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The Impact of a Qur'an-, Hadith-, and Historical Exemplar-Based Religious Literacy Intervention on Students' Wasatiyyah Attitudes: a Pre-Experimental Study

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Abstract

Religious illiteracy constitutes an epistemic problem that contributes to the reproduction of intolerant attitudes and discriminatory practices. Drawing loosely on the notion of Critical Religious Literacy (CRL), this study examines the impact of a religious literacy intervention on students' *wasatiyyah* (moderate) attitudes. The study employs a pre-experimental design with a post-test administered to two intact groups of students, and the data are analyzed using Mann–Whitney U and Chi-square tests. The intervention draws on primary Islamic textual sources (the Qur'an and Hadith) and historical exemplars from the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, framing religious moderation as an internal ethical commitment rooted within the Islamic tradition rather than as an externally imposed concept. The findings indicate that the intervention shifted students' cognitive understanding of *wasatiyyah* and strengthened moderate attitudes across several issues, including support for Muslims' obligation to protect all houses of worship and willingness to live as neighbors with Jews and Christians. However, the intervention did not produce behavioral change regarding students' willingness to provide food to Jewish neighbors. Overall, the study suggests that religious literacy interventions grounded in Islamic textual and historical sources can effectively reinforce moderate religious attitudes, particularly at the cognitive and attitudinal levels, while behavioral change may require more sustained or intensive engagement.

Keywords: Religious Literacy, Intervention, *Wasatiyyah* (Islamic Moderation), historical exemplars.

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Pengaruh Intervensi Literasi Agama Berbasis Al-Qur'an, Hadis, dan Keteladanan Historis terhadap Sikap Wasathiyah Siswa: Studi Pra-Eksperimental

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Abstrak

Ketidaktahuan tentang agama (*religious illiteracy*) merupakan persoalan epistemik yang berkontribusi terhadap reproduksi sikap intoleran dan praktik diskriminatif. Berangkat secara longgar dari gagasan *Critical Religious Literacy* (CRL), penelitian ini mengukur pengaruh intervensi literasi agama terhadap sikap wasathiyah (moderasi) siswa. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain pra-eksperimental dengan post-test pada dua kelompok siswa yang utuh (*intact groups*), dan data dianalisis menggunakan uji Mann–Whitney U dan Chi-kuadrat. Intervensi pembelajaran ini bertumpu pada sumber-sumber tekstual utama Islam (Al-Qur'an dan Hadis) serta keteladanan historis Nabi Muhammad dan para sahabatnya, dengan menempatkan moderasi beragama sebagai komitmen etis yang berakar dari tradisi Islam itu sendiri, bukan sebagai konsep yang berasal dari luar. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa intervensi ini berhasil menggeser pemahaman kognitif siswa tentang konsep wasathiyah dan memperkuat sikap moderat pada sejumlah isu, termasuk dukungan terhadap kewajiban umat Islam untuk melindungi seluruh rumah ibadah serta kesediaan hidup berdampingan sebagai tetangga dengan pemeluk agama Yahudi dan Kristen. Namun, intervensi ini tidak mendorong perubahan perilaku terkait kesediaan siswa untuk memberi makanan kepada tetangga yang beragama Yahudi. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa intervensi literasi agama yang berakar pada sumber tekstual dan historis Islam efektif dalam memperkuat sikap moderasi beragama, terutama pada ranah kognitif dan afektif, sementara perubahan pada ranah perilaku tampaknya memerlukan keterlibatan yang lebih berkelanjutan dan intensif.

Kata Kunci: Literasi agama, Intervensi, *Wasatiyyah* (Moderasi Islam), Keteladanan Historis.

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Pendahuluan

Religious moderation has become a major concern in the field of religious education in Indonesia. The growing prevalence of intolerance and discriminatory attitudes, including among young people, indicates that students' religious orientations are often shaped by partial—or even erroneous—understandings of religious teachings. This condition is closely linked to low levels of religious literacy, understood as the inability to comprehend religious teachings in a sufficiently holistic, contextual, and critical manner. Religious illiteracy can, in turn, generate discriminatory attitudes and practices carried out in the name of religion (Reid, 2024).

Religious illiteracy constitutes a serious challenge for modern societies. Prothero observes that while many Americans identify as deeply religious, they possess only limited knowledge of their own religious traditions as well as those of others; most American students, in particular, are religiously illiterate (Gallagher, 2009; Machado, 2009). This condition is especially problematic given that a great deal of harm—as well as good—is carried out in the name of religion (Machado, 2009). A similar phenomenon may also be observed in Indonesia. Mujani's (2019) study reports a high level of Muslim religiosity in Indonesia (3.768 on a scale of 1–5), while religio-political tolerance remains relatively low (1.890 on a scale of 1–3). This gap between religiosity and tolerance indirectly points to the persistence of religious illiteracy, since religious teachings themselves strongly emphasize tolerance.

Religious illiteracy encompasses several forms of misunderstanding: (1) insufficient knowledge of one's own

religious foundations; (2) lack of understanding of interreligious differences; (3) limited awareness of religious history; and (4) poor understanding of the role of religion in politics and society. In short, religious illiteracy reflects a failure to comprehend religious diversity within public life. As a consequence, religious beliefs may pose risks to social coexistence when they are mobilized or manipulated by irresponsible interests.

Given these roots of religious illiteracy, religious literacy interventions targeting young people offer a strategically important response. Instructional interventions grounded in primary Islamic sources—the Qur'an and Hadith—as well as historical exemplars drawn from the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions hold strong potential to reduce religious illiteracy. Such interventions can provide a more comprehensive epistemic framework, foster historical consciousness, and assist students in understanding *wasatiyyah* (justice) as a core teaching of Islam itself.

Religious literacy-based educational interventions can thus address religious illiteracy while simultaneously strengthening religious literacy. Religious literacy is not merely the acquisition of religious knowledge; rather, it refers to the capacity to understand and engage religious texts within the dynamics of public pluralism. Moore defines religious literacy as the ability to understand religious traditions as complex, internally diverse, dynamic phenomena that are deeply intertwined with social, political, and cultural contexts (Hashmi, 2021; Reid, 2024). Prothero, meanwhile, conceptualizes religious literacy as the ability to understand and appropriately

use religious terms, symbols, beliefs, practices, scriptures, key figures, themes, and narratives as they appear in public life (Gallagher, 2009).

Religious literacy interventions can therefore offer a more balanced and comprehensive framework for religious understanding. When individuals perceive religion as a complex tradition characterized by internal diversity and historical embeddedness, they are more likely to adopt tolerant and non-extreme modes of thinking. Prothero emphasizes that religious literacy reduces misinformation, which often serves as a key driver of intolerance and radicalism (Gallagher, 2009). Accordingly, the provision of religious instruction on the core principles of Islamic *wasatiyyah*—drawing on Qur’anic verses, Hadith, and the historical practice of the Prophet—functions as a form of religious literacy intervention capable of strengthening religious moderation. This process unfolds because more holistic and contextualized religious understanding encourages the capacity to adopt just (*wasatiyyah*) positions within conditions of diversity.

In the Indonesian context, low levels of religious literacy are reflected not only in the persistence of intolerant and discriminatory attitudes, but also in widespread misperceptions surrounding religious moderation—despite the fact that moderation constitutes a core teaching of Islam itself. A common perception holds that religious moderation is not intrinsic to Islam, but rather a foreign concept imposed upon Islamic teachings under the influence of democracy and human rights discourse (Chatimah, 2024). Another prevalent misunderstanding equates religious moderation with weak commitment, lack of seriousness, or

excessive compromise in matters of religious belief (Saifuddin, 2019, pp. 12–13).

These misperceptions have led some Muslims to become alienated from *wasatiyyah* as a foundational Islamic principle. In essence, Islamic *wasatiyyah* (moderation) refers to the inclusivity of Islamic justice that transcends religious boundaries, such that justice extends not only to Muslims but also to non-Muslims. The fundamental right to freedom of religion—understood as the prohibition of coercion in matters of faith—is explicitly affirmed in the Qur’an (al-Baqarah 2:256) and embodied in the practice of the Prophet Muhammad. Likewise, the obligation for Muslims to protect all houses of worship, regardless of religious affiliation, is emphasized in the Qur’an as a fundamental right that must be upheld (al-Hajj 22:39–40). Nevertheless, this core principle of Islamic *wasatiyyah*—the inclusivity of justice—has often been obscured by majoritarian pressures and the accumulation of persistent misinterpretations.

Such misperceptions have developed for at least three interrelated reasons. First, the term *moderation* does not originate from Islamic linguistic or conceptual traditions, but rather from the historical experience of modern Western societies. The concept of “religious moderation” emerged in response to the devastating wars of religion between Catholics and Protestants in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Second, a reductive understanding of *ummatan wasatan* (Qur’an 2:143) has led *wasat* to be narrowly translated as “moderation” or a “middle position,” understood merely as avoiding

extremes, without engaging the fuller normative meaning of the term. Third, the phrase “religious moderation” itself may convey the misleading impression that religion must be moderated, whereas in fact what requires moderation is not the religion per se, but the manner in which it is interpreted and practiced (Saifuddin, 2019, p. iii).

In light of these roots of misperception, the discourse on religious moderation should not rely solely on regulatory approaches or the language of national policy, but should also be grounded in forms of religious literacy that resonate with believers’ own religious frameworks. To date, regulatory approaches in Indonesia have institutionalized religious moderation through mechanisms such as its inclusion in national examinations for civil servants and hajj officers, which has often rendered the concept of moderation as imposed rather than internally grounded. Consequently, educational and da’wah efforts that articulate Islamic *wasatiyyah* through the language and primary sources of Islamic teachings themselves are critically important, as is empirical research examining their effects.

Empirical studies that systematically measure the role of religious literacy in fostering religious moderation remain limited. Manshur and Husni (2020), for example, demonstrate the effectiveness of literacy-based learning in promoting religious moderation among university students using a quasi-experimental design. Their study shows that literacy-oriented instruction is highly effective in strengthening attitudes, behaviors, and ethical orientations associated with religious moderation, as well as fostering interreligious friendship,

although it is less effective in enhancing conceptual understanding of religious moderation itself.

Hanafi et al. (2022) examine how university students develop their perspectives on religious moderation through reading and interpreting the Qur’an using a qualitative approach. Their findings indicate that students with more flexible and nuanced engagement with Qur’anic translation tend to demonstrate a greater capacity to interpret verses such as al-An’am 6:108, which prohibits insulting other religions, and al-Mumtahanah 60:8, which encourages kindness toward non-Muslims.

The present study investigates the impact of a religious literacy intervention using a pre-experimental design. However, unlike the two studies discussed above, this study operationalizes Islamic *wasatiyyah* through indicators derived directly from the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and historical accounts of exemplary conduct by the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. Accordingly, the operational definition of Islamic *wasatiyyah* employed in this study emphasizes different focal points and indicators than those outlined in the official *Moderasi Beragama* framework.

Measurement

In the official *Moderasi Beragama* framework, religious moderation is defined as a way of thinking, behaving, and acting that consistently adopts a middle position, upholds justice, and avoids extremism in religious life. Examples of religious moderation presented in this framework include the deliberate rejection of both religious extremism

(conservatism) and religious liberalism, understood as two opposing extremes. The core principles of moderation are defined as justice and balance, while balance is further described as a perspective, attitude, and commitment that consistently aligns with justice, humanity, and equality (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019, pp. 17–18).

Saifuddin emphasizes that religion itself inherently contains principles of moderation, namely justice and balance. A religious tradition cannot be considered authentic if it legitimizes destruction, oppression, or moral excess. Religion, therefore, does not require moderation in itself. Rather, what requires continual moderation is the manner in which religion is interpreted and practiced, since religious expression may become extreme, unjust, or excessive when detached from its ethical foundations (Saifuddin, 2019, pp. iii–iv).

Within the *Moderasi Beragama* framework, four indicators are used to assess whether a given orientation can be categorized as religious moderation: (1) national commitment; (2) tolerance; (3) rejection of violence; and (4) accommodation of local culture. According to this framework, these four indicators may be used to identify the extent to which religious moderation is practiced by individuals in Indonesia (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2019, p. 43).

Conceptually, the definition of religious moderation in the *Moderasi Beragama* framework can be understood as a representation of moderation articulated through a national or civic lens. It is therefore unsurprising that the framework does not engage extensively with classical Qur’anic exegesis or Islamic

historiography. Its normative references are limited to a brief discussion of Qur’an 2:143 and a single Prophetic tradition commonly translated as “the best of affairs are those that are moderate.”

From the perspective of Islam’s primary sources—the Qur’an and the Hadith—*wasatiyyah*, or the inclusivity of Islamic justice, constitutes one of the most fundamental teachings of Islam, second only to *tawhid*. As Saifuddin underscores, religion inherently embodies the principles of moderation, justice, and balance; accordingly, the core of Islamic *wasatiyyah* lies in the principle of justice.

One of the principal Qur’anic references for Islamic *wasatiyyah* is the phrase *ummataṇ wasatan* in Qur’an 2:143. However, the term *wasat* does not merely denote a middle position; rather, it signifies a normative commitment to justice. In an authenticated Prophetic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad explicitly explains that *ummataṇ wasatan* refers to justice (reported in Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī). Classical authorities such as Ibn ‘Abbas and Mujahid similarly interpret *ummataṇ wasatan* as “a just community.”

The notion of a “middle position” can be relative, as it often depends on situational context and perspective. For example, resistance against colonial domination has at times been labeled extremism or terrorism by occupying powers, despite representing a struggle for justice against oppression. In contrast, justice in Islam is an inclusive value that applies universally—to all human beings and even to the natural world—regardless of religious affiliation, ethnicity, race, social class, or other distinctions. This inclusive justice (*wasatiyyah*) is reflected, for instance,

in the universal principle of religious freedom affirmed in the Qur'an (al-Baqarah 2:256), as well as in the obligation to protect mosques and all other houses of worship from aggression (al-Hajj 22:40).

In this study, Islamic moderation or *wasatiyyah* is therefore defined as inclusive Islamic justice that applies universally to all humanity and the natural world, without discrimination based on religion, group affiliation, ethnicity, race, or other social categories. This inclusive conception of justice forms the normative foundation for tolerance, benevolence, and the rejection of discrimination and violence toward others (al-Mumtahanah 60:8).

An adequate understanding of *wasatiyyah* from the perspective of the Qur'an and Hadith should not be confined to a single verse, nor derived solely from linguistic interpretation. The root *w-s-ṭ* and its derivatives appear in the Qur'an on four occasions (al-Baqarah 2:143; al-Baqarah 2:238; al-Qalam 68:28; and al-'Adiyat 100:5). While *wasat* in the phrase *ummatan wasatan* is linguistically related to *tawassuṭ* (middle position), its normative meaning extends beyond moderation as positional balance to encompass a comprehensive commitment to justice.

The Prophet Muhammad clarified that *wasat* in *ummatan wasatan* denotes justice, a view transmitted in several authenticated Hadith collections (al-Bukhari, al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad, and al-Nasa'i) (al-Bukhari, 1993; Ibn Kathir, 1998). Classical exegetes further reinforce this interpretation. Ibn 'Abbas and Mujahid describe *ummatan wasatan* as a just community; al-Qurtubi explains that *wasat* signifies justice because that

which is most just is also most noble (al-Qurtubi, 1964); and Rashid Rida interprets *wasat* as justice combined with moral goodness (Rida, 1990).

A related term, *awsat*, derived from the same root, appears in Qur'an 68:28, referring to "the most wise" among a group. Al-Ṭabari explains *awsatuhum* as "the most just among them," while al-Qurtubi interprets it as "the most just and the most knowledgeable." These usages suggest that *wasatiyyah* in the Qur'anic and Prophetic tradition centers on the qualities of justice and intellectual excellence (Arif, 2021).

Accordingly, the conditions for becoming an *ummatan wasatan*—a just and exemplary community—are twofold: (1) commitment to justice or trustworthiness (*amanah*), and (2) intellectual excellence or knowledge. These qualities parallel the attributes emphasized by the Prophet Joseph when he presented himself as worthy of public trust: "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land; indeed, I am a trustworthy and knowledgeable guardian" (Qur'an 12:55).

Thus, Islamic *wasatiyyah* or justice is not limited to the avoidance of extremism or radicalism. Rather, it reflects a proactive orientation grounded in intellectual excellence and an unwavering commitment to justice (*amanah*). In this sense, *wasatiyyah* is not a reactive definition, but a proactive ethical and epistemic framework.

In this study, Islamic *wasatiyyah* is measured using four indicators: (1) knowledge or understanding (cognitive dimension); (2) attitudes reflecting the inclusivity of Islamic justice (affective dimension); (3) willingness to coexist with non-Muslims (behavioral dimension); and (4)

willingness to engage in benevolent actions toward non-Muslims (behavioral dimension).

The first indicator, knowledge or understanding of the concept of *ummatan wasatan*, is assessed through two items: (1) a question examining respondents' understanding of the dominant or core meaning of *ummatan wasatan*; and (2) a question addressing the essential conditions required for Muslims to be regarded as an *ummatan wasatan*.

The second indicator, attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice that transcends religious boundaries, is measured using four items: (1) perceptions of inclusive justice that protects not only the rights of Muslims but also the fundamental rights of non-Muslims; (2) views on freedom of religion—specifically the prohibition of coercion in matters of faith—as a reflection of Islam's inclusive justice toward human conscience; (3) beliefs regarding the obligation of Muslims to protect all houses of worship; and (4) recognition of the rights of non-Muslims to build and maintain their own places of worship.

The third indicator, willingness to coexist with non-Muslims, is measured through two items assessing respondents' willingness to live as neighbors with (1) Jewish individuals and (2) Christian individuals.

The fourth indicator, willingness to engage in benevolent conduct toward non-Muslims, is measured using two items: (1) general willingness to perform acts of kindness toward non-Muslims; and (2) willingness to emulate the example of the Prophet's Companions in providing food to Jewish neighbors.

Research Method

This study employs a pre-experimental method using an intact-group, post-test-only design (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 75). The sample, drawn from the student population of MAN 1 Tanah Datar, was divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The treatment administered to the experimental group consisted of an instructional session on Islamic religious literacy focused on the core teachings of *wasatiyyah* (moderation), grounded in Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions (Hadith), and historical exemplars from the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions.

The instructional treatment was delivered in a single session lasting approximately 45 minutes. Both groups were assessed using a post-test only, without a pre-test, which constitutes a recognized statistical limitation of the study design. Consequently, observed differences or improvements in moderation-related attitudes among the experimental group cannot be attributed exclusively to the treatment with absolute certainty.

Nevertheless, statistically significant differences (Sig.) between the experimental and control groups were identified through Mann–Whitney U and Chi-square analyses, indicating that the observed differences are unlikely to have occurred by chance alone. The Mann–Whitney U test was employed because most variables did not meet the assumption of normal distribution, as assessed using SPSS. This non-parametric test is appropriate for analyzing ordinal data derived from Likert-scale items, while the Chi-square test was applied to nominal data.

Although the absence of a pre-test limits the ability to make definitive

causal claims, the socio-cultural homogeneity of the sample—all participants originating from the same school and geographical area—provides a reasonable basis for assuming that the control group approximates the baseline condition of the experimental group. In light of this homogeneity, and given the presence of statistically significant differences between the two groups, it is reasonable to infer that the intervention exerted an effect, even though the extent to which the effect can be attributed solely to the intervention cannot be conclusively determined.

Results and Discussion

1. Understanding and the Conditions for Becoming an *Ummatan Wasatan*

Understanding the concept of *ummatan wasatan* is particularly crucial, given that this phrase functions as a widely cited and conceptually central Qur'anic term. In this study, respondents' understanding of the meaning of *ummatan wasatan* was measured using one item, while their understanding of the conditions required to become an *ummatan wasatan* was assessed using a separate item. When asked which meaning most accurately captures the dominant or core sense of the term *ummatan wasatan*, the two student groups provided responses as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Interpretation of *Ummatan Wasatan*

Kategori	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Umat yang pertengahan	30 (48.4%)	8 (32.0%)	-16.4% ↓
Umat pilihan/terbaik	14 (22.6%)	2 (8.0%)	-14.6% ↓
Umat yang adil	10 (16.1%)	14 (56.0%)	+39.9% ↑
Semua salah	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0.0%
Tidak tahu	8 (12.9%)	1 (4.0%)	-8.9% ↓
p = 0.001			

Interpretation: There is a highly significant difference between the control and experimental groups in their understanding of the core meaning of *ummatan wasatan*, as indicated by a p-value of 0.001, which is far below the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. The largest difference between the two groups appears in the response category “a just community,” with a difference of 39.9 percentage points. A majority of students in the experimental group selected the most conceptually accurate interpretation—“a just community” (56.0%). In contrast, the majority of students in the control group (48.4%) selected “a middle community,” while only 16.1% of the control group identified *ummatan wasatan* as “a just community.”

From a strict statistical standpoint, it cannot be conclusively asserted that this highly significant difference is attributable solely to the instructional treatment, given that the research design did not include a pre-test. Other uncontrolled variables external to the treatment may have contributed to shaping the responses of both groups. However, both groups consisted of students drawn from the same school and geographical area, suggesting a relatively homogeneous socio-cultural background. Under these conditions, the responses of the control group may reasonably be interpreted, to a certain extent, as approximating the baseline condition of the experimental group prior to the intervention.

Accordingly, it is highly plausible that the observed significant difference is primarily associated with the instructional treatment. Statistically, the very low p-value indicates that the difference is unlikely to be the result of random variation. Thus, the highly

significant result ($p = 0.001$) suggests that the primary function of the intervention for this item—concerning the core meaning of *ummatan wasatan*—was to shift the dominant understanding from interpreting the term as merely “a middle community” toward a more conceptually grounded interpretation as “a just community.”

To examine students’ understanding of the conditions required for Muslims to become an *ummatan wasatan*, both groups were asked the question: *What are the essential conditions for the Muslim community to qualify as an ummatan wasatan?* Table 2 presents a comparison of responses between the control and experimental groups.

Table 2. Conditions for Becoming an *Ummatan Wasatan*

Kategori	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Ilmu yang cukup	3 (4.8%)	1 (4.0%)	-0.8% ↓
Komitmen pada keadilan	12 (19.4%)	9 (36.0%)	+16.6% ↑
Komitmen pada keadilan dan ilmu yang cukup	28 (45.2%)	12 (48.0%)	+2.8% ↑
Toleran dan komitmen kebangsaan	9 (14.5%)	3 (12.0%)	-2.5% ↓
Tidak tahu	10 (16.1%)	0 (0.0%)	-16.1% ↓

$p = 0.110$

Interpretation: Statistically, no significant difference was observed between the two groups regarding their views on the conditions for becoming an *ummatan wasatan*, as indicated by a p-value of 0.110, which exceeds the conventional significance threshold of 0.05. However, descriptive patterns reveal meaningful tendencies. The experimental group placed greater emphasis on “commitment to justice” compared to the control group (36.0% vs. 19.4%) and showed a complete absence of “do not know” responses (0.0% vs. 16.1%).

In addition, the experimental group slightly outperformed the control group in selecting the most conceptually accurate response—“commitment to justice and sufficient knowledge”—with 48.0% of the experimental group choosing this option compared to 45.2% in the control group.

An important observation is that the majority of respondents in both the control group (45.2%) and the experimental group (48.0%) selected the same most accurate response: “commitment to justice and sufficient knowledge.” If the assumption is accepted that the control group reasonably approximates the baseline condition of the experimental group prior to the intervention, this finding suggests that, even before the treatment, students in both groups already possessed a relatively sound understanding of the essential conditions for becoming an *ummatan wasatan*. Specifically, they demonstrated a strong appreciation for the combined importance of commitment to justice and intellectual excellence.

Within this context, the primary function of the instructional treatment for this item appears not to be the introduction of entirely new understanding, but rather the reinforcement and refinement of existing conceptions. The treatment strengthened students’ emphasis on commitment to justice, as reflected in a difference of 16.6 percentage points, and effectively eliminated uncertainty, as indicated by the disappearance of “do not know” responses in the experimental group (a difference of 16.1%).

2. Inclusivity of Islamic Justice

Attitudes and commitments toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice constitute a central indicator in the measurement of Islamic *wasatiyyah* (moderation). This is because *wasatiyyah* itself is conceptually defined by the inclusivity of Islamic justice that transcends religious boundaries. As previously articulated, Islamic *wasatiyyah* refers to “inclusive Islamic justice that applies universally to all humanity and the natural world, regardless of religious affiliation, group identity, ethnicity, race, or other distinctions.”

Attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice were measured using four items. The first item examined respondents’ rejection of the notion that Islamic justice applies exclusively to Muslims. Specifically, respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “*Justice in Islam applies only to Muslims and does not need to apply to followers of other religions.*” Table 3 presents a comparison of responses between the control and experimental groups.

Table 3. Rejection of the Exclusivity of Islamic Justice

Tingkat Penolakan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbe
Sangat setuju	5 (8.1%)	1 (4.0%)	-4.1%
Setuju	8 (12.9%)	2 (8.0%)	-4.9%
Netral	27 (43.5%)	10 (40.0%)	-3.5%
Tidak setuju	17 (27.4%)	8 (32.0%)	+4.6%
Sangat tidak setuju	5 (8.1%)	4 (16.0%)	+7.9%
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.176

Interpretation: Statistical analysis indicates no significant difference between the two groups in

their rejection of the exclusivist view of Islamic justice ($p = 0.176$). However, descriptive analysis reveals notable patterns. A higher proportion of students in the experimental group expressed rejection of exclusivist justice—by selecting “disagree” and “strongly disagree”—compared to the control group (48.0% vs. 35.0%). This pattern suggests that a greater share of students in the experimental group embraced the inclusivity of Islamic justice relative to those in the control group.

In addition, the experimental group exhibited lower levels of agreement with the exclusivist statement, with a combined difference of 9 percentage points in the “strongly agree” and “agree” categories (4.1% + 4.9%). This further indicates a shift away from endorsing exclusivist interpretations of Islamic justice among students exposed to the intervention.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents in both the control group (43.5%) and the experimental group (40.0%) clustered around the neutral response category. The proportion of neutral responses declined by only 3.5 percentage points in the experimental group. This suggests that, if the observed differences are attributed primarily to the instructional treatment, the intervention succeeded in strengthening inclusive orientations toward Islamic justice but was not sufficiently strong to substantially shift the predominantly neutral stance held by most students.

Another aspect of attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice was examined through an item assessing whether freedom of religion is perceived as a liberal or secular concept rather than an authentic Islamic

teaching. In the Indonesian context, the term “liberal” is often perceived negatively as a foreign or secular ideology imposed on Islam, rather than as a political tradition associated with the protection of individual rights, as commonly understood in Western discourse. Conceptually, this item positions religious freedom as an expression of inclusive Islamic justice, grounded in the Qur’anic prohibition of coercion in matters of faith. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“Freedom of religion (the prohibition of coercion in matters of faith) is a teaching of liberal/secular ideology and does not originate from Islam.”* Responses from both student groups are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Rejecting the Framing of Religious Freedom as Non-Islamic

Tingkat Penolakan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbe
Sangat setuju	8 (12.9%)	1 (4.0%)	-8.9%
Setuju	14 (22.6%)	4 (16.0%)	-6.6%
Netral	28 (45.2%)	12 (48.0%)	+2.8%
Tidak setuju	10 (16.1%)	4 (16.0%)	-0.1%
Sangat tidak setuju	2 (3.2%)	4 (16.0%)	+12.8%
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.066

Interpretation: The p-value of 0.066 approaches the conventional threshold for statistical significance (0.05). Although it does not reach the level required for statistical significance, descriptive analysis indicates that the experimental group demonstrated a stronger rejection of the claim that freedom of religion is a liberal or secular concept unrelated to Islamic teachings compared to the control group. Specifically, the experimental group exhibited a 12.8 percentage-point

higher level of rejection than the control group.

Consistent with this pattern, the experimental group also showed substantially lower levels of agreement with the statement that freedom of religion does not derive from Islam, with a combined difference of 15.5 percentage points in the “strongly agree” and “agree” categories. This suggests that exposure to the intervention was associated with a clearer understanding of religious freedom as an intrinsic component of Islamic justice, rather than an externally imposed liberal norm.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents in both the control group (approximately 45%) and the experimental group (48%) selected the neutral response category. This indicates that, even if the observed differences are primarily attributed to the instructional treatment, the intervention contributed to strengthening students’ conceptualization of religious freedom as an expression of inclusive Islamic justice, although the magnitude of this effect was not sufficient to substantially shift the predominantly neutral stance held by most students.

Another aspect of attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice was examined through an item addressing the obligation of Muslim forces to protect all places of worship belonging to other religious communities. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“One of the objectives of jihad in Islam (armed struggle, when it is unavoidable) is to protect all houses of worship of religious communities, such as mosques, churches, synagogues, and*

others.” Table 5 presents a comparison of responses between the control and experimental groups.

Table 5. Agreement with the Obligation to Protect All Houses of Worship

Tingkat Persetujuan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Sangat setuju	5 (8.1%)	7 (28.0%)	+19.9% ↑
Setuju	14 (22.6%)	7 (28.0%)	+5.4% ↑
Netral	29 (46.8%)	10 (40.0%)	-6.8% ↓
Tidak setuju	10 (16.1%)	1 (4.0%)	-12.1% ↓
Sangat tidak setuju	4 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	-6.5% ↓
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.005

Interpretation: A highly significant difference was observed between the two groups in their level of agreement with the obligation for Muslim forces to protect all houses of worship, as indicated by a p-value of 0.005. A majority of respondents in the experimental group expressed agreement with this statement (56.0%, combining “strongly agree” and “agree”), whereas only 30.7% of the control group expressed agreement. In contrast, the largest proportion of the control group adopted a neutral stance (46.8%), rather than expressing explicit disagreement.

The experimental group exhibited a substantial increase in supportive attitudes, with a combined rise of 25 percentage points in agreement (19.9% + 5.4%), alongside an 18 percentage-point decrease in rejection. The proportion of neutral responses in the experimental group also declined by 6.8 percentage points.

These findings suggest two important points. *First*, if the observed differences are primarily attributed to the instructional treatment, the highly significant p-value indicates that the intervention exerted a substantial effect

on this particular dimension of inclusive Islamic justice. *Second*, the magnitude of this effect appears to have been facilitated by the baseline attitudes of both groups, which were not strongly resistant to the idea that Muslims have an obligation to protect all houses of worship. The majority of students in the control group were not firmly opposed to this obligation but instead occupied a neutral position (46.8%), and a considerable proportion of the control group (30.7%, combining “strongly agree” and “agree”) already expressed support for the protection of all houses of worship.

Another dimension of attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice was examined through an item assessing respect for the fundamental rights of non-Muslims to build and possess houses of worship. Respondents were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“Owning and building houses of worship is a fundamental right of every religious adherent, which must be respected and supported by Muslims.”* Responses from the two student groups are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Agreement with the Right to Build and Own Houses of Worship

Tingkat Persetujuan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Sangat setuju	7 (11.3%)	6 (24.0%)	+12.7% ↑
Setuju	23 (37.1%)	9 (36.0%)	-1.1% ↓
Netral	29 (46.8%)	10 (40.0%)	-6.8% ↓
Tidak setuju	3 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	-4.8% ↓
Sangat tidak setuju	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0.0%
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.149

Interpretation: Statistical analysis indicates no significant difference between the two groups in their level of agreement with the fundamental right to build and own houses of worship for all religious communities ($p = 0.149$). Nevertheless, descriptive patterns suggest that the experimental group expressed higher levels of agreement than the control group (60.0% vs. 48.0%). Notably, no respondents in the experimental group expressed rejection of this right (0.0%).

Despite this tendency, neutral responses remained prevalent in both the control group and the experimental group, with 46.8% and 40.0% of respondents, respectively, selecting the neutral category. The proportion of neutral responses declined by only 6.8 percentage points in the experimental group. This suggests that, even if the observed difference is primarily attributed to the instructional treatment, the intervention strengthened support for the recognition of worship-related rights but was insufficient to shift the majority of students away from a neutral stance.

Across the four items measuring attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice, the levels of difference between the two groups ranged from highly significant to non-significant. The strongest and most statistically significant difference was observed in attitudes toward the obligation of Muslims to protect all houses of worship ($p = 0.005$). A near-significant difference emerged in the rejection of the notion that freedom of religion is a liberal concept rather than an Islamic teaching ($p = 0.066$). Two items exhibited differences that were further from statistical significance: rejection of the exclusivity of Islamic justice ($p =$

0.176) and agreement with the right to build and own houses of worship ($p = 0.149$).

Importantly, when responses across all four items were combined, the overall difference between the control and experimental groups reached a highly significant level ($p = 0.005$). This indicates that, taken together, the intervention had a statistically robust effect on students' attitudes toward the inclusivity of Islamic justice.

Nevertheless, from the perspective of Islamic moderation, item-level analysis remains more analytically informative than aggregate measures. Examining each item individually allows for the identification of issues that are more readily accepted by students, as well as those that remain more resistant to change. Through item-level analysis, it becomes possible to assess the relative magnitude of attitudinal shifts across different dimensions of inclusive Islamic justice and to distinguish between issues that are more responsive to intervention and those that require deeper or more sustained educational engagement.

3. Willingness to Coexist with Non-Muslims

The third indicator of Islamic *wasatiyyah* concerns students' willingness to coexist with non-Muslims. This indicator was measured using two items. The first item assessed respondents' willingness to live alongside Jewish neighbors, using the following question: "*Would you object to having Jewish neighbors?*" Table 7 presents a comparison of responses between the control and experimental groups.

Table 7. Willingness to Live as Neighbors with Jewish Individuals

Tingkat Keberatan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Sangat keberatan	4 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	-6.5% ↓
Keberatan	7 (11.3%)	0 (0.0%)	-11.3% ↓
Biasa saja	40 (64.5%)	16 (64.0%)	-0.5% ↓
Tidak keberatan	7 (11.3%)	7 (28.0%)	+16.7% ↑
Sama sekali tidak keberatan	4 (6.5%)	2 (8.0%)	+1.5% ↑
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)	0.014		

Interpretation: The difference observed in this item is statistically significant, with a p-value of 0.014. A clear contrast emerges between the two groups. A substantially higher proportion of students in the experimental group expressed willingness to live alongside Jewish neighbors—by selecting “not object” and “strongly not object”—amounting to 36.0% (28.0% + 8.0%). Notably, none of the respondents in the experimental group expressed objection or strong objection (0.0%). In contrast, only 17.0% of students in the control group indicated such willingness.

Nevertheless, the majority of respondents in both the control group (64.5%) and the experimental group (64.0%) selected the response category “neutral” (“ordinary” or “no particular feeling”). While this response does not indicate objection, it also does not reflect a strong or affirmative willingness to coexist. The predominance of neutral responses in both groups suggests that explicitly affirmative willingness to live alongside Jewish neighbors does not constitute the majority position among students.

Although the statistically significant difference between the two groups ($p = 0.014$) may reasonably be

interpreted, to some extent, as reflecting the influence of the instructional treatment, the magnitude of this influence appears limited. Specifically, the intervention was effective in increasing willingness among a substantial minority of students but was not sufficient to shift the neutral stance held by the majority toward a more explicitly affirmative position.

The indicator of willingness to coexist with non-Muslims was further examined through an item assessing respondents’ attitudes toward having Christian neighbors. Students were asked the following question: “*Would you object to having Christian neighbors?*” Responses from the two student groups are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Willingness to Live as Neighbors with Christian Individuals

Tabel 8. Kesiediaan Bertetangga dengan Kristen

ingkat Keberatan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
ngat keberatan	3 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	-4.8% ↓
beratan	4 (6.5%)	0 (0.0%)	-6.5% ↓
isa saja	45 (72.6%)	13 (52.0%)	-20.6% ↓
lak keberatan	7 (11.3%)	9 (36.0%)	+24.7% ↑
ma sekali tidak keberatan	3 (4.8%)	3 (12.0%)	+7.2% ↑
ymp. Sig. (p-value)	0.001		

Interpretation: A highly significant difference was observed between the two groups in their willingness to have Christian neighbors (Asymp. Sig. = 0.001). A marked contrast is evident in the response patterns. In the experimental group, 48.0% of students expressed willingness—by selecting “not object” or “strongly not object”—and none reported objection (0.0%). In contrast, only 16.0% of students in the control

group expressed willingness, while 12.0% indicated objection.

Despite these differences, the majority of respondents in both groups selected the neutral response category. Specifically, 72.6% of students in the control group and 52.0% in the experimental group indicated that they felt “neutral” or “ordinary” about having Christian neighbors. If the observed differences are assumed to be largely attributable to the instructional treatment, these figures suggest that the intervention reduced neutral responses by approximately 20 percentage points, decreased objection by about 11 percentage points, and increased expressed willingness by approximately 31 percentage points.

Nevertheless, while the treatment was effective in shifting attitudes in a positive direction, it did not succeed in transforming the majority neutral position into a majority stance of explicit willingness. This pattern indicates that, although short-term instructional interventions can meaningfully influence students’ behavioral dispositions toward interreligious coexistence, more sustained or repeated engagement may be required to move neutral attitudes toward consistently affirmative positions.

4. Willingness to Engage in Benevolent Behavior Toward Non-Muslims

The fourth indicator examined in this study concerns students’ willingness to engage in benevolent behavior toward non-Muslims. This indicator was measured through two items: (1) general willingness to act kindly toward non-Muslims, and (2) willingness to share food with Jewish neighbors.

The first item asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: “*Toward non-Muslims who are peaceful and respectful, Muslims are strongly encouraged to act kindly.*” Responses from the two student groups are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Willingness to Act Kindly Toward Non-Muslims

Tingkat Persetujuan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perbedaan
Sangat setuju	10 (16.1%)	10 (40.0%)	+23.9% ↑
Setuju	29 (46.8%)	8 (32.0%)	-14.8% ↓
Netral	19 (30.6%)	7 (28.0%)	-2.6% ↓
Tidak setuju	3 (4.8%)	0 (0.0%)	-4.8% ↓
Sangat tidak setuju	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	-1.6% ↓
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.059

Interpretation: The p-value of 0.059 indicates a difference between the two groups that approaches the conventional threshold of statistical significance (0.05) with respect to willingness to act kindly toward non-Muslims. Although the difference does not reach statistical significance, a notable descriptive pattern is evident. A substantially larger proportion of students in the experimental group expressed *strong agreement* compared to the control group (40.0% vs. 16.0%), and no respondent in the experimental group expressed disagreement (0.0%).

More importantly than the between-group difference is the overall distribution of responses within each group. A majority of both the control group (62.0%; 46.8% agree and 16.1% strongly agree) and the experimental group (72.0%; 32.0% agree and 40.0% strongly agree) expressed willingness to act kindly toward non-Muslims. The primary difference lies in the intensity of endorsement: the control group tended

to express this willingness through the category “agree,” whereas the experimental group more frequently selected “strongly agree.” In addition, a small minority in the control group (6.0%) expressed reluctance or objection (disagree or strongly disagree), while no such responses were recorded in the experimental group.

These patterns suggest that, prior to the intervention, the majority of students in both groups already held positive attitudes toward benevolent behavior toward non-Muslims. The intervention therefore appears to have functioned primarily as a reinforcement mechanism, strengthening the intensity and certainty of an already favorable disposition rather than producing a dramatic shift in overall attitudes.

The willingness to engage in benevolent behavior was further assessed through a second item concerning the sharing of food with Jewish neighbors. Students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“I would seek to emulate the Prophet’s Companions, such as ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Umar (may God be pleased with him), who shared food with his Jewish neighbors, if I were to live next to a Jewish family.”* Responses from the two groups are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Willingness to Share Food with Jewish Neighbors

Tingkat Persetujuan	Kontrol (n=62)	Eksperimen (n=25)	Perb
Sangat setuju	9 (14.5%)	2 (8.0%)	-6.5%
Setuju	22 (35.5%)	11 (44.0%)	+8.5%
Netral	28 (45.2%)	11 (44.0%)	-1.2%
Tidak setuju	2 (3.2%)	1 (4.0%)	+0.8%
Sangat tidak setuju	1 (1.6%)	0 (0.0%)	-1.6%
Asymp. Sig. (p-value)			0.92

Interpretation: No significant difference was found between the two groups in their willingness to share food with Jewish neighbors. The Asymp. Sig. value of 0.927 is extremely close to 1 rather than to 0, indicating a high degree of similarity in response patterns between the two groups. Only minor differences appear in specific response categories, such as a -6.5% difference in the “strongly agree” category and an 8.5% difference in the “agree” category, with even smaller differences in the neutral and strongly disagree categories.

Despite the absence of statistically significant differences, an important substantive finding emerges from the overall response distribution. A majority of both the control group (50.0%; 14.5% strongly agree and 35.5% agree) and the experimental group (52.0%; 8.0% strongly agree and 44.0% agree) expressed willingness to share food with Jewish neighbors. The second-largest response category in both groups was the neutral option, selected by 45.2% of the control group and 44.0% of the experimental group. While neutrality does not constitute an explicit affirmation of willingness, it also does not reflect strong rejection.

Consistent with this pattern, levels of outright rejection were very low in both groups. In the control group, only 4.8% of respondents indicated disagreement or strong disagreement. In the experimental group, only 4.0% expressed disagreement, and none selected “strongly disagree.” Taken together, these findings indicate that the baseline condition in both groups was already characterized by a generally positive or at least non-hostile disposition toward sharing food with Jewish neighbors. The large proportion

of neutral responses suggests limited behavioral confirmation rather than resistance.

Given the minimal differences between groups, combined with the absence of pre-test data to establish baseline equivalence, the effect of the intervention on this particular behavioral item cannot be clearly identified. In this case, the instructional treatment does not appear to have produced a discernible impact.

Taken together, the findings of this study indicate that the Qur'an-, Hadith-, and historical exemplar-based religious literacy intervention produced differentiated effects across cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral dimensions of students' wasatiyyah orientations.

At the cognitive level, the intervention demonstrated a clear capacity to reframe dominant understandings of key Islamic concepts. The most notable shift occurred in students' interpretation of *ummatan wasatha*, where the dominant meaning moved from a descriptively "middle" position toward a normatively "just" one. This shift is substantively important because it reflects a transition from a spatial or positional understanding of moderation to an ethical and justice-centered conception. At the same time, the intervention did not fundamentally alter students' understanding of the prerequisites for becoming *ummatan wasatha*, as the majority in both groups already recognized the centrality of justice and knowledge. Here, the intervention operated not as a corrective mechanism but as a reinforcing one, sharpening the salience of justice as a defining commitment.

In the domain of inclusive Islamic justice, the intervention's

primary effect was likewise strengthening rather than transformation. Across multiple items, students in the experimental group consistently exhibited more inclusive attitudes than those in the control group, although these differences were not always statistically significant. The most substantial effect within this indicator emerged in the item concerning the obligation of Muslims to protect all houses of worship. This finding suggests that when inclusive principles are anchored explicitly in Islamic textual sources and historical precedents, students are more likely to move beyond neutrality toward affirmative endorsement. By contrast, items related to abstract principles—such as rejecting exclusivist conceptions of justice or affirming religious freedom as an Islamic value—proved more resistant to change, with neutrality remaining the dominant response. This pattern indicates that concrete moral obligations grounded in historical exemplars may be more effective in shaping inclusive attitudes than abstract normative claims alone.

The strongest effects of the intervention were observed in the indicator of willingness to coexist with non-Muslims. In both items measuring willingness to live alongside Jewish and Christian neighbors, the differences between the experimental and control groups were statistically significant, with particularly pronounced effects in attitudes toward Christian neighbors. These findings suggest that the intervention was especially effective in reducing reluctance and increasing explicit willingness in contexts of everyday social proximity. Nevertheless, it is also noteworthy that neutrality remained the modal response in both

groups, indicating that while the intervention shifted attitudes at the margins, it did not fully transform the dominant disposition toward affirmative coexistence.

By contrast, the intervention had limited observable impact on the indicator of willingness to act benevolently toward non-Muslims. In one item—general willingness to do good to peaceful non-Muslims—the experimental group expressed stronger intensity of agreement, suggesting an affective strengthening of an already positive norm. In the other item—willingness to share food with Jewish neighbors—no meaningful difference emerged between the two groups. Importantly, this absence of effect should not be interpreted as a failure of moderation at baseline, as majorities in both groups already endorsed benevolent behavior. Rather, it indicates a ceiling effect, where the intervention had little room to produce additional change because the underlying attitude was already relatively well established.

Overall, these patterns suggest that the primary contribution of the religious literacy intervention lies not in producing wholesale attitudinal transformation, but in recalibrating students' moral reasoning, strengthening justice-oriented interpretations, and nudging ambivalent positions toward greater inclusivity. The findings underscore the importance of distinguishing between cognitive clarification, attitudinal reinforcement, and behavioral readiness when evaluating interventions aimed at promoting Islamic moderation. They also highlight the strategic value of grounding moderation-oriented education in

primary Islamic texts and historical exemplars, particularly when addressing socially sensitive issues of coexistence and religious pluralism.

5. Positioning the Findings within CRL and Islamic Pedagogy

Although this study does not adopt Critical Religious Literacy (CRL) as a strict analytical framework, its findings resonate strongly with several core insights of CRL, particularly regarding the relationship between religious knowledge, interpretive authority, and ethical orientation.

Central to CRL is the argument that religious literacy should move beyond factual knowledge toward critical engagement with how religious meanings are constructed, contested, and mobilized in social life. The present study aligns with this orientation by showing that students' attitudes toward *wasatiyyah* shift not simply through exposure to religious texts, but through guided reinterpretation of authoritative sources. The intervention did not introduce new doctrines; rather, it reconfigured the interpretive lens through which familiar Qur'anic and Hadith concepts were understood. This corresponds closely to CRL's emphasis on interpretation, power, and meaning-making rather than doctrinal instruction alone.

At the same time, this study extends CRL by demonstrating the importance of internal religious legitimacy in faith-based educational contexts. Whereas CRL literature often emphasizes external critical distance—particularly in pluralistic or secular classrooms—the findings here suggest that, in Islamic educational settings, critical engagement is most effective when it is anchored within the

tradition's own epistemic and moral resources. By grounding moderation in the Qur'an, Hadith, and historical exemplars of the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions, the intervention avoided the perception of moderation as an externally imposed or politically driven agenda. In this sense, the study contributes to an emerging strand of scholarship that advocates for *tradition-grounded criticality* rather than detraditionalized critique.

From the perspective of global Islamic pedagogy, this study speaks directly to long-standing debates on how Islamic education can cultivate ethical openness without diluting religious commitment. The findings challenge the assumption that moderation requires reducing theological conviction. Instead, they support pedagogical approaches that emphasize ethical depth, historical consciousness, and jurisprudential reasoning as pathways to inclusive attitudes. The shift observed in students' understanding of *ummatan wasatha*—from positional moderation to justice-oriented ethics—mirrors broader reformist trends in Islamic thought that reinterpret classical concepts in light of their moral objectives (*maqāṣid al-sharī'a*).

Moreover, the differentiated impact of the intervention across cognitive, attitudinal, and behavioral indicators contributes to Islamic pedagogy by underscoring that ethical formation is incremental and layered. Knowledge reinterpretation may occur relatively quickly, while behavioral dispositions—such as willingness to coexist or act benevolently toward religious others—require repeated reinforcement and experiential validation. This insight complements

pedagogical theories that stress *tarbiya* (ethical cultivation) over mere *ta'lim* (instruction).

Importantly, the strong effect of historical exemplars highlights a pedagogical dimension that remains under-theorized in both CRL and Islamic education literature. The use of prophetic and companion narratives functioned not only as moral illustration but as normative authorization, legitimizing inclusive justice as authentically Islamic. This suggests that historical exemplarity serves as a critical mediating tool between text and practice, particularly in contexts where ethical concepts are contested or politicized.

In sum, this study occupies an intermediary position between CRL and Islamic pedagogy. It shares CRL's concern with interpretation, power, and social consequences, while simultaneously affirming the necessity of internal theological coherence and historical continuity. By doing so, it contributes to a growing body of scholarship that seeks to articulate models of religious literacy capable of fostering ethical pluralism from within religious traditions rather than in opposition to them.

conclusion

This study demonstrates that a religious literacy-based instructional intervention can function to shift students' dominant understandings at the cognitive level and to reinforce wasatiyyah attitudes across multiple attitudinal and behavioral indicators. Overall, the findings indicate that the intervention was most effective in reshaping conceptual understanding and strengthening moderate orientations where students' baseline

attitudes were neutral or weakly articulated, while its impact was limited in domains where moderate attitudes were already firmly established.

At the level of knowledge, assuming that the control group's responses approximate the baseline condition of both groups, the findings suggest that the intervention successfully shifted the dominant interpretation of *ummatan wasatha* from "a middle community" to "a just community." This shift is substantively important, as it reflects a movement from a descriptively spatial understanding of moderation toward a normatively ethical conception centered on justice. Still within the cognitive domain, most students in both groups already demonstrated an appropriate understanding of the prerequisites for becoming *ummatan wasatha* prior to the intervention, as indicated by their dominant selection of "commitment to justice and sufficient knowledge." In this case, the primary function of the intervention was not corrective but reinforcing, strengthening students' emphasis on commitment to justice, as evidenced by a 16.6% increase in the experimental group.

With regard to the indicator of inclusive Islamic justice, the religious literacy intervention generally functioned to consolidate attitudes that were already moderately inclusive rather than to produce radical attitudinal change. Among the four items measuring this indicator, the strongest effect emerged in relation to agreement with the obligation of Muslims to protect all houses of worship. The highly significant difference ($p = 0.005$) reflects a clear contrast between the experimental group, where a majority expressed

agreement, and the control group, where neutrality predominated. This pattern suggests that the intervention was particularly effective in transforming latent or neutral positions into more explicit ethical commitments.

An even more pronounced effect of the intervention is observed in the two items measuring willingness to coexist with non-Muslims. Statistically significant differences were found for willingness to have Jewish neighbors ($p = 0.014$) and, more strikingly, for willingness to have Christian neighbors ($p = 0.001$). Interpreted cautiously, these findings indicate that the intervention reduced neutral responses, diminished reluctance, and substantially increased explicit willingness to engage in everyday forms of interreligious coexistence. Nevertheless, despite these gains, neutrality remained the modal response in both items, indicating the persistence of ambivalence and the limits of a single-session intervention in reshaping deeply embedded social attitudes.

By contrast, the intervention did not produce discernible effects in one of the two items measuring willingness to act benevolently toward non-Muslims, namely the willingness to share food with Jewish neighbors. The absence of significant difference ($p = 0.927$) does not indicate a lack of moderation at baseline. On the contrary, majorities in both groups already expressed willingness to engage in such behavior. In this domain, the intervention neither generated further attitudinal change nor displaced existing neutrality, suggesting a ceiling effect in which already positive dispositions leave little room for measurable improvement.

Beyond its empirical contributions, this study offers a

theoretical contribution to the fields of Critical Religious Literacy and global Islamic pedagogy. While CRL scholarship has primarily emphasized the critical examination of religion as a socio-political phenomenon, the findings of this study illustrate how religious literacy grounded in primary Islamic textual sources and historical exemplars can operate as an internal critical resource. By presenting religious moderation as an integral ethical commitment rooted in the Qur'an, Hadith, and prophetic practice, the intervention challenges misperceptions that frame moderation and religious freedom as externally imposed or ideologically foreign. In this sense, the study demonstrates that Islamic pedagogy informed by textual-historical literacy can align closely with the normative aims of CRL—contextual understanding, ethical reflexivity, and resistance to reductive interpretations—while remaining firmly embedded within the Islamic tradition itself. Consequently, wasatiyyah emerges not as a reactive or defensive concept, but as a proactive, justice-centered orientation with meaningful pedagogical and societal implications.

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