

Negotiating Conservative Traditions and Religious Moderation: A Sociological Study of the Construction of Social Harmony in Pesantren in Madura

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Abstract: *The purpose of this research is to analyze the role of pesantren in internalizing the values of religious moderation through the system applied in education organized with the pesantren's tradition. This research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation studies involving kiai, ustadz, and students in the pesantren environment. Data analysis was carried out using thematic analysis techniques through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusions drawn, and strengthened by triangulation of sources and techniques to ensure the validity of findings. The results of the study show that the internalization of religious moderation in Pesantren occurs holistically through the integration of formal curriculum, curriculum (formal and hidden curriculum), and Pesantren traditions. The example of kiai and ustadz as well as the collective culture of pesantren has proven to be a key factor in shaping the religious attitude of students that is moderate, inclusive, and oriented towards social harmony. This study concludes that pesantren function as a foundation of moderate Islamic education that is effective in maintaining social cohesion in a multicultural society. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of strengthening the role of Pesantren in the development of Islamic education policies and practices oriented towards religious moderation and social peace.*

Keywords: *Pesantren; Religious Moderation; Community Harmony*

Abstrak: *Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis peran pesantren dalam menginternalisasi nilai-nilai moderasi beragama melalui sistem yang diterapkan dalam pendidikan yang diselenggarakan dengan tradisi pesantren. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain deskriptif-analitis. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan studi dokumentasi yang melibatkan kiai, ustadz, dan siswa di lingkungan pesantren. Analisis data dilakukan dengan menggunakan teknik analisis tematik melalui tahapan reduksi data, penyajian data, dan kesimpulan yang ditarik, serta diperkuat dengan triangulasi sumber dan teknik untuk memastikan validitas temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa internalisasi moderasi beragama di pondok pesantren terjadi secara holistik melalui integrasi kurikulum formal, kurikulum (kurikulum formal dan tersembunyi), dan tradisi pondok pesantren. Contoh kiai dan ustadz serta budaya kolektif pesantren terbukti menjadi faktor kunci dalam membentuk sikap religius santri*

yang moderat, inklusif, dan berorientasi pada kerukunan sosial. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pesantren berfungsi sebagai landasan pendidikan Islam moderat yang efektif dalam menjaga kohesi sosial di tengah masyarakat multikultural. Implikasi dari penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya penguatan peran pondok pesantren dalam pengembangan kebijakan dan praktik pendidikan Islam yang berorientasi pada moderasi beragama dan perdamaian sosial.

Kata kunci: *Pondok Pesantren; Moderasi Beragama; Kerukunan Masyarakat*

Introduction

In recent developments, the dynamics of religious life in Indonesia are facing increasingly serious and complex challenges. Globalization and the development of digital technology, as well as the increasing flow of information, have brought about significant changes in the ability to understand and express religious teachings.(Supandi, 2025) On the one hand, these changes open up space for dialogue and exchange of ideas, and reinforce universal human values. However, on the other hand, globalization also gives rise to the phenomenon of polarization of religious identity, the strengthening of exclusivism, and the development of religious understanding that tends to be not harmonious in society.(Abror, 2020)

In this context, Pesantren have a strategic position as the main instrument in shaping a moderate, inclusive, and socially harmonious religious perspective.(Ramadani et al., 2025) One of the Islamic educational institutions that has strong roots in Indonesia's socio-religious history is the Pesantren.(Bakri et al., 2020) Pesantren do not only function as an institution for the transmission of Islamic knowledge(Supandi, 2017) but also as a center for character-building, social ethics, and a distinctive religious culture.

In the tradition of Pesantren, the main thing is moral education, the formation of Islamic character (*Ta'dzim*, balance between knowledge and faith, openness) makes pesantren an important space in the formation of Islamic values.(Supandi et al., 2024) Therefore, the study of Pesantren and their work in facing current challenges is becoming increasingly relevant to be researched and studied cooperatively.

Historically, pesantren have been known as centers of distinctive and special Islamic education, but in the order of social reality, not all pesantren have the same ability to answer the challenges of the times.(Muafi et al., 2023) Some Pesantren are still dealing with environmental adaptation issues such as curriculum, the application of relevant learning methods, and strategies to internalize the values of religious moderation in students.

Consequently, a research question emerged that became the primary focus of this study: how do Islamic boarding schools internalize the values of religious moderation through their educational systems and integrate them with boarding school traditions, and to what extent does this process contribute to the development of moderate, inclusive, and tolerant religious attitudes among students.

Academically, pesantren and religious moderation have actually been carried out by many experts and researchers before.(Albana, 2023) Some studies emphasize the role of pesantren as an ideological fortress against the growth and development of radicalism, while other studies focus more on aspects of the curriculum, kiai leadership, or scientific traditions of pesantren students.(Anzaikhan et al., 2023) However, most of the research still tends to be descriptive-normative, positioning

pesantren as an ideal institution without delving deeply into the internal mechanisms of how the value of religious moderation is changed and internalized in Islamic educational practices in students' daily lives.

In addition, there is a tendency for research to separate the normative dimension (values, teachings, and concepts of moderation) from the pragmatic dimension (educational practices, social interaction, and pesantren culture) so that it can produce pesantren relationships and the formation of student moderate attitudes has not been fully explained systematically and empirically. (Aziz & Najmudin, 2020) Therefore, this gap requires more comprehensive and integrative research, which not only sees pesantren as a symbol of moderation, but also as a social laboratory of moderate Islamic education that bridges the logical science and tradition of pesantren in shaping community harmony.

Therefore, this study offers an approach that places pesantren as a praxis space for Islamic education in order to support the succession of religious moderation which will ultimately give birth to community harmony and peace. (Bando, 2025) The aim is to analyze in depth how the values of religious moderation are internalized through a formal curriculum, *Hidden Curriculum*, (Wahidah, 2024) The tradition of Pesantren, as well as examples of kiai and asatidz in managing pesantren as traditional educational institutions, but as a dynamic and adaptive education system to contemporary socio-religious challenges. (Ramadani et al., 2025) In addition, academically, this research is driven by the need to enrich the treasures of Islamic education studies and Pesantren, because with a more analytical and contextual approach, pesantren are not only positioned as objects of study, but also as sources of knowledge and Islamic education practices that are relevant to the challenges and developments of technology and the times.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of pesantren in internalizing the values of religious moderation through the education system and pesantren traditions. Meanwhile, the target is pesantren as an ideal Islamic educational institution, students as Islamic Education courses, (Habib, 2022) and Pesantren education actors who are directly involved in the learning process and the formation of Islamic character.

Although a number of studies have discussed pesantren as agents of religious moderation as well as as institutions that maintain conservative religious traditions, the existing literature tends to position the two dichotomically—between conservatism and moderation—without sociologically elaborating on how the internal negotiation process takes place in the daily practice of pesantren. Research on religious moderation focuses more on state policy or theological normative narratives, while pesantren studies often stop at cultural and genealogical descriptions of scientific traditions. There has not been much research that has analyzed in depth how the actors of pesantren (kiai, santri, curriculum, and social structure) construct social harmony through the mechanism of adaptation, resistance, and reinterpretation of traditions in the context of Madura's pluralistic society. This gap is what makes this study important, namely to sociologically map the dynamics of negotiation between conservative traditions and religious moderation as a dialectical process that forms the construction of social harmony in the pesantren environment.

This research contributes significantly to enriching the study of Islam and Pesantren by offering a more comprehensive understanding of Pesantren as the basis for religious moderation education. (Mahamid, 2023) As well as contributing to the development of Islamic education theory that emphasizes the integration of values,

traditions, and social practices, which then becomes a reference for pesantren managers and policymakers in designing more effective educational strategies in instilling religious moderation in building a harmonious, tolerant, and civilized society.

Research Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach (Sugiono et al., 2020) With a descriptive-analytical design, which aims to deeply understand the role of pesantren in internalizing the values of religious moderation through the educational system and pesantren traditions. This approach was chosen because this research focuses on exploring the meanings, values, and social-religious practices that live in the context of pesantren that cannot be explained quantitatively completely. This descriptive-analytical design reveals the phenomenon and analyzes the patterns, processes, and mechanisms of internalizing the value of religious moderation that occur in the pesantren environment, thereby capturing the reality of the pesantren holistically.

The research subjects in this study are key actors in the pesantren education system (kiai, asatidz, santri). The object of the research is the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation in pesantren education, which includes (students' knowledge and practice about religious moderation), curriculum, pesantren traditions, and socio-religious practices in daily life.

The population used as respondents in this study amounted to 250 respondents from the student element represented by 50 students in each Pesantren, then corrected through the extraction of qualitative data from the elements of the pesantren that were directly involved in the process of education and student development.

Table 1. About Location and Research Informant

<i>No</i>	<i>Research Location</i>	<i>They report</i>
1	Ash Shiddiqi Pesantren	Kiai, Ustad and students
2	Al-Faqih Pesantren	Kiai, Ustad and students
3	Miftahul Ulum Bettet Pesantren	Kiai, Ustad and students
4	Al-Amin Pesantren	Kiai, Ustad and students
5	Miftahul Faizin Pesantren	Kiai, Ustad and students

This study uses purposive sampling techniques with the following criteria: a) Kiai who has authority in making policies, b) Ustadz or teachers who are actively involved in the learning process. c) Students (respondents) must have attended pesantren education for at least two years, so that they have sufficient experience in the pesantren tradition. These criteria are chosen to ensure that the data obtained is relevant and credible. The main instruments in this study are the results of interviews, observations and documentation analysis.

This study uses a descriptive qualitative design with a purposive sampling strategy to capture variations in the positions of key actors in the negotiation of conservative traditions and religious moderation in Madura Pesantren. The informants consist of (a) ulama/kiai/ustadz (policy makers and determinants of scientific authorities), (b) students/students (actors who internalize values and daily practices), and (c)

members of the surrounding community (recipients of social impacts and relational partners of the pesantren). Inclusion criteria include: (1) direct involvement of at least 2 years in pesantren activities (for students), (2) structural or functional roles in coaching/curriculum (for kiai/ustadz), and (3) regular interaction with pesantren through socio-religious activities (for the community). Recruitment is carried out in stages until it reaches information-rich cases and data saturation; The diversity of informants is maintained through variations in age, roles, and intensity of involvement.

The data collection technique in this study goes through several stages such as: 1) in-depth interviews with kiai and ustadz to gain an understanding of the vision of pesantren education, the strategy of internalizing religious moderation, and the challenges faced. 2) participatory observation to directly observe the learning process, students' social interaction, and religious practices in the pesantren environment. 3) Documentation review is carried out to examine official and non-official documents that reflect the values and orientation of pesantren education.

Table 2. About Data Collection Techniques

<i>No Pesantren Pillar</i>		<i>Data Collection</i>	<i>Technical</i>
		<i>Techniques</i>	
1	Pesantren as an Institution of Religious Moderation is reviewed from formal education (Curriculum)	Demonstrations, Documentation	Observations,
2	Pesantren as a locus of Culture of Internalization of the Value of Religious Moderation	Demonstrations, Documentation	Observations,
3	Pesantren and Kiai Asatidz in the Social Sphere and Internalization of Religious Moderation	Demonstrations, Documentation	Observations,
4	Supporters and Inhibitions of Internalization of Religious Moderation	Demonstrations, Documentation	Observations,

Data were collected through limited participatory observation, semi-structured interviews, and document studies (pesantren rules, study materials, curriculum, sermons/announcements, and social activity archives). The main focus of observation was: (1) the teaching practice of the book and the pattern of religious authority, (2) the social interaction of the students and the community (studies, community service, social services), (3) the forms of expression of conservatism (e.g. reading selection, authoritative reference) and moderation space (e.g. peaceful language, tolerance of social practices), and (4) mechanisms of conflict resolution and harmony production (deliberation, tabayyun, kiai reference). The interview guide is organized in clusters: (a) the meaning of "tradition" and "moderation"; (b) negotiation experience (concrete situation: differences in practice, intergroup relations, social issues); (c) institutional strategy (curriculum, studies, rules); (d) social impact (changes in relationships, community acceptance); (e) Examples of harmonic/tension cases and how to solve them. Each interview is recorded (with permission), transcribed, and coded.

Data analysis is carried out gradually and continuously since the data collection process takes place. The analysis technique is to present thematic data through the stages of data presentation, data confirmation and conclusions drawn. To increase the validity of the findings, this study applied triangulation techniques, both source triangulation, triangulation of techniques or methods, and time triangulation, so that the results of the analysis have a higher level of confidence.

The analysis follows the flow of Miles & Huberman operationally: (a) data condensation is carried out by transcription, data cleaning, and open coding on units of meaning (sentences/fragments) using initial codes such as kiai authority, ta'dzim, traditional boundaries, social accommodation, tabayyun, deliberation, tolerance praxis, communal harmony, resistance, and adaptation. (b) Data display is carried out through a matrix of actors×situation (kiai/ustadz–santri–community × events/issues) and process maps (from "tensions" → "negotiations" → "resolutions" → "normalization of harmony"). (c) Conclusion drawing/verification is carried out by grouping the code into themes (axial coding) such as "moderation as a strategy to maintain traditional authority", "social harmony through the mechanism of deliberation-tabayyun", and "selective adaptation to plurality". Verification is carried out through triangulation of sources (kiai–students–community), triangulation of methods (interviews–observations–documents), member checking on the summary of key findings, and audit of the analysis footprint (code notes, matrices, and analytical memos) to ensure the credibility and traceability of the process from raw data to themes.

For the convenience of readers, the researcher explains the following in the following research diagram:

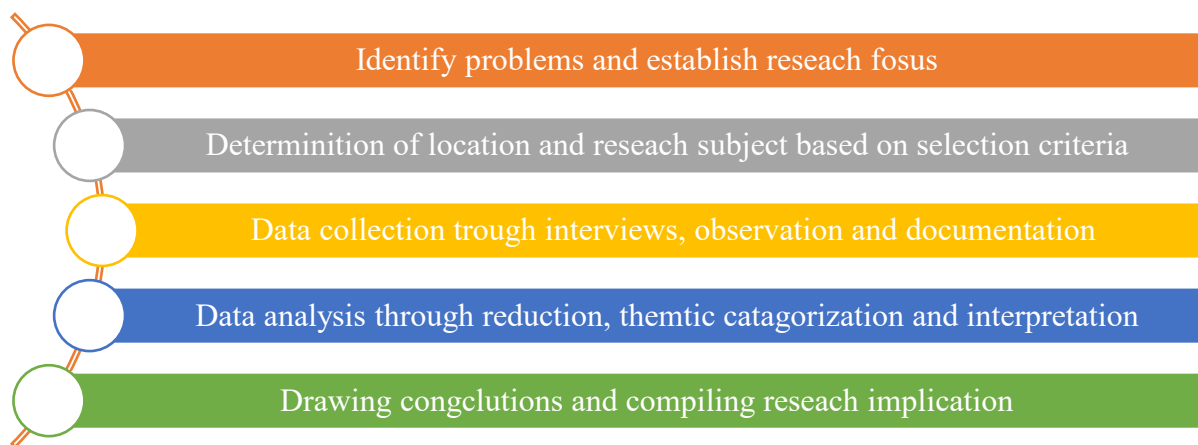


Figure 1. About Research Flowchart

This diagram shows the linear and cyclic relationship between data collection and data analysis, making it easier for readers to understand research procedures thoroughly.

Results and Discussion

Results

1. Pesantren as the right institution in building harmony is reviewed from the formal curriculum

The results of the study show that pesantren as an Islamic educational institution has a distinctive socio-religious character and is relatively stable in building harmony in the community. Pesantren not only functions as an institution that charges the transmission of Islamic knowledge, but also as a space for the formation of social and moral ethos of students in the pesantren environment which is characterized by a strong hierarchical relationship between kiai, ustadz, and students as well as stakeholders and alumni, which is framed in the values of ta'dzim, obedience, and example towards kiai as religious figures. Findings in the

field show that the social structure of pesantren functions as a strategic medium in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation in the midst of a multicultural society, the values in question are balance (*tawassuth*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), justice (*i'tidal*), and openness to differences that are not formally taught as abstract value concepts, and are present in daily life practices that are repetitive and systematic continuity.

In the context of Madura Pesantren, the internalization of religious moderation is inseparable from the selection and teaching structure of the yellow book which epistemologically represents the tradition of Ahlussunnah wal Jama'ah. Classical texts are chosen not solely because of their traditional authority, but because of their argumentative content that allows for moderate and contextual reading.

Some of the books that are systematically taught include:

Table 3. Curriculum Pillar: Classical Texts and the Construction of Religious Moderation in Pesantren

No	Classic Text	Level	Specific Chapture/ theme	Moderation Values	Pedagogical Strategy	Assesment Method	Measurable Social Outcome	Theritical Linkage
1	Fath al-Qarib al-Mujib	Wustha-Ulya	Ikhtilaf al-Ulama; Fiqh Muamalah	Tasamuh; I'tidal	Comparative fiqh discussion; bahtsul masail	Oral defense; case-based reasoning	Acceptance of intra-madhab diversity	Sociology of pluralism; legal pluralism theory
2	Bidayat al-Mujtahid	Ulya	Comparative jurisprudence	Epistemic tolerance	Analytical debate; cross-school comparison	Structured debate rubric	Reduction of exclusivist reasoning	Epistemic humility (religious studies)
3	Tafsir al-Jalalayn	All levels	Q49:13; Q2:256; Q5:8	Tawassuth; 'Adl	Thematic tafsir + contextual reflection	Reflective essay; group discussion	Inclusive social attitude	Peace education framework
4	Ihya' 'Ulum al-Din	Wustha-Ulya	Adab al-Suhbah; Riyadhah al-Nafs	Tawazun; Islah	Ethical habituation; moral mentoring	Behavioral observation	Conflict mediation skills	Moral education theory
5	al-Muwafaqat	Ulya	Maqasid al-Shari'ah	Maslahah-oriented moderation	Analytical reading; policy simulation	Policy brief assignment	Social sensitivity & justice orientation	Social cohesion theory
6	Ta'lim al-Muta'allim	Ula-Wustha	Ethics of learning & disagreement	Syura; dialogic ethos	Guided discussion norms	Participation rubric	Dialogic culture in classroom	Deliberative education theory

The pesantren curriculum shows that religious moderation is not introduced as an external value, but rather is built through the selection of classical texts that epistemologically contain plurality legitimacy and legal balance. Internalization occurs through structured pedagogical transmission, ethical habituation, and dialogical learning practices. The measurable outcomes include tolerance toward intra-Islamic diversity, conflict mediation capacity, and community-oriented religiosity. Thus, pesantren operates as a mediating institution that negotiates conservatism and moderation through curriculum architecture rather than ideological rupture.



Figure 2. About Internalizing moderation in pesantren

The image represents a model of the flow of internalization of the value of moderation in pesantren that moves systematically from textual authority to social cohesion. The process begins with Textual Authority (Classical Texts) as a source of normative legitimacy, then is interpreted through the Interpretive Frame by the kiai who act as an epistemological mediator between the text and the context. The values that have been contextualized are transmitted through Pedagogical Transmission, namely the curriculum and the formation of pesantren habitus. The next stage is Santri Internalization, which includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformations. Internalized values are then reproduced in the public sphere through Social Reproduction, namely alumni involvement and community social interaction. This flow leads to the formation of Social Cohesion and Religious Moderation, which shows that social harmony is not an instant result, but a product of a sustainable pedagogical and institutional process.

2. Pesantren as a cultural locus of Pesantren in order to internalize the Value of Religious Moderation in Madura

In the pillar of pesantren culture (informal realm), the value of *tawassuth* (moderation) is not taught primarily through normative lectures, but is formed through daily habitus that reflects the balance between authority and dialogue, tradition and adaptation, as well as firmness and flexibility. The interaction of the students shows a hierarchical but not authoritarian pattern of relations: the students are taught *ta'zīm* (respect), but are still given space to ask questions and discuss in recitation forums and *bahtsul masā'il*. In practice, the kiai often exemplify the attitude of not being easy to disbelieve, avoiding provocative remarks against other groups, and emphasizing the legitimacy of the scholars' *ikhtilaf* as part of the treasures of Islam. This habitus is strengthened through deliberation in internal problem solving, emotional control in differences of opinion, and habituation of polite language. Thus, *tawassuth* is internalized as a disproportionate attitude that is not extreme in maintaining traditions, but also not reactive to social changes that then form the character of students as agents of social harmony in society.

The process of internalizing the value of religious moderation in Pesantren takes place through three main paths, including through the implementation and insertion of religious moderation values through formal curriculum, *hidden curriculum*, and pesantren traditions. The purpose of the formal curriculum is for the value of religious moderation to be integrated into religious subjects, especially in the study of fiqh, belief, and interpretation. The source of the classical books taught in pesantren implicitly contains the principle of balance, excessive prohibition in religion, and respect for differences of opinion (*ikhhtilaf*). Meanwhile, through a hidden curriculum, the value of religious moderation is instilled through the pattern of social interaction, collective discipline, and the daily culture of Pesantren.

The results of observation activities show that the practice of deliberation, mutual cooperation, and peaceful conflict resolution is an effective mechanism in shaping the moderate attitude of students in Pesantren, this can be seen in *bahstul masail activities* that are usually carried out daily in Pesantren, accepting and accommodating attitudes towards the opinions of others and avoiding fanaticism towards groups, groups and so on.

The tradition of Pesantren, such as routine recitation and joint religious activities, students are trained to think openly, dialogue, and not easily blame other parties. This tradition is a space for the actualization of the value of religious moderation in the form of social praxis.

3. Pesantren include Kiai and asatidz as cultural pillars in the Internalization of Religious Moderation

In the external (social) pillar, pesantren function as a moral mediator as well as an agent of social stabilization in the dynamics of the surrounding community. The involvement of Pesantren in conflicts is usually not confrontational, but through cultural mechanisms such as *tabayyun* (clarification), deliberation, and mediation based on kiai authority. When tensions arise, such as differences in religious practices, local political issues, or friction between kiai residents, it is often the main reference to reduce escalation through religious advice, affirmation of the principle of justice ('adl), and the emphasis on the importance of social brotherhood (*ukhuwah insaniyah*). On the other hand, in the context of harmony, pesantren actively build harmony through open socio-religious activities such as public recitation, social compensation, community service, cross-community dialogue, and alumni involvement in community structures (teachers, religious leaders, village officials). This role shows that pesantren are not in a closed space, but are organically connected to society, thus becoming a space for negotiation between conservative traditions and the demands of social plurality. Thus, the contribution of pesantren to harmony is not only symbolic, but is manifested in the practice of mediation, reproduction of moderation values, and strengthening social cohesion at the local level.

The results of the study show that kiai and asatidz have a central role in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation. because Kiai is not only positioned as a scientific authority, but also as a moral figure who is the main reference (figure) for students in behaving and behaving (character education).

The results of the in-depth interview revealed that the kiai's example in being open, non-confrontational, and respecting differences is a dominating factor in shaping students' moderate attitudes (*character formation*). Ustadz acts as a value mediator, who translates the principles of moderation into pedagogical language

that can then make it easier for students to understand the message of kiai which can then be applied by students in their daily lives.

The results of observations and interviews show that the majority of students show a moderate, inclusive, and adaptive religious attitude towards differences. Students generally have the ability to distinguish between differences of opinion in the realm of religion and destructive ideological conflicts. In addition, the students also show a tendency to avoid extreme attitudes to get their opinions, both in the form of religious exclusivism and intolerance towards other groups. These findings show that the process of internalizing religious moderation in Pesantren does not stop at the cognitive aspect, but continues to be manifested in students' attitudes and social practices.

These findings show that religious moderation in pesantren is not built through indoctrination alone, but through a process of dialogical learning and social examples in building social piety in society.

The identification of several supporting factors for the internalization of religious moderation in Pesantren, based on the results of this study shows that the strong moral authority of kiai (protector), the establishment of Pesantren traditions, and a relatively homogeneous and conducive social environment for character development are factors that strengthen and support the implementation of education and the application of religious moderation values in the Pesantren community.

Meanwhile, these obstacles include limited access to contemporary Islamic literature, the influence of social media that carries extreme religious narratives, and differences in student backgrounds that affect the speed of internalization of the religious moderation value system are challenges in themselves which then become obstacles to the success of the succession of Bergama moderation in Pesantren.

In addition, the results of the study show that pesantren have a significant capacity in internalizing the value of religious moderation through a holistic educational approach. The value of moderation is not taught as a normative doctrine, but as a social practice through scientific tradition, and an example of pesantren education actors represented by a kiai and asatidz.

Table 4. Mapping of Moderate Values and Practical Implementation in Pesantren

Moderate Value	Conceptual Definition	Implementation in Pesantren	Impact on Social Harmony
Tasamuh (Tolerance)	Respect for differences without eliminating the principle of faith	Teaching fiqh across sects, open dialogue during bahtsul masail, reception of guests across organizations	Reduce the potential for ideological conflict and strengthen cross-group social relations
Tawassuth (Moderators)	The middle ground between extreme and liberal attitudes	A curriculum that combines classics and contemporary issues	Creating a balance between tradition and modernity
I'tidal (Keadilan)	Proportionate and fair attitude in judging differences	Resolution of internal conflicts through deliberation and tabayyun	Increase social trust and legitimacy of pesantren

Tawazun (Keseimbangan)	Harmonization between spiritual and social dimensions	Integration of ritual worship and social activities	Forming students who are religious and inclusive
Shura (Deliberation)	Collective decision-making	Student Deliberation Forum and Asatidz Council	Encourage a culture of dialogue and participation
Islah (Reconciliation)	Reparations and peace efforts	Mediation of conflicts between students/communities	Strengthening social stability in the pesantren environment

Discussion

H-1 Deep Interpretation (the "why" mechanism)

The findings of this study show that moderation in Madura Pesantren is not just the result of "teaching tolerance", but is the product of a layered internalization mechanism that works in the cognitive-affective-practical realm. On a cognitive level, classical texts are not understood as a closed doctrinal package, but are deconstructed through the tradition of ikhtilaf and ta'lil (legal rationalization) so that students are accustomed to distinguishing between principles (uṣūl) and branches (furū'). At the affective level, the kiai's charismatic authority forms a moral disposition—respect, emotional control, and adab al-ikhtilaf—that retains the tendency to exclusivism. At the level of social praxis, the values of tasamuh and tawassuth become "habitus" through the routine of deliberation, tabayyun, and the involvement of social services of the Pesantren; These values are then contextualized with the local relational ethos of Madura (e.g., the taretan dhibi' as the moral language of brotherhood), so that moderation works as an ethics of daily association, not an ideological slogan. With this framework, pesantren appears to be an arena for negotiation: conservative traditions are maintained as identities, but channeled in cooperative social practices that result in harmony.

H-2 Dialogue with SOTA (strengthening/challenging established theories)

Theoretically, these findings are in line with the social cohesion thesis that moral institutions can lower the social costs of conflict and increase social trust through shared norms; however, its important contribution is to show that cohesion in Madura Pesantren is built more through "authority-based social capital" than through formal civic associations. In Putnam's language, this study affirms the importance of social capital for harmony, but modifies its source: instead of relying on modern organizations, social capital grows from a network of charitable obedience to kiai, mutual rites, and alumni networks that bind the community. On the other hand, these findings also challenge the generalization of research that portrays pesantren as an exclusive space of conservatism: in Madura, conservatism does not always lead to social isolation, but can be transformed into a relational bridge when mediated by the adab al-ikhtilaf curriculum and the practice of social engagement (open recitation, community service, conflict mediation). Thus, pesantren act as social "brokers"—connecting different groups—that expand the conception of moderation from mere theological attitudes to institutional capacities to manage differences.

D-3 Discovery of Novelty (bold claims, theoretical impacts)

Based on this synthesis, this research offers a novelty in the form of a model of "Vernacular Moderation"—that is, moderation that is not primarily born from state

policy intervention, but grows from negotiations between the tradition of the Yellow Book, kiai authority, and local cultural ethics. Vernacular moderation explains why pesantren can remain conservative in doctrinal identity, but moderate in social relations: its main mechanisms are (1) reinterpretive framing of kiai that directs texts to the goal of social welfare, (2) the formation of student habitus through the discipline of adab and deliberation, and (3) the reproduction of values through alumni networks and social service practices in the community. This model expands the discourse of the sociology of religion by showing that social harmony in traditional Muslim communities can be produced by a combination of "charismatic authority + classical literacy + local ethics", so that Madura's findings do not stop as case studies, but rather contribute theoretical propositions that can be tested in the context of other Pesantren in Southeast Asia as well as traditional religious communities in the global region.

The results of the study show that pesantren not only function as normative Islamic educational institutions, but also function as a space for social praxis in the application of religious moderation. These findings reinforce the view that religious moderation is not sufficiently understood as a purely theological concept or normative policy, but must be internalized through social experience and ongoing Islamic education (Nuryupa et al., 2024)

From the perspective of Islamic education, pesantren have structural and cultural advantages that allow the process of internalizing values to take place naturally. However, the tradition of pesantren that has long emphasized the education of manners or morals, examples, and habituation to social piety makes the value of religious moderation present in the daily practice of students. This is in line with the view that value education will be more effective when transformed through *Life Experience* (Apriani & Komalasari, 2024) and not just cognitive transmission through formal education that is administratively necessary.

The findings of the study show that the internalization of religious moderation in Pesantren occurs through the integration of formal curriculum and *hidden curriculum*. At the formal curriculum level, the teaching of classical books not only serves as a transmission of knowledge, but also as a medium for the formation of balanced and non-extreme religious attitudes in determining religious attitudes and social attitudes. The principles of ikhtilaf, tolerance for differences of opinion, and the prohibition of excessive behavior in religion are values that have been implicitly embedded in the learning process that have become the hallmark of Pesantren alumni.

The hidden curriculum plays an equally important role in the formation of students' religious moderation attitudes in Pesantren. The pattern of social interaction, collective discipline, and deliberation practices in shaping students' habitus tends to be moderate and inclusive. These findings reinforce the theory of character education that states that moral and social values are more effectively instilled through habituation and example than through verbal and administrative instruction alone (Akhwani et al., 2021)

The results of the study show that kiai and ustadz are key actors in the process of internalizing religious moderation in Pesantren. Kiai, as an authoritative figure and moral symbol, plays a strategic role in shaping students' religious perspectives. The example of kiai in being open, non-confrontational in their attitude, and respecting differences is the main reference for students in viewing social and multicultural diversity as in this archipelago.

Meanwhile, the role of ustadz as an educator is also very significant, especially in translating the values of religious moderation into dialogical and contextual pedagogical practices. These findings are in line with Islamic educational leadership theory that emphasizes the importance of role models (*Uswah Hasanah*) in the process of value education. Thus, religious moderation in pesantren is formed more through social relations and personal example than through formal regulations that are administratively required. The results show that students not only understand religious moderation at the conceptual level taught in formal education, but also display it in social attitudes and behaviors. Students tend to have the ability to adapt to differences, avoid ideological conflicts, and build harmonious and accommodating social relationships with local culture, making them characteristic of graduates or alumni of Pesantren. These findings reinforce the argument that effective religious moderation is one that is internalized as an attitude toward life, not just a normative discourse (Soim et al., 2025)

In this context, pesantren function as a social environment conducive to the formation of such attitudes. The values of moderation are not taught as slogans and icons alone, but are applied in repetitive and consistent social practices. This emphasizes that Islamic education and religious moderation require a space of praxis that allows these values to be experienced directly by the pesantren community (kiai, asatidz and students and even pesantren alumni).

Pesantren has a strong capacity in instilling the value of religious moderation, this study also reveals a number of challenges. The influence of social media and the flow of digital information tends to be an external factor that has the potential to interfere with the process of internalizing the value of religious moderation in Pesantren. Because students are not completely isolated from extreme religious narratives, because these narratives continue to develop in digital spaces and public spaces, so pesantren are required to develop educational strategies that are adaptive to the development of information technology.

In addition, limited access to Islamic literature, and differences in students' social backgrounds also affect the variation in internalization of religious moderation values. Therefore, pesantren need to continue to conduct studies and reflections as well as pedagogical innovations to remain relevant in facing religious and social challenges that continue to change and complex. Thus, the findings of this study strengthen the paradigm that pesantren is the basis of moderate and effective Islamic education in building social harmony.

Practically, the results of this study provide important implications for Pesantren managers and Islamic education policy makers (the ministry of religion and the ministry of education and culture). Strengthening the role of kiai and ustadz, developing a curriculum that is responsive to contemporary challenges, and critically utilizing digital media are strategic steps in strengthening religious moderation in the pesantren environment.

Thus, pesantren as a locomotive institution of Islamic Education as an important actor in maintaining social and religious harmony in Indonesia. So that pesantren deserve to be positioned as a model of Islamic education based on values and social praxis, which has great potential to contribute to the development of a tolerant and civilized society.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, pesantren have a strategic and substantial role in internalizing the values of religious moderation, namely through the education system and pesantren traditions that have been firmly rooted in students' lives. Pesantren function as an institution for the transmission of Islamic knowledge and also as a space for social praxis in the formation of religious attitudes that are moderate, inclusive, and oriented towards religious social harmony. Religious moderation values such as balance, tolerance, justice, and openness to differences are present as social normative through the exemplary practice of kiai and ustadz, as well as collective culture in Pesantren.

The process of internalizing religious moderation in Pesantren takes place holistically through the integration of the curriculum (formal and hidden curriculum) of Pesantren culture. The example of kiai and ustadz has proven to be a dominant factor in shaping the religious attitudes of students, while the tradition of pesantren functions as an effective medium in changing the value of religious moderation from the cognitive realm to social attitudes and behaviors.

The influence of digital media and limited access to contemporary Islamic literature, as well as the heterogeneity of student backgrounds are challenges in pesantren in supervising religious moderation, so adaptation and pedagogical innovation are needed to remain relevant in the face of evolving socio-religious dynamics.

This research contributes to strengthening the study of Pesantren and Islamic education, namely by affirming the position of Pesantren as an effective basis for moderate Islamic education, thereby enriching the perspective of Islamic education that emphasizes the importance of integration between values, traditions, and social practices in the formation of religious character. Practically, it provides important implications for pesantren managers and policy makers to strengthen the role of pesantren in building religious moderation through the development of adaptive curriculum, educator capacity building, and the use of critical and educational digital media.

We hope that further research can develop a more diverse and integrative methodological approach to have a broader impact on the development of science and a peaceful, tolerant, and civilized religious life.

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