



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sowing Moderation Through the Curriculum of Love: The Relevance of Ibn Miskawaih's Middle Path Ethics

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Abstract

Religious moderation is a crucial approach in maintaining social harmony amid religious and cultural diversity in Indonesia, but its implementation still faces serious challenges in the form of intolerance and radicalism. This article examines the relevance of Ibn Miskawaih's concept of the middle path (*al-ikhtiyar al-awsat*) in the book *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* as an ethical foundation for strengthening this moderation, while also proposing a "Curriculum of Love" as a transformative pedagogical approach. The thoughts of emphasizes that moral virtue lies in the balance between two extremes and the purification of the soul (*tahdhib al-nafs*), which in the context of Islamic education in Indonesia, these values can be integrated through a character-based curriculum to shape an inclusive attitude towards religion. This article argues that the integration of the values of compassion (*mahabbah*) and moral balance is essential to address the challenge of intolerance, where the "Curriculum of Love" serves as an instrument to internalize religious moderation through an affective approach that goes beyond mere textual understanding. Through a literature review, this study concludes that the synergy between Ibn Miskawaih's middle path ethics and the Curriculum of Love can encourage the creation of "Active Tolerance" and stronger social cohesion, enabling educational institutions to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent but also highly empathetic towards diversity.

Keyword: Religious Moderation, Ibn Miskawaih, Curriculum of Love, Tolerance, Islamic Education.

Introduction

Indonesia is known as the country with the greatest religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity in the world. With the majority of its population being Muslim, Indonesia continues to provide freedom of religion to various other religions and beliefs in accordance with Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution. However, this diversity often causes major problems, such as escalating socio-religious conflicts, intolerance, and radicalism. The 2023 Setara Institute report shows that despite an increase in awareness of religious moderation, there were 217 cases involving 329 violations of freedom of religion/belief (KBB) in various regions (Setara Institute, 2024). This fact indicates that a new approach that pays more attention to the moral and ethical aspects of society is needed.

Religious moderation is one of the government's main strategies in maintaining social harmony and diversity in Indonesia. The National Action Plan (RAN) for Religious Moderation, published through Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2020, is the main foundation for strengthening this principle of moderation (Muhammad & Muryono, 2021). Religious moderation emphasizes the principle of *wasatiyah* or the middle path, which not only avoids extremism in religion but also encourages tolerance and recognition of diversity (Dewi, Sayuti, & Hadiana, 2023). However, to implement this moderation, an approach based on moral and ethical values, as well as formal policies, is needed.

The concept of religious moderation in Islam has strong roots in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith. Islam is known as a religion that emphasizes balance (*tawazun*), justice (*'adl*), and the middle path (*wasathiyyah*) (Sumarta, Burhanudin, & Budiyanto, 2024). In the Qur'an, Muslims are referred to as *ummatan wasathan* (a moderate community) in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which reads, "And thus We have made you (Muslims) a "middle community" so that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad) may be a witness over you..." According to Quraish Shihab in Tafsir Al-Mishbah (2005), the term *wasath* does not simply

mean "middle" in a geographical or positional sense, but encompasses the meanings of justice, balance, and moderation in all aspects of life. Muslims are required to avoid excessive (*ifrath*) and negligent (*tafrith*) attitudes, and to place everything in proportion. This moderation, according to Quraish Shihab, is a requirement for Muslims to be role models (witnesses to mankind) who present real evidence in social life, not just normative claims.

Religious moderation in this context means an attitude that is not extreme in understanding and practicing religious teachings, either toward liberalism that ignores Islamic values or radicalism that tends to be excessive in interpreting religious teachings (Subchi, et al., 2022). In the Indonesian context, religious moderation has become one of the strategic agendas of the Ministry of Religious Affairs to maintain social harmony in a multicultural and multi-religious society.

In this context, Ibn Miskawaih's thoughts on the middle path (*wasatiyah*) as expressed in his work *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* are very relevant. In his work, Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes that moral virtue lies in the balance between two extremes, a principle he calls *al-ikhtiyar al-awsat* (the middle choice). His thinking is in line with Aristotle's theory of the golden mean, which states that virtue lies between two extremes of excess and deficiency (Zhou, 2021). For example, courage is the middle ground between excessive fear (*jubn*) and reckless courage (*tahawwur*). Thus, in a religious context, one must be able to balance strong beliefs with an open attitude towards differences. The middle path in Ibn Miskawaih's view is not only about moderation, but also about universal ethics that prioritize justice, simplicity, and self-control (Omar, et al., 2021). This concept can be a philosophical foundation for strengthening religious moderation in Indonesia.

Ibn Miskawaih's thinking is not only relevant in shaping individual morality but also in efforts to instill values of religious moderation through education. He emphasized that balance in morality can be achieved through character education (*tahdhib al-nafs*), which involves practicing good habits and controlling desires (Hartono & Rosyadi, 2024). This concept has strong relevance in the Islamic education system in Indonesia, especially in shaping tolerant and moderate characters. Therefore, a character-based Islamic education curriculum needs to be designed to build a balanced and non-extreme religious attitude.

Islamic education has a strategic role in internalizing the values of religious moderation. According to data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs (2022), around 26 million Indonesian students are enrolled in Islamic educational institutions, both madrasas and

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Islamic boarding schools (Sari et al., 2023). This shows that Islamic education can be an effective medium for teaching the values of moderation. However, the facts on the ground show that the implementation of these values of moderation is still hampered by a curriculum that is not relevant to the challenges of the times, as well as a lack of training for educators to teach these values.

The Indonesian government has actually taken a strategic step by issuing Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) Number 18 of 2020 concerning the National Action Plan (RAN) for Religious Moderation (Munif et al., 2023). This policy emphasizes the principle of *wasathiyah* or the middle path, which aims to avoid extremism while promoting recognition of diversity. However, the implementation of this policy is often top-down and administrative in nature, requiring a stronger foundation of values in order to be internalized in individual character (Destian et al., 2024). This is where the Love Curriculum becomes relevant as a manifestation of universal Islamic values such as compassion (*rahmah*) and justice (*'adl*) emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143. The concept of the Love Curriculum is in line with the mandate that Muslims are *ummatan wasathan* or a moderate community, called to be witnesses to human harmony.

Philosophically, the Love Curriculum finds its intellectual roots in the thinking of Ibn Miskawaih, a classical Islamic philosopher known for his magnum opus *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* (Majid, 2022). Ibn Miskawaih offers the concept of *al-ikhtiyar al-awsat* or the middle choice, a principle which states that moral virtue lies at the point of balance between two extremes. For example, courage is the middle point between cowardice (*jubn*) and blind recklessness (*tahawwur*). In the context of education, the Curriculum of Love can be defined as a pedagogical approach that aims to achieve *tahdhib al-nafs* or purification of the soul. Through this curriculum, students are not only taught religious texts cognitively, but are also trained to control their desires and build deep empathy for their fellow human beings.

The urgency of the Love Curriculum becomes even more apparent when we look at data from the West Kalimantan Regional Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for 2024, which notes the strengthening of religious moderation among those receiving education in Islamic institutions, ranging from madrasas, which are already at 100%, to Islamic boarding schools, which are at 96% (West Kalimantan Provincial Office of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2024). This significant figure shows that Islamic education is the most effective medium for spreading the values of moderation. Unfortunately, the reality on the ground shows that there is a gap; the existing curriculum is often considered irrelevant to the dynamics of the times, and educators still lack methods to teach moderation emotionally and spiritually (Qomarudin & Jannah, 2025). The Love Curriculum aims to fill this gap by emphasizing that moderation is not merely about avoiding radicalism, but actively loving humanity and nurturing harmony.

The integration of Ibn Miskawaih's thinking into the Love Curriculum requires a paradigm shift in Islamic education in Indonesia. Education should no longer focus solely on formalistic aspects, but must touch on the realm of *tahdhib al-akhlaq*, which balances strong religious beliefs with openness to differences (Bakri, 2018). Similar to Aristotle's theory of the golden mean, which influenced Ibn Miskawaih, the Love Curriculum teaches that true happiness can be achieved through ethical balance and self-control. Thus, the younger generation will have the mental resilience to resist the influence of extremism, whether in the form of religious radicalism or liberalism that disregards basic values.

The importance of this love-based and moderate approach is also evident in the social dynamics of the digital age. Today's society is easily polarized by hoaxes and intolerant narratives on social media (Rustan, 2020). However, amid these challenges, interesting phenomena have emerged, such as the "Takjil War" during Ramadan 2024, which went viral on platforms such as TikTok. This phenomenon, where non-Muslims join Muslims in hunting for takjil, reflects an organic spirit of moderation based on fluid togetherness. This is clear evidence that when the middle-of-the-road values of Ibn Miskawaih and the spirit of compassion are practiced in everyday life, social cohesion will form naturally.

Therefore, this study aims to examine in depth how Ibn Miskawaih's concept of the middle path can serve as a philosophical basis for the development of the Love Curriculum in supporting religious moderation in Indonesia. Through library research, this article will explore the text *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq* to find integrative strategies for educational policies and community programs. The

main focus is how these universal ethical values can be transformed from mere philosophical theory into real practice in an inclusive Islamic education curriculum, so that it can respond to the challenges of intolerance in the era of globalization. Through the synergy between government policy, educational institutions, and the Love Curriculum approach, it is hoped that Islam can truly become *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (a blessing for all creation) that creates peace amid Indonesia's diversity.

Method

This study uses library research methods that aim to thoroughly examine the relevance of Ibn Miskawaih's middle path concept and the integration of the Love Curriculum with religious moderation in Indonesia. This method involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data from various relevant literature sources, such as books, journals, articles, and official documents related to religious moderation, character education, and the thoughts of Ibn Miskawaih (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The main source used as a basis is Ibn Miskawaih's monumental work, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, which is used to explore Islamic ethical and moral values that support the principle of moderation.

In the data collection process, researchers utilized primary and secondary sources related to the theme of religious moderation in Indonesia, such as the National Action Plan for Religious Moderation document and the Ministry of Religious Affairs' annual reports. In addition, researchers included literature on the Love Curriculum as secondary material to see how a loving approach can be a practical instrument in character building. The data obtained was then analyzed using a content analysis approach, which allowed researchers to explore the deeper meaning of these texts in order to connect classical ethical concepts with the challenges of moderation today (Krippendorff, 2019).

This study also combines historical and philosophical perspectives to understand Ibn Miskawaih's thinking in the context of social and religious life in Indonesia. The historical perspective is used to trace the origins of the concept of moderation, while the philosophical perspective is used to interpret the universal values in *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, particularly those related to *tahdhib al-nafs* or purification of the soul. Through this approach, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how the Love Curriculum can be implemented as a tangible form of middle-way ethics in education and community policy to support the strengthening of religious moderation (Wahid, 2024).

Results and Discussion

Definition and Philosophy of the Curriculum of Love in the Context of Moderation

Terminologically, the "Curriculum of Love" is not merely a collection of new teaching materials imposed on students, but rather a pedagogical paradigm that places affection and empathy at the heart of the dialectical process of education (Alfisyah, 2025). In the context of religious moderation, the Curriculum of Love can be defined as a value education system that aims to transform textual-legalistic religious understanding into spiritual-humanistic awareness (Alfisyah, 2025). The ontological basis of this curriculum is rooted in the essence of humans as beings created with the potential for Rahman and Rahim (Love and Compassion) (Ma'ruf, 2017). As stated by Paulo Freire in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), true education is an "act of love," which requires the courage to engage in dialogue and remove the barriers of dehumanization (Tantu, 2018).

In Indonesia's education ecosystem, the Love Curriculum aims to fill the affective void that has long been neglected by formal curricula, which tend to be cognitive-oriented (Surabaya Religious Training Center, 2025). Religious moderation, which has been formally regulated in Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) No. 18 of 2020, requires a "spirit" so that it does not stop at bureaucratic jargon (Research and Development Center for Training, Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2025). The Love Curriculum acts as a driving force that transforms the concept of *Wasathiyah* (the middle path) from a mere theory of balance into a real practice of loving others (Directorate of KSKK Madrasah et al., 2025). Quoting Erich Fromm in *The Art of Loving* (1956), love is not a passive feeling, but an active force that involves four main

elements: care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge (Azzahra et al., 2024). These four elements form the foundation for an individual to be moderate; they care about the fate of others who have different beliefs, are responsible for maintaining harmony, respect other identities, and have the deep knowledge to avoid being easily trapped in prejudice.

The philosophy of the Love Curriculum finds its strongest intellectual roots in the ethical thinking of Ibn Miskawaih. In his monumental work, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, Miskawaih asserts that true happiness (*sa'adah*) can only be achieved through the purification of the soul (*tahdhib al-nafs*), which leads to moral balance (Bakri, 2018). However, Miskawaih makes an important note that balance or "the middle path" (*al-wasat*) will never stand without *Mahabbah* (Love) (Majid, 2022). He divides love into several levels, the highest of which is love based on goodness and virtue of the soul.

For Miskawaih, humans are creatures who naturally need other people (*madaniyyun bi al-thab'i*) (Miskawaih, 2025). It is in this social need that love functions as a force that unites differences. He states that "Love is the main cause of unity, and unity is a prerequisite for the creation of a civilized society" (Miskawaih, 2025). The relevance of this thinking in the Love Curriculum is crucial: religious moderation cannot be achieved through the enforcement of laws or dry rhetoric of tolerance. It must be born out of sincere *Mahabbah*. If students are taught to love their fellow human beings as a manifestation of loving the Creator, then extremism, hatred, and intolerance will disappear on their own (Dwi & Arifin, 2025). The Love Curriculum adopts this Miskawaih principle by emphasizing that the "middle path" does not mean taking a safe position between two conflicts, but rather a position built on a foundation of compassion to reconcile and unite.

The implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia currently faces major challenges in the form of residual social polarization and rising levels of intolerance. Data from the Setara Institute in 2023, which recorded 217 incidents of violations of religious freedom, shows that there is a "moral rift" in our society (SETARA Institute, 2023). Philosophically, the Love Curriculum criticizes the "Bank" model of education (to borrow Freire's term), which only fills students with exclusive religious doctrines (Freire, 1970). Religious education that places too much emphasis on black-and-white "right-wrong" aspects without involving the dimension of love often produces a generation that feels self-righteous and is quick to judge others (Wahid, 2024).

Nel Noddings, a figure in the Ethics of Care, argues in her book *Caring: A Relational Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (2013) that moral education should be based on the relational connection between the caregiver (teacher) and the cared for (student). The Love Curriculum integrates this view with the philosophy of *Rahman-Rahim*. Here, religious moderation is taught not as a "subject," but as an "atmosphere." When schools become environments full of love, where every student feels accepted regardless of their religious background, the values of moderation will be internalized organically. This is what is referred to as the hidden curriculum, which is far more effective than one-way lectures in the classroom.

The Love Curriculum is also based on Ibn Miskawaih's principle of moral balance to avoid two extremes in moderation. The first extreme is blind fanaticism (*ifrāt*), which closes its eyes to truths outside its group (Hanifah et al., 2025). The second extreme is indifference or apathy towards religious values (*tafrīt*), which is disguised as tolerance but ignores the principles of faith (Shofiyah & Siregar, 2025). The Love Curriculum offers "The Middle Way of Love".

Philosophically, love in this curriculum does not mean compromising one's beliefs, but rather gentleness in dealing with others. As in the popular quote from Sayyidina Ali bin Abi Thalib, which is often used as a reference for moderation: "Those who are not your brothers in faith are your brothers in humanity." The Love Curriculum uses this quote as an operational guideline. Moral balance is achieved when a student remains steadfast in their religious beliefs (the principle of justice to oneself), but at the same time is able to provide ample space for compassion for followers of other religions (the principle of justice to others). Miskawaih in Shofiyah & Siregar (2025) refers to this as the virtue of *Hikmah* (wisdom), where common sense is able to guide the anger so that it does not explode in the form of violence in the name of religion.

The Love Curriculum philosophy demands a major transformation in learning methods. Whereas religious education

has tended to be exclusive (only studying one's own religion), the Love Curriculum encourages a more inclusive and dialogical approach. This is in line with the concept of *Sadaqah* (Friendship) proposed by Miskawaih as a form of love in action. According to Miskawaih, true friendship can only occur if there is a common goal in achieving virtue.

In the context of moderation in Indonesia, these "primary objectives" are the integrity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) and social peace. The Love Curriculum guides students to see that every religion has the same core teachings in terms of universal ethics—such as honesty, compassion, and justice (Alfiansyah, 2025). By focusing on the "common ground" (*kalimatun sawa*) through the lens of love, barriers of suspicion can be broken down. A quote from Jalaluddin Rumi is very relevant here: "Your task is not to seek love, but merely to seek and find all the barriers within yourself that you have built to resist it." These barriers, in the context of moderation, are prejudice, stigma, and hatred that must be destroyed through education based on compassion.

In this era of information disruption, where hate speech spreads easily, the Love Curriculum has become an urgent necessity. Education can no longer rely solely on technical digital literacy, but requires emotional literacy (Alfisyah, 2025). The philosophy of love in religious moderation teaches students to have a "conscience filter." When exposed to provocative content, students who have internalized the Love Curriculum will ask: "Does this action reflect compassion?" or "Will this narrative damage human brotherhood?"

Ibn Miskawaih's concept of soul harmony provides a solution that the stability of society is highly dependent on the stability of individual character (Miskawaih, 2025). The Love Curriculum seeks to produce individuals who are "at peace with themselves"—individuals whose souls are calm because they are filled with love, so they have no urge to hurt others. This is the deepest essence of religious moderation: a mental state that is not extreme because it has found satisfaction in loving and being loved by God and fellow human beings.

In conclusion, the definition and philosophy of the Curriculum of Love in the context of moderation is an effort to restore education to its human nature. It is an intelligent synthesis between the classical ethics of Ibn Miskawaih, which emphasizes moral balance (*Wasatiyah*) and *Mahabbah* (Love), and the modern demands for inclusivity and global peace (Shofiyah & Siregar, 2025). By making love the foundation of the curriculum, religious moderation is no longer a burden of policy imposed from the top down, but rather a collective consciousness that flourishes from the bottom up (Solichin, 2015).

The integration of the values of compassion and moral balance is not merely an educational utopia, but a strategic necessity to address the challenges of intolerance in Indonesia. As Miskawaih said, justice is a scale, but love is its glue. Without that glue, the scales of our social justice will easily be shaken by storms of hatred. The Love Curriculum is here to ensure that the scales of our moderation remain upright, sturdy, and filled with the warmth of human compassion.

The Relevance of Ibn Miskawaih's Concept of Mahabbah as the Foundation of the Curriculum of Love

Ibn Miskawaih, an Islamic philosopher from the classical era, developed the concept of the middle path (*al-ikhtiyar al-awsat*) as a principle of moral and ethical balance. According to Ibn Miskawaih, moral virtue can be achieved by balancing two extremes, whereby one must avoid both excessive (*ifrath*) and deficient (*tafrith*) behavior in attitude and action (Basri, 2017). His thinking is in line with the concept of religious moderation, which emphasizes the importance of balance between firm beliefs and tolerance towards differences. In the context of religious life, this balance means not falling into fanaticism that can trigger conflict, but also not being too lax that it neglects the fundamental values of religion.

In Indonesia, as a country with religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, religious moderation is an important aspect in maintaining social harmony. The Social Conflict Theory proposed by Lewis A. Coser (1956) states that diversity can be a source of conflict if not managed properly, but it can also be a strength if directed towards values of inclusivity and tolerance (Agustin, Baldani, & Mu'alimin, 2023). Ibn Miskawaih's thinking on balance (*al-ikhtiyar al-awsat*) provides an ethical perspective that encourages religious

communities to avoid extremism in practicing their beliefs, while respecting differences (Arroisi, Taqwa, & Nasution, 2024). Religious moderation in Indonesia itself has become a strategic policy promoted by the government through the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Program for Strengthening Religious Moderation. In this context, Ibn Miskawaih's principle of balance is relevant as a philosophical basis for shaping an inclusive, peaceful, and harmonious attitude towards religion.

In addition, Ibn Miskawaih's principle of balance can be applied in social life, especially in developing a tolerant and inclusive attitude. In his concept, every individual must have *tahdhib al-nafs* or purification of the soul in order to be able to control their desires and achieve true moral virtue (Nidzom & Zainiati, 2022). With this approach, society can develop mutual respect and cooperation despite differences. In Indonesia, these values can be applied in social interactions between religious communities, where each person not only maintains their own beliefs but also understands and respects the beliefs of others.

Ibn Miskawaih's concept of the middle path is also relevant in education, particularly in shaping the character of students to be moderate and virtuous. Education based on Islamic values must be able to instill an understanding of the importance of balance in thinking and acting. This is in line with Lickona's (1991) thinking on character education theory, which states that moral and ethical education is an important foundation in shaping a balanced and responsible personality (El-Yunusi, Rusijono, & Izzati, 2022). Thus, the younger generation can grow into individuals who are not easily influenced by extremist ideologies, whether radical or liberal. The Islamic education curriculum in Indonesia can adopt this principle by emphasizing value-based learning.

In classical Islamic ethical discourse, Ibn Miskawaih did not merely stop at formulating the "Middle Way" (*al-ikhtiyar al-awsat*) as a balance between two extreme poles. Furthermore, in his work *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq*, he emphasized that social stability and harmony in diversity cannot be achieved solely through legal instruments or logic of justice alone, but requires an inner bond that he refers to as *Mahabbah* (Love) (Miskawaih, 2025). This concept of *Mahabbah* becomes particularly relevant when integrated into Indonesia's "Curriculum of Love," a pedagogical approach that emphasizes compassion as the primary instrument for fostering religious moderation.

Ibn Miskawaih viewed love as a driving force that unites human souls to know and work together. In the context of Indonesia's multicultural society, love is a prerequisite for tolerance to be practiced. Without the foundation of *Mahabbah*, religious moderation risks becoming merely formal compliance with government regulations, such as Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2020, without any sincerity in respecting differences (Destian et al., 2024). The Love Curriculum aims to fill this emotional void by adopting the thinking of Ibn Miskawaih that true moral goodness is born from a calm and loving soul, capable of controlling destructive desires such as hatred and blind fanaticism.

The first relevance of the concept of *Mahabbah* in the Love Curriculum lies in the paradigm shift from "Passive Tolerance" to "Active Tolerance." Ibn Miskawaih argues that friendship (*sadaqah*) based on mutual kindness is the highest form of social interaction (Supriyanto, 2022). In the Love Curriculum, students are not only taught to "allow" followers of other religions to worship, but are encouraged to "care" for their safety and well-being. This is reflected in the viral phenomenon of "War Takjil," where interactions between religious communities occur not because of legal obligations, but because of a sense of togetherness and collective joy that is at the core of the teachings of compassion.

Second, Ibn Miskawaih emphasizes the importance of *tahdhib al-nafs* or purification of the soul as a path to moral balance (Miskawaih, 2025). The Love Curriculum implements this through an affective approach in which educators act as figures who radiate loving energy. When a teacher is able to set an example in loving all of their students regardless of their religious background, the values of moderation will be internalized more strongly (Ngangun, 2023). Islamic education based on love will distance students from radicalism, which is often rooted in hatred and fear of "the other." On the contrary, love fosters the courage to be fair, which, in Ibn Miskawaih's view, is the middle ground between injustice and misguided submission.

Third, the concept of *Mahabbah* provides a foundation for a more humane interfaith dialogue. Ibn Miskawaih believed that humans are

social beings whose perfection depends on their interactions with others (Miskawaih, 2025). In the Curriculum of Love, dialogue no longer focuses solely on rigid theological debates, but on "Dialogue of the Heart" that seeks common ground in humanity. By promoting love, differences in beliefs are not seen as threats, but as manifestations of the richness of God's creation that must be preserved. This is in line with the goal of Islamic education to shape characters capable of becoming *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Awalita, 2023).

The integration of Ibn Miskawaih's thinking into the Love Curriculum also provides a solution to the challenges of polarization in the digital age. Narratives of hatred and hoaxes on social media can only be stemmed if the community has religious literacy based on wisdom (*hikmah*) and love (Nurpriatna et al., 2025). This curriculum teaches students to filter information with a pure heart, so that they are not easily provoked by divisive narratives. Love, in this perspective, functions as a "moral immunity" that keeps individuals on the middle path, avoiding extreme attitudes that destroy the social order.

Substantively, the Love Curriculum based on Ibn Miskawaih's ethics is able to respond to criticism of the education system that places too much emphasis on cognitive aspects (Directorate of KSKK Madrasah et al., 2025). By touching on emotional and spiritual aspects, religious moderation is no longer just memorized material in textbooks, but a way of life that is practiced daily. This love-based character education ensures that Indonesia's younger generation grows up to be well-rounded individuals: steadfast in their religious principles yet gentle in their human interactions. This is the true essence of the middle path envisioned by Ibn Miskawaih, where justice is upheld with the right hand and love is given with the left, creating eternal harmony in the archipelago.

The Practice of the Love Curriculum: Integrative Strategies and Pillars for Strengthening Religious Moderation

Religious moderation is a key principle in maintaining religious harmony in Indonesia. The government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has mainstreamed religious moderation as a strategic policy to prevent radicalism and intolerance. This program involves various sectors, ranging from educational institutions and religious leaders to the wider community. The implementation of this policy is not limited to regulations, but also includes various initiatives, such as strengthening an inclusive religious education curriculum, providing guidance in religious communities, and training religious leaders in delivering moderate sermons (Zulaikhah, Gani, Misbah, & Setiyono, 2023). In this case, Ibn Miskawaih's principle of the middle path is relevant as a guideline in building a religious society with a balanced attitude, not extreme in belief, but still firm in practicing religious teachings.

In the field of education, religious moderation has been integrated into school and college curricula through character-building programs based on national values and tolerance. The government, through Presidential Regulation (Perpres) No. 87 of 2017 on Strengthening Character Education, encourages educational institutions to instill balanced religious values and avoid extremist ideologies (Putra & Anggraini, 2023). In addition, Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation (PMA) No. 18 of 2020 concerning Religious Moderation mandates Islamic educational institutions to develop teaching materials that emphasize tolerance, respect for differences, and uphold unity in diversity (Firdaus & Mardiana, 2024). The middle path values taught by Ibn Miskawaih can be a reference in shaping students' characters so that they do not get caught up in fanaticism or excessive liberalism. Islamic higher education institutions, such as UIN, IAIN, and Islamic boarding schools, also have a central role in spreading an understanding of religious moderation through academic studies and scientific discussions.

In addition to formal education, the implementation of religious moderation also involves religious communities and community organizations. The Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah actively campaign for Islam that is *rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which is in line with the principle of balance in the teachings of Ibn Miskawaih. These organizations also encourage interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue to strengthen national unity. Furthermore, many faith-based communities initiate various joint social activities, such as social services and cooperation in disaster management, which reflect the practice of religious moderation in everyday life (Mukhlis, Mustafa, & Syarifudin, 2022).

At the policy level, religious moderation is manifested in various regulations governing religious life in Indonesia. One of these is Joint Ministerial Regulation (PBM) No. 9 and 8 of 2006 concerning the Establishment of Houses of Worship, which regulates the procedures for building places of worship so as not to cause conflict between religious communities (Ardiansyah, 2018). In addition, the 2021-2024 National Action Plan for Countering Extremism (RAN PE) is also a strategic step in countering radical ideologies that contradict the principle of moderation (Panjaitan, Rahayu, & Hamka, 2023). The Ministry of Religious Affairs also issued Minister of Religious Affairs Decree (KMA) Number 832 of 2021 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation, which serves as a reference for educational institutions and religious communities in implementing religious moderation programs in a more systematic manner (Kemang RI, 2021).

The implementation of religious moderation values in educational institutions is often trapped in administrative formalities and rigid cognitive teaching. However, according to Ibn Miskawaih, ethics is not merely knowledge about goodness, but rather a "state of mind" (*halat al-nafs*) that encourages a person to spontaneously perform good deeds without lengthy consideration (Miskawaih, 2025). Therefore, the Love Curriculum offers a praxis—real actions integrated into theory—to transform the school environment into a living space for moderation (Directorate of KSKK Madrasah et al., 2025). This praxis is outlined in three main pillars of activity: Heartfelt Dialogue, Teacher Role Models through the Pedagogy of Compassion, and Organic Interfaith Social Action.

Until now, religious education in schools has often used discussion methods that lead to theological debates (*jadal*). In debates, the main objective is to find out who is right and who is wrong, which often results in the strengthening of group ego (in-group favoritism) and the belittling of other groups (out-group derogation) (Rafida et al., 2025). Ibn Miskawaih warned that the desire to win in a debate can cloud one's judgment and destroy moderation of the soul. As an alternative, the Love Curriculum introduces the "Heart Dialogue" or "Life Dialogue" method.

In Heart Dialogue, the focus of learning is shifted from "What do you believe?" to "How does your belief help you become a better person?". Students are invited to share personal experiences that touch on universal human dimensions, such as experiences of loss, the joy of helping others, or the challenges of practicing patience (Rahman et al., 2019). When a Muslim student talks about the concept of patience and a Christian student talks about the concept of love, they are not debating doctrine, but rather finding common ground (common feeling).

This method is very effective in fostering Radical Empathy. Psychologically, sharing vulnerability through personal stories can break down walls of prejudice. Ibn Miskawaih mentions that true friendship (*sadaqah*) is born when two souls recognize the goodness in each other (Supriyanto, 2022). By listening to the life stories of classmates of different religions, students begin to see the "human face" behind religious identities. Heart-to-heart dialogue creates a space where differences are no longer a threat to identity, but rather a source of richness that broadens one's horizons (Muslih et al., 2023). This is the practice of the middle path ethic: remaining steadfast in one's own identity while having a heart spacious enough to appreciate the presence of others.

One of the sharp criticisms of moderation education today is the lack of preparedness among educators. Many teachers are able to explain the definition of moderation theoretically, but fail to practice it in the classroom (Muhaemin, 2025). The Love Curriculum emphasizes that teachers are the main instruments or "living curriculum." Ibn Miskawaih viewed teachers as *Mu'addib*—moral educators whose main task is to perform *tahdhib al-nafs* (purification of the soul) of students (Supriyanto, 2022). This task cannot be successful if the teacher does not have deep compassion.

The praxis of this point is the application of "Pedagogy of Love." A moderate teacher not only transfers knowledge but is also present as an active listener who does not judge. In many cases of intolerance in schools, the seeds of intolerance arise when teachers show bias or discrimination toward students from minority groups or students who think critically (Ngangun, 2023). Pedagogy of Love requires teachers to embrace every student with equal attention (Ma'ruf, 2017). Teachers must have the ability to detect narratives of hatred that may arise in the midst of student conversations and respond not with physical or verbal punishment, but with guiding dialogue.

Furthermore, teachers need to receive special training that is not only technical, but also spiritual and psychological (Hanafi et al., 2024). Teachers must be able to reflect on their personal biases before they stand in front of the class. Citing Ibn Miskawaih's (2025) concept of justice as a "middle ground," teachers must be fair referees in the classroom, ensuring that the voices of minority students are heard and respected. Teachers' exemplary behavior in listening without interrupting, respecting different opinions, and showing genuine concern will serve as a mirror for students. If students see their teachers embracing diversity, they will emulate this attitude as a social norm, not merely a school assignment (Murtadho et al., 2025). This is the most effective way to internalize religious moderation: through consistent and loving role modeling.

The third pillar of the Love Curriculum implementation is shifting the focus of moderation from rigid classrooms to organic and enjoyable social spaces. Often, religious moderation programs are very formal, such as interfaith seminars or workshops that only reach the elite or intellectual levels. The Love Curriculum proposes a practice of "Collective Joy," inspired by social phenomena such as the "War Takjil" that went viral in Indonesia.

The "War Takjil" phenomenon shows that the most effective interfaith interactions occur when there is no formal label of "Moderate Dialogue" (Asmiati et al., 2025). The excitement of hunting for takjil by non-Muslims and the warm welcome from vendors and Muslims shows that there is a strong social bond: human brotherhood and shared happiness. In the view of Ibn Miskawaih, friendship based on shared joy (*alladhah*) is the first step toward friendship based on goodness (*al-khair*). The Love Curriculum adapts this spirit into school programs such as "Interfaith Social Action."

Schools can organize activities in which students from different religious backgrounds work together to solve social problems in their local communities. Examples include joint projects to clean up the environment, help orphanages, or collaborate creatively in cultural festivals. In these activities, the religious labels of each student are put in the background, while the "common goal" becomes the main focus. When Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist students work together to plant trees or paint public facilities, they are building strong bonds.

The interactions that occur in the joy and teamwork will erase feelings of "strangeness" towards other religions. Moderation is no longer felt as a burden of government instruction, but as an enjoyable lifestyle. This is the essence of the Love Curriculum: making moderation an expression of love for the homeland and fellow human beings. The "War Takjil" phenomenon teaches us that when love and joy are prioritized, dogmatic barriers dissolve on their own without having to sacrifice one's beliefs.

The three activities above—Heart Dialogue, Teacher Role Models, and Interfaith Social Action—form a unified whole that reinforces each other within the Love Curriculum ecosystem (Directorate of Madrasah KSKK et al., 2025). Heart-to-Heart Dialogue strengthens students' cognitive and affective dimensions, Teacher Role Models provide a foundation of moral authority, and Interfaith Social Action provides real empirical experiences. This synergy is in line with Ibn Miskawaih's vision that character education must encompass all aspects of the soul: *al-quwwah al-nathiqah* (reason), *al-quwwah al-ghadhabiyah* (spirit/courage), and *al-quwwah al-syahwiyyah* (desire/love).

By consistently implementing this practice, educational institutions will no longer just produce intellectually intelligent graduates, but also individuals who possess "emotional intelligence." Students will grow into individuals who are able to stand on the "Middle Path" not because they fear legal sanctions, but because they realize that loving humanity is part of their devotion to God. The implementation of this Love Curriculum will ultimately be a tangible contribution by the world of education in reducing intolerance in Indonesia, as evidenced by the 2023 KBB violation data that forms the basis for the urgency of this research. Through love, religious moderation is no longer a project, but rather the pulse of a harmonious national life.

Conclusions

Based on an in-depth study of classical ethical thinking and contemporary challenges, it can be concluded that religious moderation in Indonesia requires a more solid philosophical and

pedagogical foundation than mere administrative policies. The continuing phenomena of intolerance and radicalism indicate a “moral rift” that cannot be resolved through formalistic or top-down approaches alone. This is where the relevance of Ibn Miskawaih's concept of the middle path (al-ikhtiyar al-awsat) becomes crucial as a foundation for universal ethics that emphasizes balance between two extremes. This study affirms that moderation is not merely a passive position in the midst of conflict, but rather a moral achievement through purification of the soul (tahdhib al-nafs) that enables individuals to remain steadfast in their beliefs yet gentle in their human interactions.

The integration of the value of love (mahabbah) into the structure of Islamic education through the idea of a “Curriculum of Love” is a transformative solution to address the affective void in the current education system. The Love Curriculum shifts the paradigm of religious education from a textual-legalistic approach to a spiritual-humanistic awareness. By placing love as the main spirit, education no longer only pursues intellectual intelligence, but also builds deep empathy. This concept is in line with the teachings of Ibn Miskawaih, who stated that justice as a measure of moderation will only stand firm if it is bound by love. Through this approach, religious moderation is transformed from mere memorization into a way of life that is organically internalized by students.

In practical terms, the implementation of the Love Curriculum requires fundamental changes in teaching methods through three main pillars: Heart Dialogue, teacher exemplarity as Mu'addib, and organic interfaith social action. Heart Dialogue serves to break down walls of prejudice by shifting rigid theological debates toward sharing universal human experiences that foster radical empathy. Meanwhile, teachers act as a “living curriculum” who must radiate loving energy and be fair referees in the classroom, ensuring that every voice is valued without bias. This synergy ensures that the values of moderation do not remain mere theory, but are practiced in daily interactions that are full of respect for human dignity.

Furthermore, the success of religious moderation in the future greatly depends on our ability to create “Collective Joy” amid differences, as reflected in social phenomena such as “War Takjil.” This phenomenon proves that the most effective interfaith interactions occur when dogmatic barriers dissolve in a spirit of fluid and enjoyable togetherness. The Love Curriculum adopts this spirit to encourage the birth of “Active Tolerance,” where individuals not only allow others to be different, but actively care for and take responsibility for maintaining social harmony. Thus, religious moderation becomes a cultural movement that grows from the bottom up, driven by the unifying power of love.

In conclusion, the synergy between Ibn Miskawaih's middle path ethics and the Love Curriculum offers a new vision for Islamic education in Indonesia to shape a generation that is “at peace with itself”—individuals whose souls are calm because they are filled with love, so they have no desire to hurt others. Education based on spiritual purification and moral balance will become a strong moral immunity for the younger generation in facing polarization in the digital age. By making Islam a blessing for all creation through the practice of genuine love, educational institutions will be able to produce intelligent individuals with deep empathy, who will ultimately bring about lasting peace amid the diversity of the archipelago.

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