an approach can lead to superficial understanding rather than deep, reflective learning. Furthermore, the notion of moderation may sometimes be misused to

justify the avoidance of difficult discussions around controversial issues ([Karimullah et al., 2023](#)). This can create an environment where students feel discouraged from questioning or challenging ideas, hindering their intellectual development. In extreme cases, the emphasis on moderation can overshadow the necessity for passionate advocacy for justice and ethical values, which are equally integral to Islamic teachings ([Wani et al., 2015](#)). Thus, while the concept is inherently valuable, its execution requires careful consideration to avoid falling into mediocrity.

In essence, moderation in Islamic education is the application of Islamic moderation, as Islamic education represents the implementation of the values of Islamic teachings ([Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023](#)). Education is a process of forming and developing skills in intellectual, emotional, and social dimensions. The educational process is a transformation or change in the capabilities of students, making them tangible to improve both their material and spiritual quality of life. The moderation of Islamic education is one of the dimensions of several dimensions of moderation in Islam based on the Quran and Sunnah, as well as Maqashid Shariah. Moderation in many studies is often misinterpreted, leading to a deviation from its true meaning, whereas, according to the opinions of several exegesis experts, it can be concluded in three meanings:

- 1) *Al-Adl* (justice)
- 2) *Al-Khair* (the best),
- 3) *As-Siratal Mustaqim/right way* ([Adeel, 2015](#)).

Moreover, the term is often politicized with specific agendas and goals, leading to claims that it belongs to certain parties, groups, and sects, whereas moderation is a characteristic of Islam and of every Muslim who adheres to their religion, regardless of their origin. Moderation in Islamic education has become an urgent need to save the generation from extremist and fanatical attitudes ([Widodo, 2019](#)). As information and Islamic content on social media often lead to such issues. For example, promoting moderation in Islamic education can help prevent young Muslims from being influenced by extremist ideologies spread through social media platforms ([Mukhibat et al., 2024](#)). By emphasizing the principles of justice, doing what is best, and staying on the straight path, educators can guide students towards a balanced understanding of their faith and steer them away from radical beliefs.

Moderation in Islamic education reflects the highest values of Islamic teachings encapsulated in all forms of goodness, characterized by comprehensiveness, integration, balance, and sustainability ([Fajri, 2022](#)). The meaning of moderation from an Islamic perspective is not merely a middle position between two extremes, right or left, up or down, but rather extends to the meanings of excellence, goodness, and justice, ultimately reaching the highest level of perfection. This understanding is emphasized in the Hadith of the Prophet, which states: if you ask Allah, then ask for the highest paradise, because it is the most perfect and the most noble." ([Ashari, 2025](#)). Moderation in Islamic education, or religious moderation, is an effort to develop human nature and human resources by practicing religious teachings in an absolute manner while recognizing the existence of others ([Hadi et al., 2024](#)). It involves adopting a tolerant attitude, respecting differing opinions, and refraining from imposing one's will through violence, as well as valuing diversity and the willingness to interact and express religion wisely and courteously.

Islamic Education in Indonesia

In the history of education in Indonesia, the oldest Islamic educational institutions are pesantren and madrasah diniah. Both have played a significant role in enlightening the nation and fostering awareness among the people to drive out colonizers from the archipelago ([Marzuki et al., 2020](#)). These two institutions have consistently served as centers for teaching *tafaqquh fiddin* in religious knowledge and have proven to produce figures of the nation and religion up to the present day. Islamic education in Indonesia is characterized by a diversity of institutions, from traditional

pesantren to modern Islamic schools linked to the government ([Suharto, 2015](#)). These institutions are crucial in promoting moderate interpretations of Islam and integrating local wisdom and cultural values into their curricula. One of the Islamic educational institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs is the Islamic State High School Insan Cendekia Serpong, abbreviated as MAN ICS. Its vision and mission are to produce high-quality human resources in faith and piety (IMTAQ), mastery of science and technology (IPTEK), an understanding of Islamic and national perspectives, and the ability to actualize these in community life (Muawanah, 2021). Studies indicate that the curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia emphasizes critical thinking and interfaith dialogue, preparing students to engage in a pluralistic society ([Saepudin, 2018](#)). MAN ICS stands out as an exemplary MAN institution and serves as a model for high schools throughout Indonesia. Additionally, MAN ICS has become a brand mark for Indonesia on the international stage, often representing the country in the International Science Olympiad. MAN ICS is a miniature of a madrasah in Indonesia that integrates Islamic culture and national identity with a modern and moderate character ([lunaedi et al., 2023](#)), thereby challenging the stereotype of madrasahs as breeding grounds for extremist movements, whether right-wing or left-wing, as has been portrayed in the past.

Islamic Education in Turkey

Islam has had a significant impact on the social, political, and educational development in Turkey throughout its long history, serving as a crucial tool for building social institutions and becoming a way of life and tradition for the community since its spread in the region. During the Ottoman Empire from the 15th to the 19th centuries, Islam was a primary factor in the educational model, successfully instilling Islamic values and building Islamic civilization ([Heper, 2000](#)). Imam Hatip schools have undergone significant transformations since their establishment. Initially aimed at training religious leaders, these schools now serve a broader educational purpose, combining religious and secular subjects ([Tombuş & Aygenc, 2017](#)). Research for modern civic life while maintaining their religious identity indicates that this school promotes a version of Islamic education that aligns with contemporary secular values, preparing students for modern civic life ([Kaya, 2015](#)). The curriculum often reflects a commitment to fostering critical thinking and moderation, albeit within the unique Turkish context. Imam Hatip schools have always received special attention from authorities, with their activities being closely monitored. Their existence has become a topic of ongoing debate and controversy between secular and Islamic groups, as well as between Kemalist nationalists and modernist Islamic factions ([Cakmaklı et al., 2017](#)).

This school has played a significant role in the existence of Islam and the Islamic movement in Turkey, influencing not only domestic affairs but also international perspectives, as it hosts students from 70 countries and its curriculum is used in 22 countries, including Russia, Bulgaria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, France, and Germany ([Shukla, 2017](#)). This school is seen as capable of moderating radical fundamentalist understandings and has produced modern Muslim leaders, such as President Erdogan and a third of the members of parliament from the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey ([Korkut, 2017](#)). As a role model for multicultural Islamic education based on values of justice and excellence, Imam Hatip schools, despite being less popular in the Middle East, demonstrate this through their practices ([Beşenk, 2018](#)). Additionally, during Friday prayers, students wear traditional clothing from their respective countries, showcasing diversity while uniting in their differences.

Cultural Context and Islamic Education in Indonesia and Turkey

Cultural context significantly influences educational practices, shaping how Islamic teachings are interpreted and taught. According to [Fisher \(2021\)](#), understanding the cultural backdrop is essential for effective pedagogy. The role of education in shaping societal values is well-

documented. Studies suggest that exposure to moderate Islamic education can significantly influence students' attitudes toward tolerance and interreligious dialogue ([Alim & Munib, 2021](#)). By fostering understanding and respect among diverse religious and cultural groups, educational institutions can contribute to social cohesion and reduce the potential for conflict ([Hill et al., 2000](#)). This research aligns with findings from both Indonesian and Turkish contexts, indicating that well-designed curricula can promote values of moderation and coexistence. The instillation of values and culture in individuals or groups through Islamic education shapes attitudes and behaviors that serve as references in decision-making, reflected in their mindset, behavior, and attitudes. Values such as honesty, justice, and truth become guiding principles in their lives.

In Indonesia, Pancasila serves as a guiding philosophy that emphasizes pluralism and democratic values, influencing the approach to Islamic education as the MAN Insan Cendekia representative Islamic school ([Pohan & Vinata, 2019](#)). In addition to traditional academic subjects, students at MAN Insan Cendekia also participate in workshops and discussions that encourage them to explore different perspectives and worldviews. By fostering a spirit of respect and understanding, graduates of the school are equipped to navigate diverse cultural and religious landscapes with empathy and open-mindedness ([Apud, 2018](#)). The curriculum at MAN Insan Cendekia truly empowers students to become global citizens who can contribute positively to an increasingly interconnected world. Conversely, in Turkey, secularism plays a significant role in shaping the educational landscape, with Imam Hatip schools adapting to these principles by promoting critical thinking and civic engagement alongside religious teachings ([Ozzano & Maritato, 2019](#)). The Ottoman Empire significantly influenced the Islamic education system in Turkey, with madrasas serving as key institutions for centuries ([Rodogno, 2011](#)).

Modernization efforts during the early Republic era led to significant changes in the education system, with traditional Ottoman traditions still influencing religious education today. Sufism and other mystical traditions have significantly influenced the spiritual and philosophical aspects of education, emphasizing inner spiritual development alongside academic learning ([Öztürk, 2016](#)). Turkish nationalism has also shaped the educational curriculum and policies, promoting a sense of national identity and pride ([Aydın, 2019](#)). The integration of spiritual teachings and nationalist ideals creates a well-rounded educational system reflecting Turkey's diverse cultural influences. In both countries, there is a recognition of the importance of equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to thrive in a rapidly changing global society. By integrating modern educational practices with traditional Islamic teachings, schools in Indonesia and Turkey are preparing their students to engage with diverse perspectives and contribute positively to their communities. This approach not only fosters a sense of national unity and identity but also promotes tolerance and understanding among different religious and cultural groups ([Hill et al., 2000](#)). For example, in Indonesia, some schools have incorporated lessons on entrepreneurship and technology alongside Quranic studies to prepare students for the modern workforce. In Turkey, schools have implemented programs that teach students about democracy and human rights while also emphasizing the principles of Islam to promote civic engagement and social responsibility.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a qualitative comparative approach to examine moderate Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey, focusing on MAN Insan Cendekia in Indonesia and Imam Hatip schools in Turkey as the best Islamic high schools in both countries and a miniature of a madrasah that integrates Islamic culture and national identity with a modern and moderate character. The research method is a comparative case study ([Sugiyono, 2015](#)). Data collection includes a deep interview with one of the stakeholders of MAN ICS and a senior teacher of IHC Turkey, and two

experts in Islamic Education from both countries, reviewing documents, textbooks, and teaching materials that reflect the values and principles of moderate Islamic education, especially the theme of cultural influences in both countries. The data will be analyzed through a component analysis framework, focusing on key themes related to moderation and cultural influences ([Moleong, 2021](#)). Data validation used theory triangulation related to moderation from Indonesian and Turkish Muslim scholars to ensure the validity of this research. The table below illustrates the Imam Hatip Schools (Turkey) and MAN Insan Cendikia (Indonesia) curricula:

Aspect	Imam Hatip Schools (Turkey)	MAN Insan Cendikia (Indonesia)	Similarities
Type of School	Vocational religious schools under the Turkish Ministry of Education.	Islamic senior high schools under the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA).	Both are state-funded Islamic schools combining religious and secular education.
Primary Focus	Integration of Islamic studies (Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, etc.) with general academic subjects.	Focus on science, technology, and Islamic values (integrated curriculum).	Both emphasize a balance between religious and secular knowledge.
Curriculum Structure	Divided into religious (40%) and secular (60%) subjects.	Divided into general sciences (70%) and Islamic studies (30%).	Both have a dual curriculum structure.
Religious Subjects	Quran, Tafsir, Hadith, Fiqh, Islamic History, Arabic Language.	Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Akidah, Akhlak, Arabic Language.	Both include core Islamic subjects and the Arabic language.
Secular Subjects	Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Turkish Literature, Foreign Languages (English/Arabic).	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, English, Social Sciences.	Both include STEM subjects and social sciences.
Language of Instruction	Turkish (primary), Arabic (for religious studies).	Indonesian (primary), Arabic (for religious studies).	Both use the national language and Arabic for religious studies.
Admission Criteria	Open to all students, but preference for those interested in religious education.	Highly selective; based on academic merit and entrance exams.	Both aim to attract students interested in Islamic education.
Target Students	Students aiming for religious careers (e.g., imams, preachers) or general higher education.	High-achieving students aiming for top universities in STEM and Islamic studies.	Both prepare students for higher education and religious careers.

Extracurricular Activities	Religious activities, Quran competitions, and community service.	Science Olympiads, research projects, and religious activities.	Both emphasize holistic development through extracurriculars.
Graduation Pathways	Can pursue higher education in theology, social sciences, or secular fields.	Can pursue STEM fields, social sciences, or Islamic studies at top universities.	Both provide diverse pathways for higher education.
Cultural Context	Rooted in Turkish Islamic traditions and influenced by Ottoman heritage.	Rooted in Indonesian Islamic traditions and influenced by local culture.	Both adapt Islamic education to their national contexts.
Government Role	Fully funded and regulated by the Turkish government.	Fully funded and regulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs.	Both are state-supported institutions.

The similarities of MAN Insan Cendikia and Imam Hatip Schools are state-funded and regulated institutions that aim to integrate Islamic education with modern academic subjects. They differ in admission selectivity, curriculum emphasis, and cultural context, with Imam Hatip focusing more on religious studies and MAN Insan Cendikia on science and technology.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong

MAN Insan Cendekia according to [Suyitno \(2025\)](#) as its foster and director general of Islamic education at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia confirmed that moderation is the main pillar of Islamic Education and a key to instill inclusive tolerance, and the nationality of the youth generation. This Islamic School is a leading madrasah in Indonesia, aiming to create high-quality human resources in faith, piety, science, and technology. It serves as a model for high schools across Indonesia and represents the country in international science Olympiads ([Saepudin, 2018](#)). MAN ICS integrates Islamic culture with a modern and moderate character, dispelling stereotypes of madrasahs as breeding grounds for extremist movements ([Samsirin et al., 2023](#)). In the context of MAN Insan Cendikia Serpong, which is known for its focus on science and technology as well as Islamic values, moderation would also likely include ensuring that the Islamic education component is balanced with the national curriculum and that both are delivered in a way that is consistent with the school's ethos and educational goals.

Here are some ways moderation might be applied in a school setting

Curriculum Moderation

MAN ICS employs a textual and contextual learning approach to understand sacred texts. Textual understanding focuses on interpreting texts based on their literal meanings, while contextual understanding considers historical, cultural, and social contexts (1). This approach helps avoid misinterpretations and emphasizes self-defense and religious freedom. The Quran, for example, requires contextual understanding to avoid misinterpretations about violence. This school uses various methods for understanding texts, including Ulumul Qur'an, Mustalah al-Hadith, and Usul Fiqh, to gain a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings ([Ardiansyah, 2019](#)). Contextual understanding of Islamic teachings emphasizes the optimistic view of everyone, regardless of their cultural background. This approach is used for the sake of the common good and

contemporary issues, promoting a moderate perspective. For example, in the context of self-defense, Islamic teachings emphasize the importance of protecting oneself and others from harm while also promoting peace and non-violence whenever possible. This balanced approach ensures that individuals can defend themselves while upholding the principles of mercy and compassion in all situations ([Aryati & Khoiri, 2022](#)). In situations of conflict, Muslims are encouraged to seek peaceful resolutions and only resort to violence as a last resort. This exemplifies how Islamic teachings prioritize harmony and unity among diverse individuals, regardless of cultural differences.

Promoting Dialogic Learning without Anarchy

MAN Insan Cendikia is promoting dialogic learning, a method that encourages open dialogues about sensitive topics like religion and culture. This approach fosters critical thinking and cultural understanding, allowing students to learn from each other and appreciate different beliefs ([Aryati & Khoiri, 2022](#)). Teachers play a crucial role in guiding discussions, setting boundaries, and ensuring productive dialogue. By striking a balance between freedom of expression and a structured learning environment, this school aims to promote dialogue and respect for cultural and religious differences. For example, during a class discussion on different religious practices, students from diverse backgrounds at Cendikia can share their perspectives and respectfully ask questions. The teachers facilitate the conversation by providing context, encouraging empathy, and challenging stereotypes to deepen understanding among students. This approach allows students to engage with each other's beliefs without fear of judgment, fostering a sense of community and mutual respect within the classroom ([Hidayatullah, 2021](#)). By promoting open-mindedness and critical thinking, these schools equip students with the skills needed to navigate a diverse and interconnected world.

Cultural Contexts and Islamic Values

Islamic education in Indonesia is influenced by local culture, historical traditions, and national identity. MAN Insan Cendekia integrates Pancasila values, emphasizing pluralism and mutual respect among different religions and cultures. This holistic approach promotes tolerance, understanding, and unity among diversity ([Mantau & Buhungo, 2024](#)). Interfaith dialogues and cultural exchange programs help students learn about their country's cultural heritage. Dede Rosyada ([2024](#)) a prominent Islamic Education thinker in Indonesia agrees with the idea that the incorporation of local culture and language ideology into religious education can instill moderate thinking, attitudes, and actions in students.

IHC Sultan Mehmet Istanbul

Imam Hatip School Fatih Sultan Mehmet, managed by the Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs, was initially a vocational school for religious affairs but has evolved into an international institution. The madrasah accommodates foreign students from predominantly Muslim countries, as well as those from Muslim minorities. It accommodates foreign students from 58 countries ([Vakvi, 2020](#)), addressing Islamophobia and extremist groups. According to one of the senior teachers, Ahmad Asraf, the madrasah is a leading role model in Turkey for reconciling Islamophobia with modern and moderate Muslims, and attracting students from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and from Southeast Asia like Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, who came to study about Islam and Turkish heritage integrated with modern sciences. Imam Hatip schools in Turkey, including those named after Sultan Mehmed, are specialized religious vocational schools that combine religious education with a standard academic curriculum. These schools aim to prepare students for both higher education and religious leadership roles ([Ozgen, 2014](#)). Based on data collected

from a deep interview with a school Islamic teacher. reviewing documents, textbooks, and teaching materials, and Spradley's analysis was found: "Moderation in these schools is applied in several ways to ensure a balanced approach and to education":

Balanced Curriculum

Imam Hatip schools blend Islamic teachings with secular principles, reflecting Turkey's unique historical and political context. They promote critical thinking, national identity, and character development, aiming to produce well-rounded individuals who are spiritually and academically prepared for the modern world. By studying traditional Islamic texts alongside subjects like math and science, students are equipped with the skills and values necessary to navigate societal complexities while remaining grounded in their faith. Imam Hatip schools offer a balanced curriculum, combining religious and secular subjects for a comprehensive education ([Zengin & Hendek, 2023](#)).

Moderate Interpretation of Islam.

IHC Sultan Mehmed follows a moderate interpretation of Islam, emphasizing tolerance and critical thinking, and emphasizing ethical and moral education, teaching values like honesty, integrity, and respect. It prepares students for modern society, teaching civic responsibilities and democracy. It encourages dialogue and critical thinking, fostering understanding and informed opinions on various issues ([Kılıç, 2014](#)). M. Asyraf, Senior teacher of IHC, said:

"Students are encouraged to engage in discussions on a wide range of topics, from current events to ethical dilemmas." - Senior teacher of IHC

This approach helps students develop a well-rounded perspective and the ability to think critically about complex issues. By promoting open-mindedness and respect for diverse viewpoints.

Holistic education

Imam Hatip schools aim to cultivate responsible citizens who can contribute positively to society, the maintenance of Islamic values, the cultural context, and modern subjects. Overall, the schools provide a holistic education that not only focuses on academic success but also on personal growth and moral development. Moderation in Imam Hatip schools is achieved through a holistic, qualified student personality with cognitive, affective, and psychometric competencies. Moderate interpretation of Islam, ethical education, integration with modern society, encouragement of democracy, civic engagement and critical thinking, and social responsibility ([Junaedi et al., 2023](#)). Imam Hatip Schools in Turkey are often regarded as a model of moderate Islamic education, featuring an inclusive learning environment that accommodates multiple ethnic, linguistic, and cultural communities. These institutions integrate religious and secular instruction while promoting tolerance and balanced Islamic values ([Aşlamacı & Kaymakcan, 2017](#))

The Similarities Aspect:

Moderate Educational Approach

Both schools emphasize the importance of moderate education in addressing the social and religious issues faced by society. They teach a balanced understanding of religion and avoid extreme views, prioritizing the balance between religious and social aspects.

Understanding Religion Contextually and Textually

Both IHC and ICS prioritize an understanding of religion that is not only based on texts but

also their context. They teach to understand religious revelations within the historical and social context in which the texts were revealed, thereby avoiding a misunderstanding of religious teachings.

Dialogic Learning

These two schools support dialogic learning, which is an approach that encourages students to engage in open, productive, and respectful discussions. This approach focuses on the development of critical thinking skills and intercultural understanding, without violating the values of harmony and peace.

The Importance of Tolerance and Respect for Differences

In both schools, there is an emphasis on the importance of tolerance and respect for diversity. This is reflected in the curriculum that teaches the importance of respecting differences in religion, culture, and other worldviews, as well as how to live together peacefully.

The differences aspect:

Cultural and Historical Context

IHC is located in Turkey, where there is an effort to balance Islamic values with secular principles within the historical and political context of the country. Meanwhile, ICS in Indonesia emphasizes the importance of pluralism and diversity that reflect the values of Pancasila and the more diverse local cultures of Indonesia.

1. Approach

The IHC Curriculum approach combines Islamic teachings with a secular curriculum, teaching religious lessons alongside scientific subjects such as mathematics and science, to create individuals who understand how religious principles can be applied in the context of the modern world. Meanwhile, ICS prioritizes learning that focuses on the values of focus on Character Development. Imam Hatip places greater emphasis on character development based on Islamic values that combine spiritual depth and academic education to prepare students to face the challenges of the modern world. On the other hand, ICS emphasizes character development that focuses more on Indonesian national values and contributions to a multicultural society.

2. Teaching Methods and Activities

MAN ICS, in addition to religious education, there are also more intensive programs that encourage students to participate in interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange programs, while IHC, in addition to developing religious understanding, there is an emphasis on critical education that is more related to the integration of Islam with secular principles and Turkish nationalism. Overall, although both schools have similar goals in shaping a moderate and character-driven generation, IHC focuses more on the balance between Islam and secularism in the Turkish context, while ICS emphasizes the values of Pancasila and the cultural diversity of Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Islamic education at MAN Insan Cendekia Serpong in Indonesia and IHS Fatih Sultan Mehmet in Turkey. Both institutions emphasize moderation and tolerance, incorporating textual and contextual interpretations of Islamic teachings. They also promote dialogic learning, encouraging open communication and critical thinking. The educational frameworks are shaped by their respective cultural contexts, with MAN Insan Cendekia integrating Pancasila values and IHS Fatih Sultan Mehmet combining Islamic teachings with secular principles. Both schools serve as

models for moderate Islamic education, promoting understanding of religion based on text and context, So a moderate Islamic school is an Islamic education that adopts an integrated, national curriculum and religion, which combines religious subjects, modern knowledge, and cultural context in the curriculum aimed at producing a generation with intellectual, ritual, and social competencies and able to collaborate with anyone regardless of differences in religion, ethnicity, race, and citizenship.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

The study on moderate Islamic education in Indonesia and Turkey is limited to two institutions, limiting its generalizability to other regions. The findings are influenced by the unique cultural, historical contexts of these countries, making it difficult to draw universal conclusions. The study's sample size and representation are also limited, and the data availability may not fully capture the complexities of educational practices. Additionally, the study does not assess the long-term impact of moderate Islamic education on students' attitudes, behaviors, or societal contributions.

Comparative research on moderation between countries is still very limited, so researchers need further studies with a larger sample of schools, and in the historical and political context of moderation. Additionally, comparative research on the role of teachers and the methods that need to be used in instilling and promoting moderation between the two countries is also necessary.

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