



Mainstreaming Islamic Moderations Values in Higher Education: Policy, Implementation, and Challenges

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Abstract

Islamic moderation is highly vital in any field of life especially in higher educational context. In the context of this study, the researcher employed phenomenological study by the aim to investigate policy made by policy makers in two public universities in Balikpapan and Samarinda regarding the mainstreaming Islamic moderation in their universities by using in-depth interview. Additionally, the implementation of Islamic moderation was also explored especially on the steps of planning, implementing, and evaluating the teaching and learning process of Islamic Religious Education course or what so called by Pendidikan Agama Islam (PAI) course by utilizing direct observation, field-notes, and added by document analysis. Finally, in-depth interview was conducted to highlight the challenges faced by the PAI lecturers in mainstreaming Islamic moderation in Islamic Religious course. As a result, Islamic moderation was reflected in the policy made by the policy makers at both public universities in terms of hidden curriculum. Moreover, Islamic moderation values was also revealed in every aspect of teaching and learning of Islamic Religious course including planning, implementing, and evaluating. Lastly, the Islamic Religious lecturers encountered eight barriers when implementing Islamic moderation during PAI course. Novelty and pedagogical implications were also emphasized in this research.

Keywords: challenges, Islamic moderation values, Islamic Religious course, policy

A. Introduction

Liberalism and radicalism are both threats for the ideology of religion and nation where its existence becomes a negative stigma in almost all countries in the world including Indonesia. These two groups are considered to be hazardous because their extreme characters where liberal people tend to practice religion freely whereas radical people hold extreme principles strictly (Ismail et al., 2012). In this case, the role of third party i.e. moderate (*wasath*) stream which can resolve this matter is necessary where the existence of moderation means combining two or more perspectives in practicing religion (Subandi et al., 2020). Moderate also means reluctance in seeing a phenomenon from only one side, therefore, moderate people will collect some perspectives and consider the most objective to the answer of the problems faced. Theoretically and empirically, moderation can play its role globally in politics, economics, government policies, partnership, and law (Gutkowski, 2015). Moderation will provide a decent value on keeping the balanced and suitable judgement for humans' daily behaviors since its present facilitate people with vary academic perspectives from different media both from East and West sides (Islam & Khatun, 2015).

In the context of moderation in practicing religion, mainstreaming the moderation in Islamic studies is important to encounter extremism problems e.g. liberalism and radicalism. Failure to understand and accept moderation concept is possible to make a Muslim categorized as an extremist (Rashid et al., 2020). The existence of moderate Muslims is considered to be non-radical and can match with government, any social and political groups, and anti-extremism (Scharbrodt, 2011). In this case, educational institutions are the right place in mainstreaming Islamic moderation. There are two categories of Islamic moderation practices, i.e. passive and active Islamic moderations. Passive religious moderation is done by an educational institution in order to fulfill individual needs as the foundation of perspectives and ethical values in everyday life. Unlike the passive moderation, active moderation is done by an educational institution to build an active social relations among individuals both in small and large scopes (Ministry of Religious Affairs, 2021).

Due to the fact that there are ten Universities in Indonesia are exposed to radicalism (Syatar, 2020), mainstreaming Islamic moderation is a global demand to counter from radicalism through religious studies represented in curriculum which consisted standard concept and actions in strengthening the Islamic moderation (Darmalaksana, 2019). Moreover, mainstreaming Islamic moderation needs to be developed not only in Islamic higher education, but also in public educational institutions. Additionally, in the context of this research site, East Kalimantan is one of strategic places in Indonesia with varied condition of population, social-economics, politics, etc. Hence, this condition might make this province becomes one of the most targeted areas for the growth of liberalism and radicalism by certain group. In this case, the background of public universities especially in East Kalimantan is heterogeneous in terms of students' belief, therefore mainstreaming Islamic moderation in this context is challenging. The way that Islamic moderation can be

implemented is through Islamic Religious Education course or what so called by *Pendidikan Agama Islam* (PAI) in the students' first year on studying at college.

Some previous studies have done various researches regarding Islamic moderation. Literature studies were done by some researchers e.g. critical review on literature studies regarding the characteristics of moderate Muslims (Rashid et al., 2020), political views on Islamic moderation (Achilov & Sen, 2017), Islamic moderation and radicalism in relation to plural societies (Davids, 2017) and global community (Safei, 2021), the role that Islamic moderation played in promoting democracy in Indonesia and Malaysia (Freedman, 2009), the importance of democratic moderate Islam identity (Nugraha, 2012). Some field researches also done concerning with how certain Islamist Party (Wuthrich & Ciftci, 2020) and Prosperous Justice Party is more moderate due to its respect to the government democratic style (Tomsa, 2012), .

Not limited to general and political views on researching the topic of Islamic moderation, some studies concerning with the Islamic moderations in educational context were existed e.g. investigation of how Islamic moderation was implemented in higher education especially through three ways i.e. policies, students' admission, and curriculum (Fuad & Susilo, 2019), exploration on the model of Islamic moderation in education (Kartikawati, 2019), the role of Islamic Boarding School (Thoriquttyas & Hanun, 2020) and Islamic Universities in representing the Islamic moderation through curriculum and religious activities (Nasir & Rijal, 2021; Siswanto, 2020; Syatar, 2020), and investigating college students' understanding towards Islamic moderation (Suharto, 2019). Other studies investigated around campus even though not directly have an impact on teaching and learning process was the research on whether two kinds of campus organization promote moderation or radicalism (Arifianto, 2018) and reconsidering *cadar* banning in higher education where it is probably the result of fear of radicalism happened around campus (Kurniawan, 2018).

Many of previous studies were concerning with Islamic moderations in general and political context. Additionally, some previous studies also represented Islamic moderation in educational context and touch the area of curriculum as the media of implementing the Islamic moderation in the context of Islamic Universities and Islamic Boarding Schools. Unlike the previous studies, this research is aimed to explore mainly regarding the Islamic moderations which specifically represent in Islamic Religious course in public universities in East Kalimantan. Specifically, the researcher formulated research questions as follows:

RQ 1: How are the policies of mainstreaming Islamic moderations made by policy makers?

RQ 2: How is the values of Islamic moderation reflected in Islamic Religious courses?

RQ 3: What are the challenges in mainstreaming Islamic moderations in Islamic Religious courses?

B. Literature Review

1. Mainstreaming Islamic Moderation in Higher Education

The term of moderate or *wasathiyah* in general means consistent (*istiqomah*), safety, strength, and unity (Futaqi, 2018; Qardhawi, 2011). Meanwhile, in terminologically, means

in the middle or balance (*al-tawazun*) between two directions which can be contradictory one to another (Shihab & Sahabuddin, 2007; Shallabi, 2020). Moderate people represent modernism, progressivism, and reformism in carrying out the functions of life (El Fadl et al., 2006). In this case, the moderate attitudes have been explained and commanded in Al-Qur'an, specifically in Al Baqarah: 143 and Ali Imran: 110, mentioning that moderate or *wasathan* people is the best people (*khaira ummah*) in upholding justice and *wasathiyah's* values as the identity and character of Islam (Bagir, 2017; Subandi et al., 2020).

Specifically, there are five characteristics of moderations concept used in Islamic context, i.e. building Islamic development with non-violence ideology, adopting modern life styles with various aspects of life including science, technology, democracy, human rights, etc., thinking rationally, understanding Islam with contextual approach, and using *ijtihad* as a method in determining certain rule or law in certain issue when there is no explicit statement written in Al-qur'an and Hadith (Hilmy, 2013). Islamic moderation demand balanced proportion in Islamic teaching and learning towards all dimensions of life as it is an effort to build values of being middle and straight (*tawassut*), proportional and just (*I'tidal*), acknowledging and respecting diversity (*tasamuh*), prioritizing deliberation (*syura*), prioritizing social welfare (*islah*), being a leadership for humanity (*qudwah*), and acknowledging state and nation as well as respecting citizenship as human being (*muwatonah*) (Sofanudin, 2018).

Islamic moderation is highly possible to be implied in PAI course education since it is a life-based educational concept and containing principles values in Islamic teaching (Aziz et al., 2011). The role of Islamic moderation implied through PAI course is to prevent spiritual crisis phenomena e.g. extremism in religion practices (Idi & Suharto, 2006). Additionally, it is also a media to build students' morals, attitudes, and characters to counter radicalism and liberalism as well as guiding students to be an open-minded, independent, tolerant, and humanist personality in social life (Indra et al., 2003).

2. Establishing the Values of Islamic Moderation in PAI Teaching and Learning

In establishing the values of Islamic moderation in the context of teaching and learning of PAI course, it is vital to highlight the basic principles of Islamic moderation or *wasathiyah*. It is mentioned that Islamic moderation prioritizes tolerance, humanity and integrity, away from extremism, and demands for balanced proportion between thought and behavior based on the concept of Rahmatan Lil 'Alamin in Islam (Subandi et al., 2020).

From above basic concept of how values of Islamic moderation should be relied on, character and personality building of students should be determined in teaching instruments i.e. lesson plans. Those two aspects then should be combined with the values of Islamic moderation i.e. obedience to God Almighty, having decent morals and personality, work ethics, nationalist, having social sensitivity, respect cultural diversity, other people's perspectives, religion, maintain tolerance, uphold the justice (Amar, 2018).

Moreover, Solikhah (2015) added that in order to implement Islamic moderation, attitudes of tolerance, responsible, promoting peace, anti-violence, being nationalist, balanced proportion between individual and social lives, upholding academic ethics i.e. honesty, academic freedom, and academic autonomy, should be achieved by students.

Above Islamic moderation values, in the context of this study, are important to be appeared in the lesson plan of PAI courses since providing a decent lesson plan is crucial before implementing and evaluating the teaching and learning process. Some aspects which a must to be existed in a lesson plan including (1) goals; the general aim achieved by students after the completion of the course, (2) objectives; the specific expectations that students need to achieved as the indicators of their ability at the end of the course, (3) activities; a set of learning activities provided by teachers in learning process, (4) media; an equipment to ease both teachers and students during the teaching and learning process, and (5) assessment; methods of evaluating students' capability after the course (Brown, 2001; Richards, 2001; Cameron, 2001).

C. Research Methodology

This research is qualitative research with phenomenological design where the researcher focused on investigating one's daily experiences (Creswell, 2014; Neuman, 2007). In this research, the researcher focused on the experiences of PAI lecturers in two different public universities in East Kalimantan i.e. Balikpapan and Samarinda. In these two universities, PAI course are taught in the first and second semesters. The main subject of this study was two PAI lecturers (coded as PL₁ and PL₂) from public university in Balikpapan, and two PAI lecturers (coded as PL₃, PL₄) from public university in Samarinda.

Generally, the researcher utilized direct observation, in-depth interview, and document analysis to gain the answer for the researcher questions proposed in this study (Flick, 2009; Hatch, 2002). Specifically, the steps of data collection in this research were done in five ways i.e. (1) the Rector and Vice Rector of public universities in Samarinda and Balikpapan were interviewed in order to gain the policies regarding mainstreaming Islamic moderations implemented in their universities, (2) direct observation was conducted via zoom to the online classes from both public universities in order to capture the Islamic moderation values reflected in PAI lectures, (3) documents analysis i.e. lesson plans were organized to investigate the values of Islamic moderation reflected from the teaching instruments before teaching PAI lectures (5) challenges on mainstreaming the Islamic moderations in PAI course were also gained by conducting in-depth interview to the lecturers. It is clearly described in the following figure:

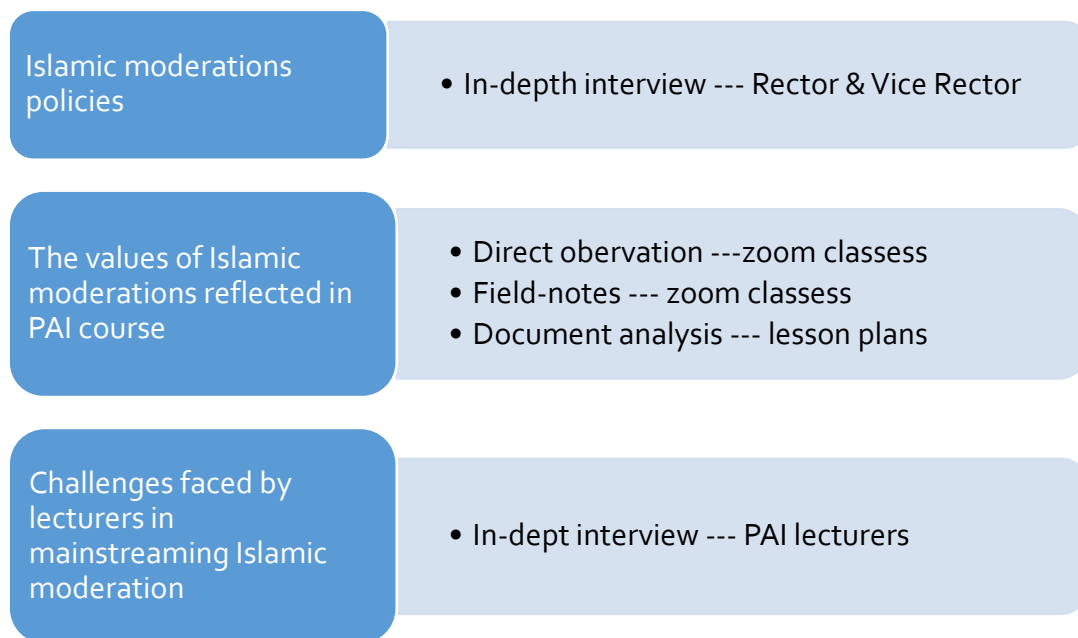


Figure 1. Steps of Data Collections

Furthermore, data analysis was conducted by relying on the flow model analysis which contains data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In this case, data gained from all instruments were selected, focused, classified, and summarized based on the researcher needs in gaining the answers from all research questions. After displaying the data which have been classified, the data found then triangulated further using theory triangulation (Hales et al., 2010) where the researcher crosschecked the data found to the existing theory regarding the values of Islamic moderations.

D. Findings and Discussion

RQ 1: Policies on Mainstreaming Islamic Moderation

Policies on mainstreaming Islamic moderation at public university in Samarinda and Balikpapan were gained by conducting interview to the Rector and Vice Rector of each university. Generally, both universities have implemented the values of Islamic moderation in their university, even though there is no specific written policies or grand design regarding the Islamic moderation implemented in teaching and learning process in each study program they have. This fact drives to the factor which is related to non-Islamic university background, so that there is no clearly-stated vision and mission which lead to the mainstreaming of Islamic moderation.

However, both universities have run spoken socialization in formal and informal ways in any occasion to remind the all of campus element on the importance of mainstreaming Islamic moderation through daily interaction and classroom learning. The universities researched in this study realized that mainstreaming Islamic moderation is more important

to be positioned as hidden curriculum in teaching and learning process in the classroom, especially in the context of PAI course. Therefore, the policies tend to be socialized in spoken methods to support the Islamic moderation to be implemented in daily activities and finally make a pattern of behavior. However, the awareness of both universities in making unstated policies is supported by Fuad & Susilo (2019) and Subandi et al. (2020) whose mentioning that mainstreaming Islamic moderation in educational context started by policies set by the management as a beginning step of countering radicalization.

Moreover, in both universities, the spirit of mainstreaming Islamic moderation is seen from one who can be assigned in strategic position in the university. In fact, although the majority of elements of campus are Muslim, two of vice rectors in the current period are non-Muslim. Other than that, in order to prevent the students from radicalism and liberalism, only internal organizations can use campus facilities and hold events in campus area. This result is in line with the research conducted by Fuad & Susilo (2019) where one of ways in preventing students from liberalism and radicalism is by prohibiting students from radical organization which might come from external campus, even though it is not always true that external organization of campus promote radicalism and liberalism (Arifianto, 2018).

RQ 2: Islamic Moderation Values Reflected in PAI Courses

1. Data Gained from Direct Observation & Field-notes

In this part, data related to Islamic moderation values reflected in PAI classrooms were gained from zoom classes at both public universities in Balikpapan and Samarinda. Firstly, in the case of PAI classes at university in Balikpapan and Samarinda, the values of Islamic moderations appeared in the matter of learning activities and assignment given. In terms of learning activities provided by the lecturers, group discussion was the most preferable activity facilitated by the PAI lecturers along six meetings. It also happened in PAI classes in the context of public university in Samarinda where group discussion was mostly used by the lecturers to make students more active and to promote students' critical thinking. This kind of activity is an effort in developing the values of Islamic moderation because its presence is potential to enhance the students' ability in terms of rational and contextual thinking (Sumbulah et al., 2020).

Media used by PAI lecturers at both public universities when implementing PAI course was also reflected the values of Islamic moderation. It is indicated by the power point slides displayed by the lecturers, the content of the materials whether using pictures or videos, represented the values of respectful among human being and become a tolerant personality. The lecturers emphasize how Islam highly promote living in peace, even though in critical situation such as war, public society with different religion should be protected and public facilities such as praying house, schools, and hospital may not be destroyed.

Moreover, in the context of assignment given to the students, both lecturers in public university in Balikpapan or Samarinda demand the Islamic moderation towards the students' answer towards the lecturers' questions. Furthermore, in Balikpapan case, the

PAI lecturers asked the students to accomplish a paper containing related issues of liberalism, radicalism, and intolerance in order to drive the students to the importance of moderation in Islam. Meanwhile, in Samarinda case, paper asked by the PAI lecturers to be made by the students was related to how to maximize the function of Mosque for society during Covid-19 outbreak not only for worship to Allah, but also to held social activities for people with different religions. In this case, the values of Islamic moderation that the lecturers would like to grow was the essence of respectful, humanity, tolerance, and anti-violence.

2. Data Obtained from Document Analysis

Data found in this result section is from planning or beginning step where the lesson plans were observed as the preparation of lecturers before teaching in PAI classes. Below tables indicate how Islamic moderation values reflected at both public universities in Balikpapan and Samarinda.

Table 1. Islamic Moderation Reflected in Lesson Plan at Public University in Balikpapan

Aspects	Statements	Values
Goals	To understand the obligations as a Muslim in terms of <i>fardhu 'ain</i> and <i>fardhu kifayah</i> , have noble characters, and help each other	Anti-violence, social sensitivity
	To be aware towards Islamic teaching and build respectful personality towards other religions	Obedience to Good Almighty, anti-violence, social sensitivity
	To develop appreciation towards others' religion belief	Obedience to Good Almighty, anti-violence, social sensitivity, tolerance
	To motivate students to take part in social activities among different people with different religions	Anti-violence, social sensitivity, humanity
	To dig students' strengths to control their life and become an independent personality	Decent personality, academic autonomy
Objectives	Students are able to uphold the values of humanity and being responsible in practicing religions, morals, and ethics	Humanity and responsibility
	Students are able to respect diversity of cultures, perspectives, and religions	Respectful, tolerance
	Students are able to analyse Islamic teaching in the context of modernization in Indonesia	Obedience to Good Almighty, nationalist

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	Students are able to be a responsive and open-minded personalities towards the dynamic of modern life by actualizing the principles of Islamic teaching	Obedience to Good Almighty, open-minded
	Students are able to understand how Islam builds unity in diversity	Nationalist
	Students are able to understand how Islam overcome challenges of modernization	Obedience to God Almighty
Activities	Group discussion	Open-minded, social sensitivity, respectful, anti-violence, tolerance, integrity, humanity
Media	Power point slides which include pictures and charts concerning Tauhid, Relation between humans and God, and humans to humans and environment	Obedience to God Almighty, respectful, anti-violence
Assessment	Describe the meaning of openness in the context of modernization era based on Islamic context!	Open-minded
	Explain the role of Islamic teaching in building unity!	Obedience to God Almighty, nationalist
	Explain the Qur'anic paradigm in countering challenges of modernization!	Obedience to God Almighty
	Report your participation held by Islamic internal organization of campus!	Obedience to God Almighty, responsible

Table 1. Islamic Moderation Reflected in Lesson Plan at Public University in Samarinda

Aspects	Statements	Values
Goals	To understand noble characters based on Al-Qur'an and Hadith	Obedience to God Almighty, decent personality
	To comprehend how to deal with social interaction to different people with any background	Humanity, social sensitivity, respectful, tolerance
Objectives	Students are able to practice noble characters in daily life based on Al-Qur'ana nd Hadith guidance	Obedience to God Almighty, decent personality

	Students are able to promote peace towards social interaction to different group of people	Humanity, social sensitivity, respectful, tolerance
Activities	Group discussion	Open-minded, social sensitivity, respectful, anti-violence, tolerance, integrity, humanity
Media	Power point slides consist of videos and charts showing the importance and examples of social interactions	Respectful, anti-violence
Assessment	Mention the verses from Al-Qur'an showing about maintaining social interaction among humans! Report your participation in joining programs held by Islamic internal organization of campus!	Obedience to God Almighty, social sensitivity Obedience to God Almighty, responsible

RQ 3: Challenges Faced by PAI Lecturers in Mainstreaming Islamic Moderation

In mainstreaming Islamic moderation values in PAI classes, all of four PAI lecturers whether in public university in Balikpapan (PL1 & PL2) or in Samarinda (PL3 & PL4) agreed to have some challenges. First, it is quite challenging for PAI lecturers to control students' behavior during the Zoom classes as well as their understanding towards materials (PL 1, PL2, PL3, PL4). Since the PAI classes were one hundred percent implemented in online platform, some students had their camera off. Therefore, those students often lost the ideas delivered by the lecturers (PL 1, PL2, PL3, PL4). This fact was proven by the researcher where it was clearly seen during the Zoom classes. Additionally, the low understanding level of the students were also triggered by their different background of education before entering the university. Most of the students were from public schools with minimum allocation of time related to religious subject taught at school. Hence, the lecturers need to formulate easier form of language to be delivered to the students (PL3, PL4).

Additionally, it is difficult for the PAI lecturers in ensuring whether the general goals and specific objectives of the course were successfully understood, achieved, and practiced by the students in real life situation. Again, it is based on the fact that the flatform of online classes trigger this barrier (PL1, PL3, PL4). Since most of the students were less active in participating to the Zoom classes, the only method that the lecturers do to make sure their understanding towards the materials was from the result of their assignments (PL1, PL3, PL4).

Furthermore, PAI lecturers from both universities required the students to join programs held by internal Islamic organization at campus as one of points to be assessed in PAI course. Challenges faced PAI lecturers in mainstreaming Islamic moderation through

this method happened related to academic ethics i.e. when students were dishonest about their attendance in joining the programs (PL₁, PL₂). Additionally, students' discipline and motivation were also challenges to be solved both for the PAI lecturers and the committee of internal Islamic organization of campus (PL₁, PL₃, PL₄). The existence of internal Islamic organization is potential to support the mainstreaming and internalize Islamic moderation in higher education (Purwanto et al., 2019). However, again, the lecturers cannot control any possible situation where the students probably join to a certain external organization out of campus. This possibility is somehow makes the PAI lecturers afraid because there might be any external organization which committed to radicalism or liberalism (PL₂, PL₃).

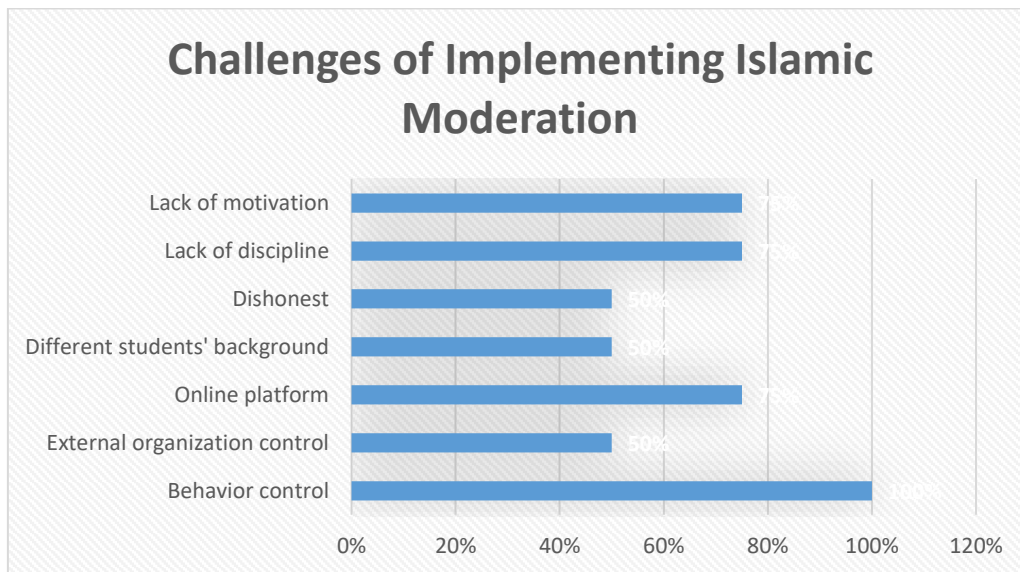


Figure 2. Summary of Challenges Faced by PAI Lecturers in Mainstreaming Islamic Moderation

The findings of RQ 1 and RQ 2 indicated that both public universities in Balikpapan and Samarinda have Islamic moderation reflected in the policy implemented at the campus in the general as well as on the teaching and learning process of PAI course specifically from planning, implementation, evaluation of the course. However, even though both public universities indicated a decent atmosphere on reflecting Islamic moderation, public university in Samarinda seems needs to improve the quantity of Islamic moderation aspects mentioned on the lesson plans in all elements including general goals, specific objectives or indicators, activities, media, and assignment. The essence of upholding the diversity in many context such as culture and religion are important to be grown in order to fostering the harmony of the nation including the context of higher educational institutions (Kurniawan, 2018).

The result of this research drive to novelty and pedagogical implications of the research. In terms of novelty of the research, the researcher found the result of this study

have more exploration regarding the challenges that the lecturers faced in mainstreaming the Islamic moderation which do not exist on the previous studies findings. Additionally, pedagogical implications of the research addressed to higher educational institutions to have clear statement on strengthening the Islamic moderation on the document of vision and mission so that every faculty and study program can easily implement the essence of Islamic moderation to the teaching documents such as curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plans As what Nasir & Rijal (2021) and Fuad & Susilo (2019) found on their research that Islamic moderation can be more easily mainstreamed through the development of curriculum. This strategy will give direct impact to the PAI lecturers so that they can relied on the curriculum and syllabus in accomplishing lesson plans in PAI course. Furthermore, the RQ 3 which is concerning with challenges faced by PAI lecturers at both public universities need to be highlighted and provided by solutions from policy makers at each university. Lastly, further researchers are suggested to have deeper analysis related to specific techniques in implementing Islamic moderation in teaching and learning which is not specifically to PAI course, but to all courses offered to students at a certain university.

E. Conclusion

From research findings displayed above, the researcher comes to three major components of results including (1) both public universities in Balikpapan and Samarinda do not have clear statement related to mainstreaming Islamic moderation in vision and mission and curriculum, therefore the policy makers tend to make the essence of Islamic moderation in terms of hidden curriculum, (2) Islamic moderation was reflected in the teaching and learning process, whether in planning including lesson plan, implementation on the Zoom classes, as well as on the evaluation, (3) the PAI lecturers encountered eight points as the challenges on mainstreaming Islamic moderation in PAI course. Therefore, curriculum development and proposed solutions regarding the challenges faced by the PAI lecturers need to be solved.

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