

Examining Religious Moderation In Islamic Boarding Schools In Java: What Is The Model For Implementing Religiousness Of Santri?

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Abstract

This study elucidates the madrasah curriculum based on Islamic boarding schools as a supporter of the implementation of religious moderation, the tradition of santri (students) in implementing religious moderation, and the model of implementation of religiousness of santri in madrasah based on Islamic boarding schools. This research was conducted in Java, including Madrasah al-Hidayat Lasem, Madrasah Qudsiyyah Kudus, MA KHAS Kempek Cirebon, Madrasah Aliyah Salafiyah Syafi'iyah Jombang, and Madrasah Hidayatul Muftadi'in Lirboyo Kediri. The method employed is qualitative with a phenomenological post-positivism paradigm. Data collection techniques were carried out by observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques were performed with the stages of data collection, reduction, data presentation, and conclusions. The results of the study revealed that strengthening the madrasah curriculum is integrated with the values of religious moderation, such as the development of a lesson plan and teaching materials that include the values of moderation. In addition, typical books of Islamic boarding schools are used as learning resources to instill a moderate attitude. Islamic boarding school traditions, such as following the qudwah of elders, maintaining local traditions, writing traditions, and scientific culture, also support the implementation of religious moderation. Madrasah synergy in the form of cooperation with interfaith institutions also provides opportunities for santri to interact with non-Muslims, thus encouraging the formation of attitudes of love for the homeland, tolerance, open-mindedness, and anti-fanaticism. Based on these data, this study formulates a "Model for Implementing Religiousness of Santri," which reflects the integration of the curriculum and Islamic boarding school traditions in instilling religious moderation. This model is expected to be a guideline for Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs in realizing a generation of moderate santri who contribute to the life of the nation and state.

Keywords: *Moderation, Islamic boarding schools, and religiousness of santri*

Date of Submission: 28-12-2024

Date of Acceptance: 08-01-2025

I. Introduction

Religious moderation is one of the key concepts that underlie religious life in Indonesia (Syahid et al., 2024), a country with cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. This moderation emphasizes the significance of a tolerant, fair, and balanced attitude in understanding and practicing religious teachings. Amid the challenges of globalization and the digital era that accelerates the flow of information, the potential for the development of intolerance and radicalism is a real threat to social cohesion (Almujahid et al., 2024). Hence, religious moderation is the responsibility not only of the government but also of educational institutions (Idris & Putra, 2021), specifically Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs, which have long been known as centers of religious

learning and national values.

As a distinctive Islamic educational institution, Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs have a strategic position to instill the values of religious moderation through a formal curriculum approach that is integrated with Islamic boarding school traditions (Rahmadi & Hamdan, 2023). Nevertheless, how these values are internalized and implemented in the daily lives of *santri* (students) continues to raise various questions. This phenomenon is increasingly interesting because although Islamic boarding schools are known to be strong in forming religious character, there exists a gap between the theory of religious moderation and the practice of its implementation in the context of formal and non-formal education in Islamic boarding school environments (Qorib, 2022).

Previous studies have made essential contributions to understanding religious moderation but tend to be partial. While Nurdin's study emphasized the use of yellow books as a learning medium to instill the values of moderation (Nurdin & Naqqiyah, 2019), Yohana focused on the role of interfaith cooperation as a means of building tolerance in educational environments (Yohana, 2024). However, these two studies have not provided a holistic picture of the integration between curriculum elements, Islamic boarding school traditions, and interfaith interaction strategies in supporting religious moderation. Moreover, there have not been many studies that design a model for implementing *santri's* religiosity as a concrete form of structured religious moderation.

This research is presented to bridge the gap of theory by offering a new perspective through a comprehensive approach. The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of the "Model for Implementing Religiousness of *Santri*," which integrates three main components: (1) a curriculum based on moderation values, including lesson plans, teaching materials, and evaluations, (2) Islamic boarding school traditions that support the formation of moderate attitudes, such as writing traditions, scientific culture, and maintaining local wisdom, and (3) interfaith interactions to broaden the religious insights of *santri* in the context of plurality.

The purpose of this study is to identify curriculum data that reinforces the implementation of religious moderation values in Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs, analyze relevant Islamic boarding school traditions in instilling moderation values in *santri*, and formulate a model for implementing religiousness in *santri* that reflects religious moderation in the context of formal and non-formal education in Islamic boarding schools.

With this approach, this study not only answers academic needs to narrow the gap between theory and practice but also provides real contributions to the management of Islamic education in Indonesia. The resulting implementation model is anticipated to be a guide for Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs in forming a generation of *santri* who are tolerant, love their country, and contribute positively to a pluralistic society.

II. Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a naturalistic paradigm and a post-positivism phenomenological foundation (Muhadjir, 2002), which is relevant to reveal the subjective reality of Islamic boarding school activities in religious moderation education. The researchers also applied a social action model by directly involving themselves in Islamic boarding school activities to understand phenomena emically, ethically, and noetically (Muhadjir, 2002). The research design can be observed in the figure below.

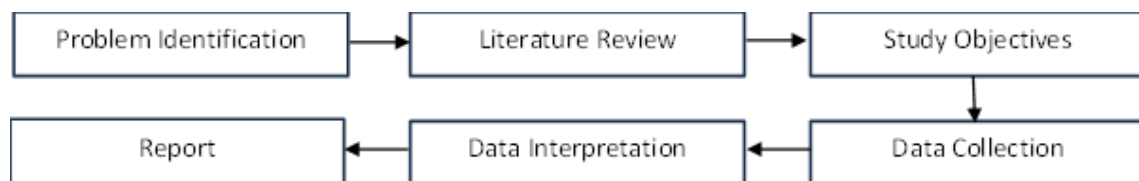


Figure 1. Research Design

The initial stage carried out in this study was the problem identification stage, namely searching, finding, and collecting problems related to the research. Furthermore, a problem analysis process was conducted through literature studies to find solutions to these problems. This method was performed by looking for references related to research, such as journals, books, and research reports. Then, it was continued with the next stages, such as data collection by interviewing the caretakers of the Islamic boarding school, collecting sample data in the form of *santri* activities in Islamic boarding schools that can reflect a moderate attitude, and supported by curriculum documents as the basis for these activities. Following that, the next stage was to analyze the data so that it could describe the tradition of *santri* in implementing religious moderation, as well as the implementation model of *santri* religiosity in Islamic boarding schools. The last stage was drawing conclusions that produced findings, with recommendations and limitations included in this study.

Sample and Data Collection

Data collection in this study was done using three techniques. 1) Interviews were conducted with the

caretakers of the Islamic boarding school, the teaching staff, and *santri* to obtain a general picture related to the understanding of religious moderation and activities that reflect a moderate attitude in the Islamic boarding school environment. 2) Observations in the Islamic boarding school environment aimed to obtain a detailed picture directly related to the activities of the Islamic boarding school. 3) Documentation included the curriculum, lesson schedule, and activity schedule in the Islamic boarding school to support the main data (interviews and observations). The research was carried out in several Islamic boarding schools in Java, namely Madrasah al-Hidayat Lasem, Madrasah Qudsiyyah Kudus, Madrasah Annawawi Purworejo, Madrasah Al-Hikmah Benda Sirampog Brebes, Madrasah Buntet Cirebon, Madrasah Kempek Cirebon, Madrasah Bahrul Ulum Tambabak Beras Jombang, and Madrasah Hidayatul Muftadi'in Lirboyo Kediri.

Analyzing Data

Data analysis was performed in two stages. The first stage produced initial conclusions through inductive analysis of field data. The second stage used qualitative descriptive methods to formulate a model for implementing religious moderation. This method was designed to produce an in-depth understanding and a systematic model that reflects the practice of religious moderation education in Islamic boarding schools accurately and comprehensively.

III. Results And Discussion

The Role of Islamic Boarding School-Based Madrasahs in Realizing Religious Moderation

Moderation is an understanding that takes the middle path, i.e., an understanding that is neither extreme right nor extreme left (Cavatorta & Merone, 2013). K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid also formulated that moderation must always encourage efforts to realize social justice, which in religion is known as *al-maslahah al-'ammah* (Anwar & Haq, 2019). Religious moderation is an understanding and practice of religion in a fair, balanced, and tolerant manner without tendencies toward extremism or excessive liberalism (Mulyana, 2023). In the context of Indonesia, religious moderation is an important element in maintaining harmony amidst religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity (Mawardi, 2024). The Indonesian Ministry of Religion defines religious moderation as a perspective, attitude, and practice of religion that emphasizes justice, balance, and tolerance in dealing with diversity (Agama, 2019). The urgency of religious moderation lies in its function as a strategy to maintain national integrity, especially in the era of globalization, which is vulnerable to polarization and religious-based conflicts (Jamiludin, 2024). Moderation values, such as tolerance, non-discrimination, and love of the homeland, are relevant to overcoming the challenges of extremism and radicalism (Royyan et al., 2024).

Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs are a combination of formal madrasah education with the distinctive traditions of Islamic boarding schools. The Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs in question are a model of managing madrasahs as general high schools with Islamic characteristics, which adopt the values and education systems of Islamic boarding schools. Three coherent facts are used as the basis for formulating this model, namely (1) the reality of madrasahs as educational institutions, (2) the expectations of society (the people) as users of madrasahs, and (3) the mainstream and vision of national education policy (Ihsan, 2020). The integration of Islamic boarding school culture into the management of this madrasah aims to modernize Islamic boarding schools in technical or management aspects only because the substantive aspect, namely the noble values of Islamic boarding schools, is maintained and adopted to improve the quality of madrasahs. In other words, the system and values of Islamic boarding schools will not be lost by modern management in the madrasah pattern because the goal of Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs is to build madrasah education management based on Islamic boarding school values (Ihsan, 2020). The operational design of the management of madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools is in one management system. This means that a madrasah is not only physically located in the Islamic boarding school environment, but the madrasah and Islamic boarding school are in one unified organizational and management structure. The purpose of unifying this management system is so that all educational processes are in a system that allows all teacher and *santri* activities to be in the same flow and program package. The integration and holistic management of the madrasah system can be seen from three aspects, including (1) institutional management, (2) learning system, and (3) environmental creation (Ihsan, 2020).

Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs integrate the values of moderation into lesson plans and teaching materials (Azmi & Akmansyah, 2023), such as the use of books in Islamic boarding schools that teach values, such as *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *ukhuwah wathaniyah*, and *ukhuwah basyariyah*, as well as Islamic boarding school traditions, such as scientific discussions, deliberations, and mutual cooperation, as a medium for internalizing religious moderation. This tradition forms the character of *santri*, who is open to differences and upholds the values of justice. Kiai and teachers at Islamic boarding schools act as role models who demonstrate moderate attitudes in everyday life (Rahayu et al., 2024). This exemplary behavior has a significant impact on the formation of *santri's* attitudes towards religious and cultural differences (Anggraeni & Maharani, 2024). This indicates that Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs are an ideal educational model for realizing religious

moderation. With an integrative approach between religious education, tradition, and social practices, Islamic boarding schools can become a fortress against extremism and radicalism (Ghazali, 2024). Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs play an important role in realizing religious moderation through strengthening the curriculum, preserving traditions, and being role models. Theoretically, Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs are able to bridge the need for moderate religious education with social challenges in a multicultural society (Brooks et al., 2020).

Institutional Policy Patterns of Islamic Boarding School-based Madrasahs in Responding to Religious Moderation

In responding to religious moderation as a government policy, madrasahs as institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Religion in implementing religious moderation include doing the following things.

Strengthening Madrasah Curriculum

This curriculum is intended to direct education towards the intended direction and goals in learning activities as a whole, especially in strengthening moderate character in the souls of *santri*. One of the subjects whose material contains the values of moderation is the material of the Islamic Religious Education group, which is divided into four subjects, namely Fiqh, Al-Qur'an and Hadith, History of Islamic Culture, and Aqidah and morals. In addition to the material from the Ministry of Religion, these Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs are also strengthened by *Salafiyah* materials, such as *taqrib* books, *fathul muin*, tafsir books, hadith books, *tasawuf* or morals, and others. In Fiqh lessons, for example, *santri* are introduced to differences of opinion, which are usually called *khilafiyah*, so that they have broad insight so as not to easily blame something different. The next material is tauhid, where in this material, *santri* are also introduced to the differences in the schools of tauhid, such as the views of *asy'ariyyah* and *maturidiyyah* and several other views. This is also intended so that *santri* has strong provisions for understanding differences. Apart from these subjects, other subjects that provide moderate character reinforcement are civic education materials because, in this material, the values of nationalism or love for the homeland are taught, which are indicators of a moderate person.

Aside from the subject matter, strengthening the value of moderation is also carried out through extracurricular activities, which are activities conducted outside of class hours to develop the potential of Human Resources (HR) possessed by *santri*, such as scouting activities, *pencak silat*, and *bahsul masail*.



Figure 2. Scouting Activities

Other activities that reinforce a moderate attitude are, for example, flag ceremonies and singing nationalistic poems in the form of *shalawat asnawiyah* to ignite the spirit of struggle so that it can train to respect the struggle of the nation's heroes and remember their services in defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) from colonial rule.

Cultivating Moderation Through Learning Resources

An important element in a madrasah is the study of yellow books (*turats*) delivered by the Kiai to the *santri*. This study is urgent in the process of instilling knowledge in *santri*. The study of the book is carried out periodically and continuously to provide a complete understanding of the contents of the book.

The Islamic education curriculum has a Salaf nuance that builds a tradition of thinking based on the treasury of Islamic knowledge. This is done by enriching religious literacy to foster an attitude of religious

moderation for *santri* in Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs. *Santri* must be literate in religious sources. Religious sources can be understood through an understanding of the *Turats* Book, which is often also called the Yellow Book. In the context of religious literacy practices, Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs have references that are based on original literacy (*Salafiyah*).



Figure 3. Books Studied at MA Qudsiyyah

In terms of instilling moderation in *santri*, the study of the books used includes the book *Idlotun Nasyi'in*. This book contains guidance that remains relevant for the young generation of Muslims today. Various advice is written in this book. With the hope of becoming a complete human being adorned with commendable morals and understanding of the problems experienced by the nation, this book also contains propaganda to ignite the spirit of the youth to move forward without giving up to create peace and unity.

Additionally, another book is the book of *faraidus saniyyah*, which contains the doctrine of *ahlus sunnah waljamaah*. The book of *tanbihat* is studied in Tebuireng, which contains the pearls of KH. Hasyim Asyari. The spirit of progress is not enough to indicate the existence of ethics. To complete the spirit of the *santri* to stay on the path of *santri*, an understanding of its relationship to morality is needed. The *santri* study morality through the book *Adab al-'Alim wa al-Muta'alim* by KH. Hasyim Asy'ari.

Following the *Qudwah* of the Elders

Qudwah is a real example of what is done and acted by the elders in the madrasah. One thing that cannot be separated from the world of madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools is the presence of a figure of a scholar, who always provides guidance for institutions and the quality of education. With the presence of this scholar, it is clear that moral cultivation is always the main focus. That is why scholars are always role models for the people, role models for society, guardians of the nation's morals, and pillars in maintaining Islamic brotherhood. In addition, the education typical of scholars always prioritizes the characteristics of education ala the Prophet Muhammad SAW, namely religious education based on tolerance. Therefore, scholars are always committed to strengthening religion as well as uniting the people above the interests of groups, organizations, and groups. MA Qudsiyyah, whose founder is one of the figures and movers of NU, has an extraordinary role in channeling nationalist values to its followers. There are many poems that he created as a spirit of nationalism, including the Independence poem and the *sholawat asnawiyah*. From several of these poems, it is apparent that K.H.R. Asnawi offers a model of religious nationalism that is typical of the *santri* community in Indonesia. K.H.R. Asnawi believes in teaching that love for the homeland is part of faith.

These are some of the things that are always adhered to by policymakers so that *santri* truly have a strong, moderate character as taught by their elders in the form of *qudwah hasanah*.

Maintaining Tradition

Tradition is a cultural product that should be used as a guideline for life because of the many values that can be taken. This aligns with the teachings and strategies of preaching carried out by Sunan Kudus. The figure of Sunan Kudus is so central to the lives of the people of Kudus and its surroundings. This centrality is realized because Sunan Kudus has provided a foundation for religious teachings and a tolerant culture. This is proof that

Sunan Kudus' teachings of tolerance are timeless and are even more relevant amidst the increasingly widespread currents of radicalism and religious fundamentalism today.

Some values of tolerance demonstrated by Sunan Kudus towards his followers were prohibiting the slaughtering of cows to his followers. Not only prohibiting the slaughtering, cows, which are halal for Muslims, were also placed in the courtyard of the mosque at that time. Sunan Kudus's steps certainly invited sympathy from the people who, at that time, considered cows sacred animals. They then flocked to Sunan Kudus to ask many other things from his teachings. Over time, starting from there, more and more people came to the mosque and listened to Sunan Kudus's advice. Islam grew rapidly. Maybe it would have been a different story if Sunan Kudus had gone against the majority by slaughtering cows.

Sunan Kudus's preaching strategy was something that was beyond its time. It was beyond its time because preaching by carrying the values of acculturation at that time was not yet widely practiced by the spreaders of Islam in Indonesia in general. By reviving the essence and spirit of Sunan Kudus's preaching, hopefully, the Muslim community can restore the friendly and tolerant face of Islam after previously being plagued by negative stigma with Sunan Kudus's Teachings of Tolerance.

Cooperation with Interfaith Institutions

Cooperation is vital in forming or increasing solidarity between *santri* of different religions. In cooperation, there are activities carried out together, and cooperation is a team and group process carried out by more than one person. Thus, carrying out cooperation can increase harmony in the social life of society. This is as MA Salafiyah Syafiiyyah Jombang has done, which often conducts visits or comparative studies at non-Islamic institutions. This certainly provides an understanding for the *santri* to be tolerant and moderate towards others.



Figure 4. Comparative Study to School of Human Jakarta and GSM School (Fun School Movement)

Diversity has a significant impact on the process of social interaction between *santri*. The process of cooperation that occurs in the classroom, especially between Muslim and non-Muslim students, is an important means of building an attitude of tolerance, mutual assistance, and mutual acceptance of differences. In this context, each individual is invited to respect each other, regardless of their different religious backgrounds. With this harmonious cooperation, it is hoped that there will be no divisions caused by differences of opinion. Therefore, strengthening attitudes of mutual respect and tolerance between *santri* is crucial to creating an inclusive and peaceful learning environment.

Curriculum Implementation Model in Forming the Religiousness of Moderate *Santri*

The implementation model of the religiousness of *santri* as a response to religious moderation aims to design an education system that teaches not only religious teachings but also forms moderate attitudes and behaviors of *santri* in everyday life. This approach integrates the values of religious moderation in the curriculum, Islamic boarding school traditions, and social interactions in the Islamic boarding school environment to create *santri* who can think openly, tolerantly, and adapt to the development of the times without losing the roots of religious values. As a response to the challenges of plurality and radicalization, this model is expected to produce individuals who have a deep understanding of religion and nationality and can live side by side with adherents of other religions in harmony. Thus, this model is an important effort in building the character of *santri*, who is moderate and plays an active role in a pluralistic society.

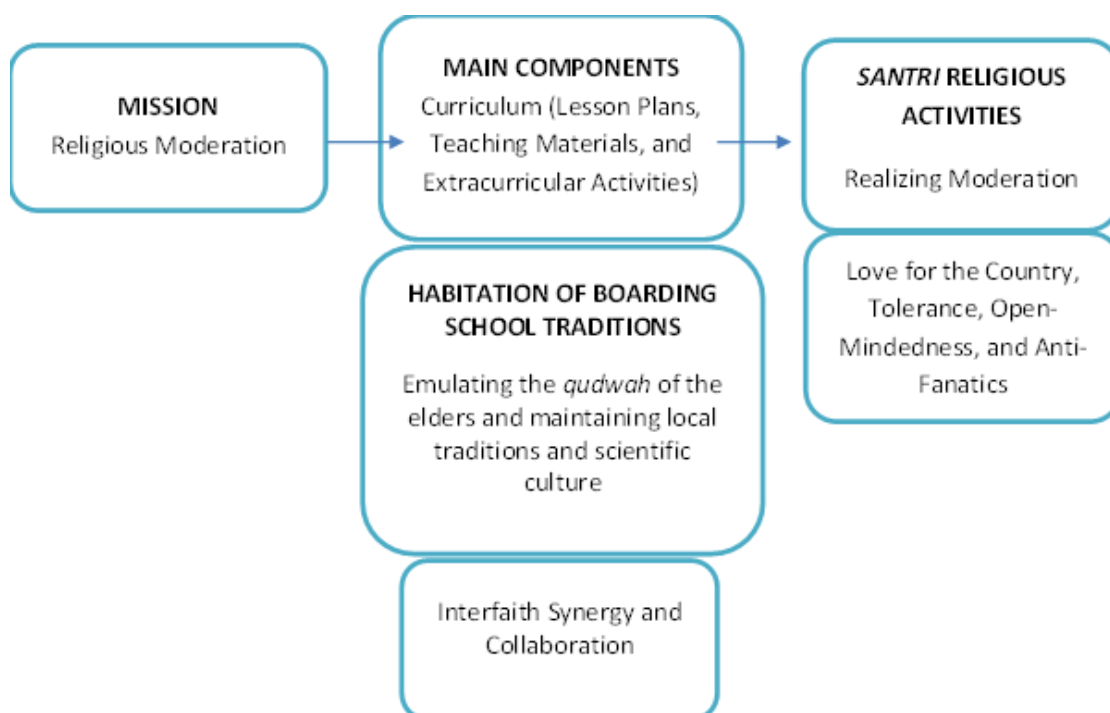


Figure 5. Curriculum Implementation Model Based on Religious Moderation in Forming the Religiousness of Santri

The moderate mission is a basic component that is the foundation for the implementation of a curriculum based on religious moderation in Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs. The mission of this curriculum is to create *santri* who are tolerant, inclusive, and able to live a religious life with the principle of moderation so that they can contribute to building harmony between religious communities in society. The mission of this curriculum includes concrete steps, such as the integration of religious moderation values in every aspect of Islamic boarding school education. In addition, there is the formation of the character of *santri*, which reflects an attitude of mutual respect, mutual assistance, and maintaining unity in religious, cultural, and social diversity.

The main components of this curriculum include lesson plans and teaching materials, which are designed to introduce and teach the values of religious moderation. A lesson plan is a planning document that details the learning objectives and topics to be studied during a semester. In the semester lesson plan, *santri* will learn about the importance of tolerance between religious communities, respect for differences, and understanding moderate Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, teaching materials are in the form of textbooks, modules, or other materials used in learning. These teaching materials include theories of religious moderation and examples of good practices in everyday life, both in religious and social contexts.

Islamic boarding schools have a strong tradition in building moderate religious attitudes, such as *bahsul masail* and *musyawarah* (deliberation), which can be a means to teach *santri* about the importance of respecting differences of opinion. These traditions are an integral part of the educational process in Islamic boarding schools. For example, the tradition of *bahsul masail* in Islamic boarding schools provides space for *santri* to speak, express opinions, and listen to the views of others with an open attitude. It also trains them to have a polite dialogue and respect for differences, whether in the context of religion, culture, or society. In addition, there is a study of classical books. The classical books studied in Islamic boarding schools often contain teachings about moderation, such as in the understanding of *ahl al-sunnah wal jama'ah*, which teaches the importance of diversity in religion. These books provide an intellectual foundation for *santri* to understand that differences in religion are natural and should be accepted. Finally, *qudwah hasanah* means the example of the Kiai and teachers. Kiai and teachers in Islamic boarding schools act as real examples (*qudwah hasanah*) in showing an inclusive and moderate attitude in religious life. This role model is highly important in shaping the character of *santri* because they tend to follow the behavior of their kiai and teachers.

The implementation of a curriculum based on religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools also requires collaboration with various parties outside the Islamic boarding school, both in an interfaith context and with other institutions. This collaboration will enrich the experience of *santri* interacting with the wider community and strengthen their understanding of the importance of moderation in religious life. Regarding interfaith cooperation, Islamic boarding schools need to expand their network of cooperation with other religious institutions, both Muslim and non-Muslim, for example, by holding interfaith dialogue activities involving *santri*

from various religions to share knowledge and experiences in living side by side peacefully. Collaboration with educational institutions can also be done, including educational institutions and social organizations, and can also help Islamic boarding schools strengthen the curriculum of religious moderation, such as through training or seminars that discuss issues of religious moderation and tolerance. This collaboration can also involve the provision of programs that support the integration of religious moderation in everyday life.

Students do not only study in class but are also involved in various activities that can strengthen the understanding and application of religious moderation values. For this reason, activities based on local wisdom are held, where Islamic boarding schools can hold activities based on local wisdom that teach the values of tolerance and mutual respect, for instance, by holding a cultural festival that showcases the richness of Indonesian culture and teaches students about the importance of harmony in diversity.

The result of the curriculum implementation model based on religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools that has been explained previously is the creation of a religious pattern of students who have the following characteristics: love of the homeland, tolerance, open-mindedness, and anti-fanaticism. The educational process that prioritizes religious moderation will gradually form a balanced religious pattern that aligns with the demands of the times.

The implementation model of the curriculum based on religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools combines various elements that support each other, starting from a clear vision and mission, structured curriculum components, existing Islamic boarding school traditions, and external collaboration and student activities that support the achievement of educational goals. Specifically, evaluation and strengthening of the program are important steps to ensure that this curriculum is effective in forming students who have moderate, tolerant attitudes and love their homeland. In this way, Islamic boarding schools can become an important forum for introducing the values of religious moderation that can be applied in everyday life and have a positive impact on society.

IV. Conclusion

This study concludes that enhancing the madrasah curriculum with religious moderation values, including the development of lesson plans and teaching materials that incorporate these values, is essential in cultivating the character of moderate *santri*. The standard books of Islamic boarding schools serve as valuable educational resources to cultivate a moderate disposition in *santri*. The traditions of Islamic boarding schools, including adherence to the *qudwah* (example) of elders, preservation of local customs, promotion of writing culture, and cultivation of scientific culture, significantly contribute to the advancement of religious moderation. Collaboration between madrasahs and interfaith organizations facilitates interactions between *santri* and non-Muslims, enhancing tolerance and concord among religious communities. This strategy educates *santri* to cultivate patriotism while fostering open-mindedness and discouraging extremism. This study develops a "Model for Implementing the Religiousness of *Santri*" that amalgamates the curriculum and customs of Islamic boarding schools to promote religious moderation. This concept is anticipated to serve as a framework for Islamic boarding school-based madrasahs in cultivating a generation of *santri* who are moderate, tolerant, and constructively contribute to national and state affairs.

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