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## INTERNALIZING RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN PESANTREN EDUCATION: INTEGRATING SUFISM AND CIVIC LEARNING

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**Abstract:** This study examines the internalization of religious moderation within the educational practices of pesantren by focusing on the integration of Sufism learning and civic education. Religious moderation has become a central discourse in contemporary Islamic education, particularly in plural societies such as Indonesia where harmonious social relations are essential. Pesantren, as traditional Islamic educational institutions, play a strategic role in shaping moderate religious attitudes among Muslim students through both formal learning and character formation. This research employs a qualitative case study approach conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu, Padangsidempuan. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis involving pesantren leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students. Data analysis was carried out through data reduction, data display, and verification. The findings reveal that the internalization of religious moderation occurs through three interconnected educational processes: classroom learning, dormitory-based character formation, and the cultivation of pesantren culture. Sufism learning strengthens spiritual awareness, moral discipline, and self-control, while civic education fosters national consciousness, social responsibility, and tolerance toward diversity. The integration of these educational components forms a holistic model of religious moderation education within pesantren, contributing to the development of moderate Muslim character in plural societies.

**Keywords:** religious moderation; pesantren education; sufism learning; civic education; islamic education

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious diversity has become one of the defining characteristics of contemporary societies. In multicultural countries such as Indonesia, the coexistence of different religious traditions, ethnic identities, and cultural backgrounds requires the development of social attitudes that promote harmony and peaceful interaction. In this context, religious moderation has emerged as an important concept for maintaining social cohesion and preventing the development of extreme religious attitudes. Religious moderation emphasizes balanced religious understanding, tolerance toward differences, and the ability to live harmoniously within diverse societies. Such attitudes are particularly important in plural social environments where individuals from different religious and cultural backgrounds interact within shared social spaces (Azra, 2019; Hasan, 2021).

In recent years, the discourse on religious moderation has received significant attention in Indonesia, particularly within the field of education. Educational institutions are widely recognized as strategic spaces for shaping students' perspectives on religion and society. Through systematic learning processes, education can cultivate inclusive religious understanding while simultaneously encouraging social responsibility and respect for diversity. Islamic educational institutions, in particular, play an important role in promoting moderate religious attitudes among Muslim youth because they serve as environments where religious knowledge, ethical values, and social awareness are transmitted simultaneously (Zuhdi, 2018; Hefner, 2016).

Among various Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, pesantren occupy a distinctive and influential position in shaping religious understanding and moral character. Pesantren have long functioned as centers of Islamic learning that integrate religious instruction with character formation and communal life. Unlike conventional educational institutions, pesantren provide a holistic educational environment in which students not only participate in formal classroom learning but also live together in a structured community that emphasizes discipline, ethical conduct, and spiritual development. This integrated educational environment allows pesantren to play a significant role in transmitting Islamic knowledge while simultaneously shaping students' moral character and social attitudes (Dhofier, 2011; van Bruinessen, 2015).

One important characteristic of pesantren education is the integration of spiritual learning and social character formation. In this regard, Sufism (tasawuf) has historically played a central role in Islamic educational traditions. Sufism emphasizes the purification of the heart, moral discipline, humility, and self-control as essential components of spiritual development. Through the study of classical Sufi texts and ethical teachings, students are encouraged to develop inner awareness and moral sensitivity in their interactions with others. Such spiritual education contributes significantly to the development of balanced religious perspectives that emphasize compassion, humility, and tolerance in social life (Nasr, 2007).

In addition to spiritual education, pesantren in Indonesia have increasingly integrated general subjects into their educational systems, including civic education. Civic education plays an important role in strengthening students' awareness of national identity, democratic values, and social responsibility. Through civic education, students learn the importance of respecting diversity and participating constructively in social and national life. The integration of civic education within pesantren education provides an important bridge between religious commitment and civic responsibility, enabling students to develop balanced perspectives that combine religious values with social awareness (Tilaar, 2016; Banks, 2016).

Previous studies have examined the role of Islamic educational institutions in promoting moderate religious understanding. Research has shown that pesantren contribute significantly to the development of moderate Islamic thought and social harmony within Indonesian Muslim communities (Hefner, 2016; Mukhibat, 2020; Sah, 2024). Other studies highlight that the integration of religious moderation within Islamic educational institutions plays an important role in shaping tolerant and inclusive religious perspectives among students (Nasir & Rijal, 2021). Other studies have highlighted the importance of religious moderation as an educational approach that encourages tolerance and respect for diversity within Islamic learning environments (Fahham, 2020; Hasan, 2021; Sugianto, 2023). These studies demonstrate that Islamic education has considerable potential in shaping moderate religious attitudes among students.

However, despite the growing body of literature on religious moderation in Islamic education, many existing studies focus primarily on institutional roles or policy perspectives rather than examining the internal educational processes through which moderation values are developed. Empirical research that explores how specific educational practices contribute to the internalization of moderation values within pesantren environments remains relatively limited. In particular, the interaction between spiritual education, such as Sufism learning, and civic education as complementary components in shaping moderation attitudes has not been widely examined in previous studies.

Understanding how these two educational domains interact within pesantren education is important for developing more comprehensive models of moderation-based Islamic education. Spiritual education strengthens ethical awareness and moral discipline, while civic education promotes social responsibility and respect for diversity. When integrated within educational practice, these two domains may contribute significantly to the formation of balanced religious perspectives among students.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the process of internalizing religious moderation within pesantren education through the integration of Sufism learning and civic education. The research was conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan, an Islamic boarding school that integrates religious and general education within its curriculum. By examining classroom learning, dormitory life, and institutional

culture, this study seeks to identify how educational practices contribute to the development of moderate religious attitudes among students.

This study is expected to contribute to the development of Islamic education studies by providing empirical insights into how religious moderation values can be effectively integrated within pesantren education. Furthermore, the findings of this research may offer important implications for the development of educational models that combine spiritual formation, civic awareness, and social responsibility as key components of moderation-based Islamic education in plural societies.

In line with recent academic discussions on Islamic education, the development of religious moderation has increasingly become an important theme within contemporary educational research. The inaugural issue of *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Azzahro* highlights various educational perspectives on religious moderation, including spiritual education, curriculum development, and social interaction within pesantren institutions (Partahian, 2025).

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study employed a qualitative research approach to examine the process of internalizing religious moderation within pesantren education. Qualitative research is appropriate for exploring social and educational phenomena in their natural settings and for understanding the perspectives and experiences of research participants (Creswell, 2014).

The research adopted a case study design conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan. The pesantren was selected as the research site because it integrates religious education with general education and promotes values related to religious moderation in its educational activities. The participants involved in this research included pesantren leaders, teachers, dormitory supervisors, and students who were directly engaged in the educational processes within the pesantren.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted to explore participants' perspectives on the implementation of religious moderation values within pesantren education. Observations were carried out to examine learning activities, religious practices, and social interactions among students in their daily life within the pesantren environment. Relevant institutional documents were also analyzed to support the research findings.

The data were analyzed using the interactive model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), which consists of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. To ensure the credibility of the findings, data triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different participants and data collection techniques.

## **RESULTS**

This section presents the research findings related to the internalization of religious moderation within pesantren education. The findings are derived from

interviews, observations, and document analysis conducted at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu in Padangsidempuan. The results show that the development of religious moderation values occurs through several interconnected educational processes within the pesantren environment, including spiritual education, civic education, institutional culture, and social interaction among students.

### **Educational Context of Pesantren Al-Ansor**

The findings indicate that Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor Manunggang Julu functions as an Islamic educational institution that integrates religious learning with character formation and communal life. The educational system within the pesantren combines formal classroom instruction with religious activities and social interaction among students. This integrated environment provides opportunities for students to experience religious teachings not only as theoretical knowledge but also as practical guidance in everyday life.

Students live in dormitories within the pesantren complex, where daily interaction becomes an important part of their educational experience. The leadership of the kiai, the role of teachers, and the institutional culture emphasizing discipline and respect influence students' attitudes toward religious practice and social relationships. These elements collectively create an educational environment that supports the development of balanced religious perspectives among students.

Table 1 summarizes the main educational components that support the development of religious moderation within the pesantren environment.

Table 1. Educational Structure Supporting Religious Moderation

<b>Educational Component</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Role in Moderation Education</b>
<b>Classroom learning</b>	Religious and general subjects taught in formal classes	Provides conceptual understanding of Islamic teachings and social values
<b>Sufism learning</b>	Study of tasawuf texts and moral guidance	Develops spiritual awareness and ethical behavior
<b>Civic education</b>	Learning about citizenship and democratic values	Strengthens social responsibility and tolerance
<b>Dormitory life</b>	Students live together in pesantren dormitories	Builds cooperation, empathy, and social interaction
<b>Pesantren culture</b>	Religious practices and communal activities	Reinforces discipline, respect, and moral values

### **Internalization of Moderation through Sufism Learning**

One of the important findings of this research is the role of Sufism (tasawuf) learning in shaping students' spiritual awareness and ethical attitudes. In the pesantren curriculum, Sufism learning emphasizes moral values such as humility, patience, sincerity, and self-discipline. These values are taught through classical

Islamic texts as well as through guidance provided by teachers during religious instruction and daily activities.

The learning process of Sufism encourages students to develop inner awareness and emotional control in their interactions with others. Teachers emphasize that religious devotion must be accompanied by ethical behavior and compassion toward fellow human beings. As a result, students develop a balanced understanding of religion that emphasizes moral responsibility and respect for others.

Interviews with students indicate that Sufism learning contributes significantly to the development of moderate religious attitudes. Students explain that the lessons they receive in tasawuf help them understand the importance of humility and tolerance in social interaction.

### **Civic Education and Social Responsibility**

In addition to religious instruction, civic education also plays an important role in the development of religious moderation among students. Civic education provides students with knowledge about national identity, democratic values, and social responsibility within Indonesian society.

Through this subject, students learn about the importance of respecting diversity and maintaining social harmony within a plural society. Teachers emphasize that religious commitment should encourage peaceful coexistence and constructive participation in society. This educational approach enables students to connect their religious beliefs with civic responsibilities as members of a diverse community.

The integration of civic education within pesantren learning contributes to the development of social awareness and tolerance among students. As a result, students demonstrate a broader understanding of the relationship between religious teachings and social responsibility.

### **Dormitory Life as a Social Learning Environment**

Another important finding of this research concerns the role of dormitory life in shaping students' social attitudes. Students at Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor live together in dormitories where daily interaction becomes an essential part of their educational experience.

Dormitory life encourages students to cooperate, respect differences, and resolve conflicts through dialogue and mutual understanding. Students participate in communal prayers, group study activities, and shared responsibilities that strengthen their sense of community.

These social interactions provide opportunities for students to practice values such as tolerance, empathy, and cooperation in their daily lives. The dormitory environment therefore functions as a social learning space where moderation values are implemented in everyday behavior.

### **Model of Religious Moderation Internalization**

Based on the research findings, the internalization of religious moderation in Pondok Pesantren Al-Ansor can be understood as a process that involves several interconnected educational components. These components include spiritual education through Sufism learning, civic education that promotes social

responsibility, institutional culture emphasizing discipline and moral behavior, and social interaction within the dormitory environment.

The interaction of these elements creates a holistic educational model that supports the development of moderate religious attitudes among students. Through the integration of spiritual formation, civic awareness, and communal interaction, students develop balanced perspectives on religion that emphasize tolerance, cooperation, and respect for diversity.

The components involved in this process are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Components of Religious Moderation Internalization

<b>Educational Component</b>	<b>Main Values</b>	<b>Educational Process</b>
<b>Sufism learning</b>	humility, sincerity, patience	study of classical texts and spiritual guidance
<b>Civic education</b>	tolerance, citizenship, social responsibility	classroom learning and discussion
<b>Dormitory interaction</b>	cooperation, empathy	communal living and shared responsibilities
<b>Pesantren culture</b>	discipline, respect	religious activities and institutional norms

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the internalization of religious moderation within pesantren education occurs through a holistic educational process that integrates spiritual learning, civic education, and social interaction within the institutional environment. The results indicate that moderation values are not merely conveyed through theoretical instruction but are developed through daily educational practices that shape students' moral awareness and social attitudes.

One of the important findings of this research is the role of Sufism learning in shaping students' ethical and spiritual orientation. The emphasis on moral discipline, humility, sincerity, and self-control within tasawuf learning contributes to the formation of balanced religious attitudes among students. These findings support the argument that spiritual education plays a significant role in developing ethical consciousness and moral behavior within Islamic education. Nasr (2007) explains that Sufism focuses on the purification of the heart and the cultivation of virtues such as compassion, humility, and tolerance. Through this spiritual orientation, religious teachings are understood not only as doctrinal principles but also as ethical guidance for social life. In this context, Sufism learning in pesantren becomes an important foundation for the development of moderate religious perspectives.

In addition to spiritual education, the findings also highlight the role of civic education in strengthening students' understanding of social responsibility within a plural society. Civic education introduces students to democratic values, national identity, and the importance of respecting diversity in social life. This educational component enables students to connect religious commitment with

civic responsibility. The integration of civic education within Islamic educational institutions supports the development of tolerance and social awareness among students. These findings are consistent with the perspective of multicultural education, which emphasizes the importance of educational processes that promote respect for diversity and democratic participation within society (Banks, 2016). Civic education therefore becomes an important instrument for developing moderation values within Islamic education.

The findings of this research also reinforce previous studies that emphasize the important role of pesantren in promoting moderate Islamic thought in Indonesian society. Previous research indicates that Islamic boarding schools function as important institutions for cultivating moderation values and developing tolerant religious perspectives among students (Mukhibat, 2020; Sah, 2024). argues that pesantren have historically contributed to the development of inclusive Islamic traditions characterized by tolerance and social harmony. Similarly, Mukhibat (2020) notes that Islamic boarding schools play a strategic role in cultivating moderation values through religious education and character formation. The results of this study confirm these arguments by showing that pesantren educational practices contribute significantly to the formation of moderate religious attitudes among students.

Another important aspect revealed in this research is the role of dormitory life as a social learning environment. Living together within the pesantren community provides opportunities for students to develop cooperation, empathy, and conflict resolution skills through everyday interaction. These social experiences contribute to the development of tolerance and mutual respect among students. This finding supports the perspective of character education, which emphasizes that moral values are often developed through social interaction and communal experiences rather than through formal instruction alone (Lickona, 2015). The dormitory environment therefore functions as a practical space where moderation values are implemented in daily behavior.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this research highlight the importance of integrating multiple educational dimensions in promoting religious moderation within Islamic education. Spiritual education strengthens ethical awareness, civic education promotes social responsibility, and social interaction within dormitory life provides opportunities for practicing tolerance and cooperation. The integration of these educational components creates a comprehensive learning environment that supports the development of balanced religious perspectives among students.

The results of this study also contribute to the broader discourse on religious moderation in Islamic education. While many previous studies have focused on conceptual discussions of moderation or institutional roles of Islamic educational institutions, this research provides empirical evidence showing how moderation values are internalized through concrete educational practices within pesantren environments. By identifying the interaction between spiritual learning, civic education, and communal living, this study offers a more comprehensive

understanding of how moderation-based Islamic education can be implemented in practice.

Therefore, the findings of this research suggest that pesantren education has significant potential to serve as an effective model for promoting religious moderation in Muslim societies. By integrating spiritual formation, civic awareness, and communal interaction, Islamic educational institutions can develop educational frameworks that encourage tolerance, balance, and social harmony in plural societies.

The findings of this study are also consistent with broader theoretical discussions on religious moderation within Islamic education. Conceptual analyses of moderation emphasize that balanced religious understanding can be cultivated through the integration of ethical values, social awareness, and educational practices within Islamic learning environments (Ritonga et al., 2025). In addition, curriculum-based approaches to moderation education highlight the importance of integrating tolerance and dialogue within educational frameworks to strengthen moderate religious perspectives among students (Nasution et al., 2025)..

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the internalization of religious moderation within pesantren education occurs through an integrated educational process that combines spiritual learning, civic education, and social interaction within the institutional environment. The findings indicate that moderation values are developed not only through formal classroom instruction but also through daily educational practices that shape students' moral awareness and social responsibility.

Sufism learning plays an important role in strengthening students' spiritual awareness and ethical character, while civic education contributes to the development of social responsibility and understanding of diversity in a plural society. In addition, dormitory life provides opportunities for students to practice values such as tolerance, cooperation, and mutual respect through everyday interaction.

The integration of these educational components creates a holistic model of moderation-based Islamic education that supports the development of balanced religious perspectives among students. Therefore, pesantren education has significant potential to contribute to the promotion of religious moderation within Muslim communities by integrating spiritual formation, civic awareness, and communal learning experiences. Future studies may explore comparative analyses of moderation education in different Islamic educational institutions.

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