



DORMITORY LIFE AND THE INTERNALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN PESANTREN EDUCATION

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Abstract: This study examines the role of dormitory life in the internalization of religious moderation within pesantren education. In Islamic boarding schools, dormitory life represents a unique educational environment where students not only receive formal classroom instruction but also experience communal living that shapes their moral character and social attitudes. This environment provides an important space for the development of moderation values such as tolerance, cooperation, and respect for diversity. This research employed a qualitative case study approach conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation involving pesantren leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that dormitory life plays a significant role in developing moderation values among students through daily interaction, shared responsibilities, and communal religious activities. Students learn to cooperate, respect differences, and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding. These social experiences contribute to the formation of moderate religious attitudes characterized by tolerance, empathy, and balanced religious perspectives. This study demonstrates that dormitory life functions as an important social learning environment within pesantren education that supports the development of religious moderation among Muslim students.

Keywords: religious moderation; pesantren education; dormitory life; character education; islamic education

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INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity and social plurality have become defining characteristics of contemporary societies. In multicultural countries such as Indonesia, maintaining social harmony requires educational approaches that promote tolerance, mutual respect, and balanced religious understanding. In recent years, the concept of religious moderation has gained increasing attention in educational discourse as a strategy for preventing religious extremism and strengthening social cohesion in plural societies. Religious education therefore plays an important role in shaping students' perspectives toward diversity and in developing attitudes that support peaceful coexistence among different religious and cultural communities (Hidayat, 2020; Pajariantanto et al., 2022).

Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, particularly pesantren, have historically served as important centers for transmitting religious knowledge and cultivating moral values among Muslim youth. Pesantren education combines religious learning with character formation, social discipline, and communal life, creating a holistic educational environment that influences students' intellectual, moral, and social development (Arifin, 2021; Kusuma & Prasetyo, 2022). Through structured religious instruction and daily social interaction, pesantren provide opportunities for students to internalize ethical values and develop responsible attitudes within their communities.

Character education has long been recognized as an essential component of educational systems that aim to develop ethical and responsible individuals. Research on character education emphasizes that moral development is not only achieved through formal instruction but also through social experiences and institutional culture within educational environments (Berkowitz & Bier, 2018). In the context of Islamic boarding schools, character education is often integrated with religious learning, enabling students to develop moral discipline, empathy, and respect for others (Aziz & Taja, 2020). Such educational practices contribute to the development of balanced religious perspectives that support moderation and tolerance.

Pesantren environments provide a unique social setting in which students experience communal living while participating in various religious and educational activities. Within this environment, students from diverse regional and social backgrounds interact intensively in dormitories and communal spaces. These daily interactions create opportunities for students to develop cooperation, empathy, and social responsibility. Studies on pesantren communities show that everyday social experiences within Islamic boarding schools significantly influence students' religious attitudes and social behavior (Nilan, 2019; Rahman, 2022).

Recent research also highlights the increasing importance of integrating religious moderation into Islamic education as part of broader efforts to address radicalism and promote social harmony. Educational initiatives aimed at strengthening moderation values emphasize dialogue, tolerance, and inclusive religious understanding within educational institutions (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022; Sadiyah, 2022). Government policies and institutional programs have also

encouraged Islamic educational institutions to incorporate moderation values into their curriculum and educational practices (Muhlisin et al., 2023).

In addition, contemporary studies have emphasized the need for Islamic educational institutions to adapt to changing social contexts, including digital transformation, multicultural interaction, and global communication. The integration of religious moderation within educational systems is increasingly viewed as an essential strategy for developing students' critical thinking, social awareness, and ethical responsibility in modern societies (Hanif, 2025; Subair et al., 2024). Multicultural approaches within Islamic education also contribute to fostering interreligious dialogue and strengthening peaceful interaction among diverse communities (Sholihuddin & Shobirin, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on religious moderation and Islamic education, many studies focus primarily on curriculum development, institutional policy, or ideological frameworks. Empirical research examining how moderation values are internalized through everyday social experiences within pesantren environments remains relatively limited. In particular, the role of communal living and dormitory interaction in shaping students' religious attitudes has not been extensively explored in previous studies. Yet, the social dynamics within pesantren communities play a crucial role in shaping students' perspectives and behaviors.

Understanding the role of social interaction within pesantren environments is therefore important for explaining how moderation values are formed in Islamic educational institutions. Previous studies have shown that pesantren communities provide a social space where students learn discipline, cooperation, and moral responsibility through everyday interaction (Damopolii et al., 2023; Sabarudin et al., 2024). These interactions contribute to the development of ethical awareness and balanced religious perspectives among students.

Recent discussions on religious moderation within Islamic education emphasize that moderation values are not only developed through formal classroom instruction but also through social interaction and institutional culture within educational environments. Studies on pesantren education indicate that moderation values can be internalized through integrated educational processes that combine religious learning, character education, and communal interaction among students (Partahian et al., 2025).

Based on this background, this study aims to examine the role of social interaction and communal life in supporting the internalization of religious moderation within pesantren education. By analyzing educational practices and social dynamics within Islamic boarding school environments, this research seeks to provide empirical insights into how moderation values are cultivated through everyday experiences among students. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education studies and offer practical implications for strengthening moderation-based educational models in pesantren institutions (Zamroni et al., 2025).

Recent scholarly discussions emphasize that religious moderation within Islamic education should be examined through diverse educational dimensions,

including institutional culture, communal interaction, and character education. The first issue of *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Azzahro* presents several studies that explore these educational dynamics within pesantren environments (Partahian, 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine how communal living within pesantren environments contributes to the internalization of religious moderation values among students. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring social interactions, educational practices, and cultural experiences within natural settings, allowing researchers to understand how values are constructed and practiced in everyday life (Berkowitz & Bier, 2018; Nilan, 2019).

The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan, an Islamic boarding school where students live in dormitories while participating in both religious and general educational activities. The pesantren environment was selected because it provides a structured setting in which religious instruction, character formation, and communal interaction are integrated into the daily lives of students (Arifin, 2021; Kusuma & Prasetyo, 2022).

Participants in this study consisted of pesantren leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students who were actively involved in the educational and social activities within the pesantren environment. These participants were selected because they possess direct experiences related to the implementation of educational programs and daily interactions that influence students' moral and social development.

Data were collected through several techniques, including in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation analysis. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives regarding the role of dormitory life in shaping students' religious attitudes. Observations were carried out to examine daily activities, social interaction among students, and educational practices within the dormitory environment. Relevant institutional documents were also analyzed to support the interpretation of research findings (Damopolii et al., 2023). Data validity was ensured through triangulation of interviews, observations, and document analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis procedures that involve data reduction, data organization, and interpretation of emerging themes. Through this analytical process, patterns of interaction and educational practices related to the development of moderation values among students were identified and interpreted within the context of pesantren education.

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the research concerning the role of dormitory life in supporting the internalization of religious moderation values within pesantren education. The findings were obtained through interviews,

observations, and document analysis conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan. The results indicate that communal living within pesantren dormitories creates a social environment that facilitates the development of tolerance, cooperation, and balanced religious understanding among students.

Dormitory Interaction among Students

One of the central findings of this research is the significant role of daily interaction among students in shaping their social attitudes and religious perspectives. Within pesantren dormitories, students from diverse social, cultural, and regional backgrounds live together in shared spaces where they interact continuously throughout their daily activities. These interactions require students to develop communication skills, mutual respect, and the ability to manage differences in opinions and behavior.

The dormitory environment encourages students to cooperate in various activities such as group learning, communal cleaning duties, and collective religious practices. Through these shared responsibilities, students gradually develop attitudes of empathy, discipline, and social responsibility. Previous research indicates that social interaction within pesantren communities contributes significantly to students' character development and moral awareness (Nilan, 2019; Kusuma & Prasetyo, 2022).

Observation results also show that students learn to resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding. When disagreements occur, senior students and dormitory supervisors often facilitate discussions that encourage peaceful problem-solving. These experiences contribute to the development of moderation values such as tolerance and respect for diversity within the pesantren community.

Communal Religious Practices in Dormitory Life

Another important finding concerns the role of communal religious practices in strengthening students' spiritual awareness and collective identity. Daily activities in the pesantren dormitory include congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation sessions, religious discussions, and collective study of Islamic texts. These activities provide opportunities for students to deepen their religious understanding while simultaneously strengthening social bonds within the community.

Communal religious activities also function as an important medium for transmitting moral values and ethical conduct. Teachers and dormitory supervisors often provide religious guidance and moral advice during these activities, emphasizing the importance of humility, patience, and compassion toward others. Such practices contribute to the development of religious attitudes that emphasize balance and moderation in understanding Islamic teachings.

Research on Islamic education highlights that communal religious practices within pesantren environments play an important role in strengthening students' spiritual awareness and ethical behavior (Arifin, 2021; Aziz & Taja, 2020). Through these collective activities, students internalize religious teachings not only as theoretical knowledge but also as practical guidance for everyday life.

The main communal religious activities observed in the dormitory environment are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Communal Religious Activities in Pesantren Dormitories

Activity	Description	Educational Value
Congregational prayer	Students perform daily prayers together in the mosque	Strengthens discipline and collective religious commitment
Qur'anic recitation	Regular recitation and memorization sessions	Develops spiritual awareness and religious literacy
Religious discussion	Informal discussions on Islamic teachings	Encourages critical thinking and balanced understanding
Collective study	Study of classical Islamic texts with guidance from teachers	Strengthens moral values and ethical conduct

Character Formation through Dormitory Life

Dormitory life also plays an important role in shaping students' character and moral behavior. The structured environment within pesantren dormitories requires students to follow rules related to discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect. Students are assigned various responsibilities such as maintaining dormitory cleanliness, organizing study schedules, and participating in communal activities.

These responsibilities help students develop self-discipline and accountability while simultaneously strengthening their sense of belonging to the pesantren community. Character education scholars emphasize that moral development often occurs through practical experiences and social interaction within educational environments rather than through theoretical instruction alone (Berkowitz & Bier, 2018).

In addition, dormitory supervisors play a crucial role in guiding students' behavior and providing moral support. Through daily supervision and personal interaction, supervisors help students develop positive attitudes such as honesty, responsibility, and respect for others. These educational practices contribute to the development of moderate religious attitudes characterized by empathy, tolerance, and balanced perspectives.

Previous studies also indicate that character formation within pesantren environments is strongly influenced by institutional culture and communal learning experiences (Mujahid, 2021; Sadiyah, 2022). Through continuous interaction and moral guidance, students gradually internalize ethical values that shape their attitudes toward religion and society.

Model of Moderation Development through Dormitory Culture

Based on the findings of this research, the development of religious moderation within pesantren dormitories can be understood as a multidimensional

educational process that integrates social interaction, communal religious practices, and character formation. These elements interact to create a holistic educational environment in which moderation values are cultivated through everyday experiences.

The dormitory culture within pesantren encourages students to practice tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect through daily interaction with peers. This social environment provides opportunities for students to experience diversity and develop the ability to manage differences constructively. Such experiences are essential for developing moderation-based religious attitudes that emphasize balance and respect for diversity.

Furthermore, institutional policies and educational programs within pesantren also contribute to strengthening moderation values among students. Educational initiatives aimed at promoting tolerance and preventing radical interpretations of religion have become increasingly important in contemporary Islamic education (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022; Muhlisin et al., 2023).

The interaction between social, spiritual, and institutional factors that support the development of moderation values within pesantren dormitories is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Model of Religious Moderation Development in Dormitory Culture

Educational Component	Main Activities	Moderation Values Developed
Social interaction	Daily communication and cooperation among students	Tolerance, empathy, respect
Communal worship	Congregational prayers and Qur'anic recitation	Spiritual awareness and humility
Character education	Dormitory rules and responsibilities	Discipline and accountability
Institutional guidance	Religious instruction and moral advice	Balanced religious understanding

The findings demonstrate that dormitory culture within pesantren education functions as an important social learning environment where moderation values are developed through continuous interaction and communal experience. Through the integration of social, spiritual, and educational activities, students gradually develop balanced religious perspectives that support peaceful coexistence in plural societies.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that dormitory life within pesantren environments plays a significant role in shaping students' religious attitudes and social behavior. The results demonstrate that communal living among students provides opportunities for the development of tolerance, cooperation, and empathy through everyday interaction. These findings support the argument that educational environments characterized by continuous social interaction

contribute significantly to character formation and moral development among students.

From a theoretical perspective, character education emphasizes that moral values are not only transmitted through formal instruction but are also developed through social experiences within educational communities. Berkowitz and Bier (2018) argue that effective character education involves the integration of institutional culture, social interaction, and ethical guidance within the learning environment. In the context of pesantren education, dormitory life functions as a social space where students continuously practice values such as discipline, responsibility, and mutual respect.

The findings also reinforce previous research highlighting the role of pesantren as institutions that combine religious instruction with character development. Studies show that pesantren education creates a unique learning environment where students develop moral awareness and social responsibility through both formal learning and communal interaction (Arifin, 2021; Kusuma & Prasetyo, 2022). Through daily interaction within dormitories, students learn to respect differences, cooperate with peers, and develop balanced perspectives toward social and religious issues.

Another important finding of this research concerns the role of communal religious practices in strengthening students' spiritual awareness and collective identity. Activities such as congregational prayer, Qur'anic recitation, and religious discussion not only reinforce religious knowledge but also create a shared spiritual experience among students. Previous studies emphasize that religious activities within pesantren environments contribute to the formation of ethical values and balanced religious perspectives (Aziz & Taja, 2020; Mujahid, 2021). These practices encourage students to understand religious teachings in ways that emphasize compassion, humility, and social responsibility.

Furthermore, the results of this study highlight the importance of institutional culture in promoting moderation values within Islamic educational institutions. Pesantren culture emphasizes discipline, communal responsibility, and moral guidance provided by teachers and dormitory supervisors. These elements collectively shape students' understanding of religion as a source of ethical guidance for social life. Similar findings have been reported in previous studies indicating that pesantren institutions play a strategic role in preventing radical interpretations of religion and promoting moderate religious attitudes among students (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022; Sadiyah, 2022).

The role of social interaction within pesantren dormitories also supports broader discussions on the relationship between education and social harmony in plural societies. Educational practices that encourage dialogue, cooperation, and respect for diversity contribute to the development of tolerant social attitudes. Studies on religious moderation in Islamic education emphasize that the promotion of inclusive religious understanding within educational institutions is essential for strengthening peaceful coexistence in multicultural societies (Hidayat, 2020; Pajariantanto et al., 2022).

In addition, recent educational policies in Indonesia have increasingly emphasized the integration of religious moderation within Islamic educational institutions. Government initiatives and institutional programs aim to encourage educational environments that promote tolerance, critical thinking, and balanced religious understanding among students. Previous research indicates that such initiatives contribute to strengthening moderation values within Islamic education and preventing the spread of extremist ideologies (Muhlisin et al., 2023; Hanif, 2025).

From an academic perspective, this study contributes to the literature on Islamic education by providing empirical evidence on how moderation values are internalized through everyday social experiences within pesantren environments. While previous studies often focus on curriculum development or institutional policy, this research highlights the importance of communal living and dormitory interaction as practical mechanisms for cultivating moderation values among students.

The findings therefore suggest that dormitory culture within pesantren education functions as an important social learning environment that supports the development of moderate religious attitudes. Through continuous interaction, shared responsibilities, and communal religious practices, students gradually develop balanced perspectives that emphasize tolerance, empathy, and respect for diversity.

Overall, the study demonstrates that moderation values in Islamic education are not solely produced through formal teaching but are also shaped through the social dynamics of educational communities. The integration of communal living, character education, and spiritual practice within pesantren environments provides an effective model for promoting religious moderation in contemporary Muslim societies.

These findings suggest that pesantren dormitory culture can serve as an effective model for developing moderation-based Islamic education in plural societies.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that dormitory life within pesantren education plays a significant role in supporting the internalization of religious moderation values among students. The findings reveal that communal living in pesantren dormitories creates a social environment in which students continuously interact, cooperate, and share responsibilities in their daily activities. Through these interactions, students develop attitudes of tolerance, empathy, and mutual respect that contribute to the formation of balanced religious perspectives.

Communal religious practices, social interaction among students, and character education within dormitory environments collectively strengthen students' moral awareness and social responsibility. These educational experiences allow students to understand religious teachings not only as theoretical knowledge but also as practical guidance for building harmonious relationships within diverse communities.

The study also shows that the integration of communal living, character formation, and spiritual activities within pesantren environments provides an effective educational model for cultivating moderation values in Islamic education. Therefore, pesantren dormitory culture can serve as an important social learning environment for developing moderate religious attitudes among Muslim youth.

Future studies may explore comparative analyses of dormitory-based educational practices in different Islamic educational institutions to further understand their contribution to the development of religious moderation.

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