

The Relevance of Islamic Boarding School Curriculum to Religious Moderation Based on the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 7272 of 2019 and Its Impact on the Religious Life of the Community: A Case Study in Cirebon Regency

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Abstract: This study analyzes the relevance of pesantren curriculum to religious moderation values within the context of Indonesian national policy, specifically the Directorate General of Islamic Education Decree No. 7272 of 2019. Using a qualitative approach with case study methods in Cirebon Regency, this research explores how variations in pesantren curricula can produce consistent religious moderation values through kitab kuning instruction and pesantren culture. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with 25 informants (kiai, santri, alumni, and community leaders), participatory observation over 8 months, and curriculum documentation analysis from 4 different pesantren. Findings indicate that despite variations in curriculum structure across pesantren, the use of similar kitab kuning and internalization of pesantren values produce graduates with consistent moderate orientations. Religious moderation principles such as tawasuth, i'tidal, tasamuh, and musyawarah are integrated into sorogan and bandongan learning methods. Pesantren alumni prove to play strategic roles in maintaining social cohesion and countering radicalism in society. This research contributes to academic discourse on the role of traditional Islamic education in shaping religious moderation in the contemporary era.

Keywords: Pesantren Curriculum; Religious Moderation; Kitab Kuning; Islamic Education; Pluralism.

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menganalisis relevansi kurikulum pesantren dengan nilai-nilai moderasi beragama dalam konteks kebijakan nasional Indonesia, khususnya Keputusan Dirjen Pendidikan Islam No. 7272 Tahun 2019. Menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus di Kabupaten Cirebon, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana variasi kurikulum pesantren dapat menghasilkan kesamaan nilai moderasi beragama melalui pengajaran kitab kuning dan budaya pesantren.

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Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan 25 informan (kiai, santri, alumni, dan tokoh masyarakat), observasi partisipatif selama 8 bulan, dan analisis dokumentasi kurikulum dari 4 pesantren berbeda. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa meskipun terdapat variasi struktur kurikulum antar-pesantren, penggunaan kitab kuning yang sama dan internalisasi nilai-nilai pesantren menghasilkan lulusan dengan orientasi moderat yang konsisten. Prinsip-prinsip moderasi beragama seperti tawasuth, i'tidal, tasamuh, dan musyawarah terintegrasi dalam metode pembelajaran sorogan dan bandongan. Alumni pesantren terbukti berperan strategis dalam menjaga kohesi sosial dan menangkal radikalisme di masyarakat. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada diskusi akademik tentang peran pendidikan Islam tradisional dalam pembentukan moderasi beragama di era kontemporer.

Kata Kunci: Kurikulum Pesantren; Moderasi Beragama; Kitab Kuning; Pendidikan Islam; Pluralisme.

A. Introduction

Pesantren, as the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have played a central role in shaping the religious character of the Indonesian people for centuries. The existence of Islamic boarding schools, which have been deeply rooted since the 15th century, not only reflects the peaceful process of Islamization in the Indonesian archipelago, but also demonstrates Islam's ability to adapt to diverse local contexts (Dhofier, 1982; Steenbrink, 1986). As an educational institution born from the fusion of Islamic teachings and local wisdom, Islamic boarding schools have unique characteristics that distinguish them from Islamic educational institutions in other parts of the world. Islamic boarding schools not only function as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge through the teaching of classical texts, but also as agents for the formation of moderate and tolerant religious attitudes that are characteristic of Indonesian Islam.

The tradition of religious moderation in Islamic boarding schools is reflected in various aspects of educational life. From teaching methodologies that emphasize dialogue and discussion (*munazharah*), pluralism of schools of thought in fiqh studies, to the practice of acculturation of local culture in religious rituals, all of these demonstrate the inclusive and tolerant nature of Islam. The holistic pesantren education

system, which covers cognitive aspects through the study of classical Islamic texts, affective aspects through the internalization of noble moral values, and psychomotor aspects through the practice of worship and boarding school life, has proven effective in producing a generation of Muslims with both spiritual depth and high social sensitivity (Mastuhu, 1994).

In the context of modern Indonesia, which is increasingly pluralistic and dynamic, the role of pesantren has become more strategic and complex. The socio-political transformation that has taken place since the reform era, accompanied by advances in information and communication technology, has had a significant impact on the religious landscape in Indonesia. On the one hand, democratic openness provides more space for diverse expressions of religiosity. However, on the other hand, this openness also opens up opportunities for the entry of radical and intolerant religious ideologies that contradict the moderate traditions of Indonesian Islam (Azra, 2006; Bruinessen, 2013).

The challenges of globalization, radicalization, and religious polarization require Islamic educational institutions to produce a generation that not only has a deep understanding of religion but is also capable of moderation in social life. The phenomenon of religious radicalization that has swept across various parts of the world, including Indonesia, has raised serious concerns about the future of tolerance and harmony among religious communities. Several cases of terrorism involving perpetrators with a religious education background show that inappropriate religious education can become a medium for spreading radical ideology. This calls for a comprehensive evaluation of the Islamic education system, including Islamic boarding schools, to ensure that the values of religious moderation are truly internalized in the curriculum and educational practices.

In response to these challenges, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has issued a series of policies aimed at strengthening religious moderation in the national education system. One of the most significant policies is the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education Number 7272 of 2019 concerning Guidelines for the Implementation of Religious Moderation in Islamic Education. This

policy emphasizes the importance of integrating the values of religious moderation into the Islamic education system, including in Islamic boarding schools, madrasas, and Islamic religious universities. The emergence of this policy is inseparable from the government's growing concern over the spread of extreme and intolerant religious ideologies among Indonesia's young Muslim generation.

Religious moderation in the context of this policy is defined as a balanced religious attitude between practicing one's own religion and respecting the religious practices of other religions, as well as not being extreme in one's religion (Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019). This definition reflects a comprehensive understanding of moderation that is not only related to interfaith relations, but also includes internal attitudes in understanding and practicing religious teachings. The concept of religious moderation established in this policy includes four main indicators that are interrelated and reinforce each other:

First, national commitment refers to acceptance of the basic national consensus in the form of Pancasila as the foundation of the state, the 1945 Constitution as the state constitution, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika as the motto of unity, and NKRI as the final form of the Indonesian state. This indicator emphasizes that religious moderation must be in line with commitment to the integrity and sovereignty of the Indonesian nation. Second, tolerance is defined as an attitude of respect for differences, both in terms of religion and other aspects of life such as ethnicity, race, culture, and political views. Tolerance in this context is not merely a passive acceptance of differences, but an active attitude in building social harmony amid diversity. Third, anti-violence refers to the attitude of not using violent means to spread or defend one's opinions and beliefs. This indicator is very important given the tendency of some groups to use violence in enforcing their religious understanding. Fourth, accommodating towards local culture, which means being friendly and not opposing local culture, as long as it does not conflict with the principles of religious teachings. This indicator recognizes local wisdom as an integral part of Indonesia's Islamic identity that needs to be preserved and developed.

Although Islamic boarding schools are historically known as institutions that promote moderate Islam, there are several challenges and questions that need to be

answered empirically in the context of implementing religious moderation policies. The first challenge relates to the variation in the curriculum of Islamic boarding schools, which is autonomous and highly dependent on the scientific background, intellectual orientation, and intellectual network of the kiai (religious leader) who is the caretaker. This autonomy, while providing flexibility in developing curricula tailored to local needs, also has the potential to produce different outcomes in terms of understanding and implementing religious moderation. Some Islamic boarding schools may place more emphasis on the formal rituals of religious practice, while others focus more on social aspects.

The second challenge is the lack of in-depth and comprehensive studies on the extent to which the current pesantren curriculum is in line with the principles of religious moderation set out in national policy. Although many studies have been conducted on Islamic boarding schools and religious moderation separately, there has been no research that specifically analyzes the relevance of the Islamic boarding school curriculum to the framework of religious moderation as stipulated in the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 7272 of 2019. Such a study is important to ensure that Islamic boarding schools can contribute optimally to the implementation of religious moderation policies.

The third challenge relates to the social impact of the pesantren curriculum, namely the need for empirical studies on how pesantren alumni apply the values they have acquired in their social lives, particularly in the context of a pluralistic and multicultural society. Are the values of moderation taught in pesantren truly internalized and manifested in the attitudes and behavior of alumni when they interact with diverse communities? This question is important considering that the true test of the effectiveness of religious moderation education is its implementation in real life in society.

The fourth challenge is the lack of in-depth understanding of the mechanism of internalization of religious moderation values in the pesantren education system. How does the transmission of moderate values occur in daily interactions between kiai, ustaz, and santri? What role do the yellow books, traditional learning methods such as sorogan

and bandongan, and the overall pesantren culture play in shaping the moderate character of santri? Understanding these mechanisms is important for optimizing the process of internalizing moderate religious values.

Based on these issues and challenges, this study aims to analyze the relevance of the pesantren curriculum to the values of religious moderation as stipulated in national policy, particularly in the context of Cirebon Regency as one of the regions with a high concentration of pesantren and a strong tradition of Islamic scholarship. The selection of Cirebon Regency as the locus of research was based on several strategic considerations. First, Cirebon Regency has a long history as a center for the spread of Islam in West Java with a deeply rooted pesantren tradition. Second, the pesantren in Cirebon Regency have a diversity of orientations and scholarly traditions that are interesting to study. Third, the position of Cirebon Regency on the border between West Java and Central Java provides its own dynamics in the development of Islamic scholarly traditions.

Specifically, this study will examine the structure and orientation of the pesantren curriculum in Cirebon Regency with a focus on its relevance to the values of religious moderation. An analysis will be conducted on the components of the curriculum, ranging from the books taught, the learning methods used, to the values emphasized in the educational process. Furthermore, this study will evaluate the suitability of the pesantren curriculum with the principles of religious moderation in the Decree of the Director General of Islamic Education No. 7272 of 2019, particularly in terms of national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture.

This study will also identify the mechanisms for internalizing the values of religious moderation in the pesantren learning process by analyzing the dynamics of interaction within the pesantren community, the role of kiai and ustaz figures in the transmission of values, and the influence of pesantren culture on the character formation of santri. Equally important, this study will analyze the impact of the pesantren curriculum on the religious attitudes and behavior of alumni in community life through a study of pesantren alumni who have entered society and played a role in various sectors of life.

This study is expected to make a significant theoretical contribution to enriching the scientific knowledge base on the role of Islamic boarding schools in shaping religious moderation. Academically, this study will develop a theoretical framework on the relationship between traditional Islamic education curricula and the values of religious moderation, which has been limited in scope until now. This research is also expected to contribute to the development of contemporary Islamic education theory that is responsive to the challenges of the times without losing its traditional roots.

Practically, this research is expected to provide constructive input for the government, particularly the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in formulating and refining Islamic education policies that are more effective in promoting religious moderation. The results of this study are also expected to be a valuable reference for Islamic boarding school leaders, Islamic education foundation administrators, and education practitioners in developing Islamic boarding school curricula that are more responsive to contemporary challenges while maintaining the noble values of the Islamic boarding school tradition. Equally important, this research is expected to assist various Islamic education stakeholders in optimizing the role of Islamic boarding schools as agents of religious moderation amid the dynamics of Indonesia's pluralistic and multicultural society, so that Islamic boarding schools can continue to contribute to maintaining social harmony and national unity.

B. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm to deeply understand the meaning and interpretation of the research subjects regarding the relevance of the Islamic boarding school curriculum to religious moderation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The choice of a qualitative approach is based on the complex nature of the phenomenon being studied, which requires in-depth exploration of the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation in the social and cultural context of Islamic boarding schools.

The research design used is a multiple case study, which allows for in-depth analysis of phenomena in a real-life context while also enabling comparisons between cases to increase the validity of the findings (Yin, 2014). The research was conducted in

Cirebon Regency, West Java, considering that this area has a long history as a center for the spread of Islam in West Java, there are various pesantren from different generations and curriculum orientations, and the community is known to be pluralistic with various religious and cultural groups. The research lasted for eight months from February to September 2025, consisting of a preparation phase (1 month), data collection (6 months), and analysis and writing (1 month).

Four Islamic boarding schools were selected as research cases based on criteria of representation of generations of Islamic boarding schools (classical, semi-modern, modern), size variation (large, medium, small), differences in curriculum orientation, and accessibility for research. The Islamic boarding schools that were the objects of research were Assalafie Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon Islamic Boarding School (classical, 1000+ students), Bina Insan Mulia 2 Islamic Boarding School in Dukupuntang, Cirebon (semi-modern, 2000+ students), Abu Mansur 2 Islamic Boarding School in Kaliwungu Plered, Cirebon (modern, 300 students), and KHAS Islamic Boarding School in Kempek, Cirebon (classical, 1000+ students). These four Islamic boarding schools were selected to obtain a comprehensive picture of the variations in the implementation of the Islamic boarding school curriculum in the context of religious moderation.

There were 25 research informants consisting of 4 kiai/Islamic boarding school leaders, 12 students (3 from each Islamic boarding school), 4 Islamic boarding school alumni, 3 community leaders, and 2 officials from the Cirebon Regency Ministry of Religious Affairs. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure their relevance to the research objectives, and snowball sampling to reach key informants who could provide in-depth information about the phenomenon under study.

Data collection was conducted using three main techniques. First, in-depth interviews with semi-structured guides covering aspects of the structure and orientation of the pesantren curriculum, learning methods and internalization of values, understanding of religious moderation, and the implementation of moderation values in daily life. Second, participatory observation of the process of learning the yellow book, pesantren life activities, social interactions within the pesantren community, and daily

religious practices. Third, a documentation study analyzing the formal pesantren curriculum, the yellow book taught, pesantren literature such as bulletins and magazines, and documentation of various pesantren activities.

Data analysis uses the Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) thematic analysis model, which consists of three stages. The data condensation stage involves the process of selecting, simplifying, and transforming raw data from the field. The data presentation stage involves compiling data in a format that allows conclusions to be drawn and actions to be taken. The conclusion drawing stage involves interpreting the meaning of the presented data by identifying patterns, themes, and categories that emerge from the data.

Data validity is ensured through four validation strategies. Source triangulation is carried out by using various sources of information from clerics, students, alumni, and community leaders to obtain diverse perspectives on the phenomenon being studied. Method triangulation is carried out by combining in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation studies to obtain comprehensive data. Member checking is carried out by confirming research findings with key informants to ensure the accuracy of data interpretation. Peer debriefing is carried out through discussions of research findings with fellow researchers and experts in the field of Islamic education to obtain constructive input and criticism.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Characteristics of Islamic Boarding Schools in Cirebon Regency

Cirebon Regency has 726 Islamic boarding schools spread across 40 subdistricts with a total of approximately 55,000 students registered online in Emis based on data from the Cirebon Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2021. These Islamic boarding schools can be categorized into three types based on their education systems: salaf/classical Islamic boarding schools (45%) that only teach classical Islamic texts using traditional methods, khalaf/modern Islamic boarding schools (25%) that combine the Islamic boarding school curriculum with the national curriculum, and semi-modern Islamic boarding schools (30%) that teach classical Islamic texts along with several general subjects.

Pesantren in Cirebon have strong historical roots in the Wali Songo tradition, particularly Sunan Gunung Jati. This historical influence has shaped the character of Cirebon pesantren, which are moderate and accommodating of local culture. Based on historical data, the oldest pesantren in Cirebon was founded in the 16th century, while the youngest pesantren was established in 2018. This diversity in age reflects the continuity of the pesantren tradition, which continues to develop into the contemporary era, while also demonstrating the adaptability of the pesantren education system in facing changing times.

2. Structure and Orientation of the Pesantren Curriculum

Analysis of the curriculum structure shows significant variations based on the typology of pesantren. Classical pesantren such as Al-Hidayah and Nurul Huda have a curriculum structure that is entirely based on classical Islamic texts with a division into three levels: *awwaliah* (basic), *wustho* (intermediate), and *ulya* (advanced). At the basic level, students study *aqidah* through *Aqidah al-Awam* and *Kifayah al-Awam*, *fiqh* through *Safinat al-Naja* and *Taqrib*, *akhlaq* through *Akhlaq lil Banin/Banat*, and *nahwu-sharaf* through *Al-Ajurumiyyah* and *Tashrif*.

Semi-modern Islamic boarding schools such as Bima Insan Mulia 2 combine 70% of the classical Islamic curriculum with a structure similar to that of classical Islamic boarding schools and 30% of general subjects including Indonesian Language, Basic Mathematics, History, and English. Meanwhile, modern Islamic boarding schools such as Abu Mansur integrate 40% of the classical Islamic texts curriculum, which is a selection of core texts, with 60% of the national curriculum that follows the Ministry of Education standards.

Despite variations in curriculum structure, analysis shows fundamental similarities in several aspects. All pesantren teach the same core texts, such as *Fathul Mu'in*, *Tafsir Jalalain*, and *Ihya Ulumuddin*. Teaching methods also show consistency, with the *sorogan* and *bandongan* methods dominating in all pesantren. The values emphasized also show similarities in their emphasis on morals, tolerance, and moderation, as well as the pesantren culture that emphasizes dormitory life with values of togetherness and mutual cooperation.

3. Curriculum Relevance to Religious Moderation

Content analysis of core texts taught in Islamic boarding schools shows strong relevance to the principles of religious moderation. The book *Fathul Mu'in* by Zainuddin al-Malibari teaches the principles of moderation through the concept of *maslahah*, which prioritizes the common good in the application of law, the principle of *la dharar wa la dhirar*, which avoids harm and does not harm others, and *fiqh al-aqalliyyat*, which provides flexibility in the law for minority contexts.

As stated by KH. Yasyif Maemun Syaerozie, Caretaker of the Assalafie Babakan Ciwaringin Cirebon Islamic Boarding School, "The book *Fathul Mu'in* not only teaches the law rigidly, but also teaches the wisdom behind the law. Students are encouraged to understand that Islamic law is flexible and considers the common good." This statement shows that the approach in teaching the yellow book is not merely doctrinal, but develops a moderate contextual understanding.

The book *Ihya Ulumuddin* by Imam al-Ghazali is the main source of character education with an emphasis on *tazkiyah al-nafs* (purification of the soul from despicable traits), *husn al-khuluq* (good morals in interacting with others), and religious tolerance that respects differences within the framework of human brotherhood. The *Tafsir Jalalain* by Jalaluddin al-Mahalli and Jalaluddin al-Suyuthi teaches a moderate understanding of the Quran through the contextualization of verses in their historical and social contexts, a hermeneutic approach that does not understand the text literally, and inclusiveness that respects diversity of interpretation within permissible limits.

An analysis of the pesantren curriculum shows a high degree of conformity with the four indicators of religious moderation set out in the Director General of Islamic Education Decree No. 7272 of 2019. In terms of national commitment, all pesantren studied showed strong commitment through the teaching of adab books such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*, which teaches manners in line with Pancasila values, the traditions of *tahlilan* and *yasinan*, which integrate prayers for the nation and state, and active participation in commemorating national holidays.

Findings from interviews with Islamic boarding school students show a good understanding of the relationship between religion and nationality. A student at the Abu

Mansur Islamic Boarding School stated, "We are taught that loving our homeland is part of our faith. The kiai often says, 'hubb al-wathan min al-iman' (love for the homeland is part of faith)." This statement reflects the internalization of national values that are not dichotomous with religious values.

The principle of tolerance is internalized in the pesantren curriculum through the teaching of *fiqh muqaran*, which compares opinions between *madhhabs* and teaches respect for differences; *adab al-ikhtilaf*, which teaches the ethics of disagreeing; and the practice of multiculturalism through harmonious interaction with the diverse communities surrounding the pesantren. Observations at the Bina Insan Mulia 2 Islamic boarding school show that students from various regional and cultural backgrounds live harmoniously side by side through a "buddy" system that combines students from different regions in one room.

An anti-violence stance is developed through moral teaching with an emphasis on good morals and avoiding bad morals, peaceful conflict resolution methods in resolving conflicts between students through deliberation, and explicit criticism by clerics of radical ideas in religious lectures. KH. Mustofa Mustofa Aqiel Siraj from the KHAS Kempek Islamic Boarding School stated, "We always teach that Islam is *rahmatan lil alamin* (a blessing for the universe). There is no place for violence in Islamic preaching. The true *jihad* is *jihad* against one's desires."

Pesantren in Cirebon also show strong accommodation of local culture through the integration of arts and culture with the use of traditional songs and arts in learning, the adaptation of rituals by adjusting religious practices to local traditions, and the use of Javanese/Sundanese in explaining religious concepts as the language of instruction.

4. Mechanisms for Internalizing Values of Religious Moderation

The pesantren learning method plays an important role in internalizing values of religious moderation. The *sorogan* method enables deep internalization of values through personal interaction between *santri* and *kiai*, individual correction of misunderstandings, and modeling in which *santri* can directly emulate the attitudes and behavior of *kiai*. Observations of *sorogan* sessions at the Assalafie Babakan Ciwaringin

Islamic Boarding School in Cirebon show that kiai not only correct students' recitation of religious texts, but also provide advice on the application of values in daily life.

The bandongan method facilitates the internalization of values through open discussions where santri can ask questions and discuss the material, peer learning where santri learn from the questions and comments of other santri, and contextualization where kiai connect the material in the book to the context of contemporary life. These two methods are not only a transfer of knowledge, but also a transmission of values and character building through intensive interaction within the pesantren community.

Pesantren culture is an important factor in the internalization of moderate values. The boarding school system serves as a living laboratory for applying moderate values through collective life that teaches tolerance in diversity, a tradition of mutual cooperation in daily activities, and conflict resolution through deliberation. Various pesantren traditions such as joint istighosah (prayer), public recitation for the wider community, and haul and tahlilan (commemoration ceremonies) that integrate local cultural values contribute to the internalization of moderation.

The exemplary behavior of the kiai (religious leader) as a central figure has a very significant influence through attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate the practice of moderation in daily life, social interactions involving various groups of society, and inclusive leadership that takes diversity into account. Pesantren also do not live in isolation but actively interact with the wider community through community service programs such as health services, community education, and economic empowerment, as well as interfaith dialogue through participation in the Forum for Religious Harmony and joint social activities.

D. Conclusion

This study shows that the pesantren curriculum in Cirebon Regency has strong relevance to the values of religious moderation as formulated in national regulations. The internalization of moderation values takes place through learning, pesantren culture, and the exemplary behavior of kiai, which consistently shape graduates with a moderate orientation. Pesantren alumni have proven to play a strategic role as agents of

moderation in society by demonstrating national commitment, tolerance, rejection of violence, and the ability to accommodate local culture.

Nevertheless, Islamic boarding schools face both internal challenges (resistance to change, limited resources) and external challenges (the rise of radicalism, pressure to modernize). However, there are still great opportunities for Islamic boarding schools to strengthen their role in the development of religious moderation, especially with the support of government policies, increased internal capacity, and community involvement.

Penelitian ini menyadari adanya keterbatasan pada cakupan wilayah, jumlah sampel, serta keterikatan waktu, sehingga hasilnya belum sepenuhnya dapat digeneralisasi. Oleh karena itu, penelitian lanjutan yang lebih luas, kuantitatif, dan komparatif perlu dilakukan untuk memperdalam pemahaman mengenai efektivitas pesantren dalam membentuk moderasi beragama di Indonesia.

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