

THE INTERNALIZATION MECHANISMS OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION VALUES IN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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Abstract

This research examines the scope and extent of internalization of the values of religious moderation, wasathiyah, tasamuh, i'tidal, and inclusivity, as well as their internalization and the subsequent behavioral outcomes at Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak, Indonesia. This study is a qualitative case study that examines mechanisms of internalization of religious moderation values in Baitul Mubarak Islamic Boarding School, Kubu Raya. Data for the study include transcripts of in-depth interviews, field notes, curriculum documents, and policies of Islamic boarding schools. Data are from 10 key informants, consisting of the Islamic boarding school headmaster, teachers, and students, as well as documentation. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and document review. Data analysis used the thematic analysis process of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings suggest that the internalization of the values is the result of the functioning of an internalized complete system, which utilizes five primary mechanisms: key transformative leadership role modeling, daily routines' institutionalized habituation, critical dialogues within the *halaqah* system, curriculum integration, and a curated 24/7 social environment. Such mechanisms bring about fundamental changes in the students' behavior, as seen in their active interfaith exchanges, counteraction to radical normative discourses, and social peace-building activities. The findings of the research emphasize that Islamic institutions such as the pesantren have the potential to bring about social change in society, as long as these institutions are approached with a holistic system and value-oriented character education for the students. This research articulates the development of a model approach to education for sustaining peace and preventing extremism, which is congruent with global frameworks and has practical relevance to the polity and institutions of Islamic education.

Keywords

Character Education, Pesantren, Religious Moderation, Transformative Pedagogy, Value Internalization.



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INTRODUCTION

Balanced religious moderation has become a significant construct to encourage the balanced practice and perception of religion, steering clear of the extreme ends of radicalism and/or liberalism (Husna & Thohir, 2020; Latifa et al., 2022). As a country with an extraordinary religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity, Indonesia has a lot of social problems related to intolerance and social disintegration, as well as radicalism, which may lead to divisions within society and to national disunity (Bazzi & Gudgeon, 2021; Khanif, 2022). In line with this, the cultivation of the values of religious moderation comes to the fore, especially through the education system, as that which is central to a change in values, cognition, and behaviour (Imamah, 2023; Aderibigbe et al., 2023; Solahudin et al., 2023).

Being the oldest and the most pervasive Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, pondok pesantren have a strategic position to produce a generation by *wasathiyya* characterized (moderate), rather than extremism, emphasizing tolerance and harmony (Wildan & Muttaqin, 2022; Haniyah, 2022). Through the dialogical and inclusive pedagogy, pesantren can become a bridging factor in the formation of a common understanding of the significance of harmony, especially in a pluralistic society with differences (Defriza et al., 2025).

The problem of this research is how the process of internalizing religious moderation values at the Baitul Mubarak Islamic boarding school in the Kubu Raya district. The Islamic boarding school within a pluralistic society evokes a question about academic issues on how to generate the young generation who have strong beliefs and are inclusive in social interaction. To these, as a reaction, the Islamic boarding school made an internalization policy, firstly through transferring curriculum and moral texts; secondly, by housing together in one room; lastly was through using religious teachers as a direct model. This policy plays a very important role in saving students from radical thinking and preparing them as preachers who are able to face the challenges of a pluralistic society in Kubu Raya.

This process, facilitated by the allegiance of the *kyai* (Islamic leaders) and by a strong tradition of Islamic boarding schools, is also experiencing severe obstacles. Key inhibitors related to the variability of students' initial ideas and also to the volume of information provided by social networking sites, which disseminate intolerant ideologies. It follows that the transmission of moderation values is not limited by being posed in a setting such as this Islamic boarding school, which begs expression, and as a dynamic process, there are always tensions between idealism and

material exigency.

This research aims to fill this gap by analyzing the specific values—curriculum, role-modelling, habituation, and the unique 24/7 boarding culture—moderation values integration in the day-to-day activities of students in Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak. Understanding the internalization process is multifaceted and, as such, entails multifactorial interactions. The transformative leadership of the Kyai, coupled with the pedagogic prowess of the teachers, is internal, while competing digital narratives and socio-political contexts are external. It is the understanding of such aids and barriers that will inform the development of a sustainable model.

A systematic review of more recent studies depicts existing gaps in this area. For example, Bosra & Umiarso (2021) and Rahmadi & Hamdan (2023) described the implementation of religious moderation in extracurricular and curricular activities but failed to analyze the processes of value internalization, or internalization of the values, and the impacts of values on students' everyday behaviour. Likewise, Nurullah et al. (2022) examined the madrasah context but failed to consider the traditional boarding pesantren ecosystem, which is uniquely set up to provide a 24/7 educational experience. Huda (2024) and Humaidi (2024) identified important components, which include institutional culture and leadership, but did not analyze the collective interrelations of these elements as an ecosystem. Riswadi et al. (2024) argued for the inclusion of system thinking for systemic integration, yet provided no behavioural proof to their claim, while Nurbayani & Amiruddin (2024) described instructional strategies of the teacher, but ignored contextual factors such as the digital environment, cognitive dissonance, and resistance to change.

The distinctive aspect of this study is its in-depth examination of the mechanisms of transformative role modeling, critical dialogue, and crafted social settings through which values of religious moderation are assimilated at Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak. Drawing on Bandura & Walters (1977) social learning theory and Bronfenbrenner (1979) the theory of ecological systems takes into account both enabling factors (e.g., institutional leadership, organizational culture) and constraining factors (e.g., digital stories, teaching and learning boundaries) to achieve an informed appraisal. Most importantly, it provides empirical evidence of how these mechanisms are operationalized and produce behavioral manifestations such as radicalism refusal and positive proactive tolerance. This provides a model of peacebuilding and character education for UNESCO (2017) violent extremism framework, which emphasizes an ecologically valid model of peace education and character formation.

Therefore, the research that attempts to fill this gap, this study will examine the internalization process of values of religious moderation at Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak, Kubu Raya, and its impact on the behavior of santri. Utilizing a qualitative case study method, the study intends to develop a comprehensive and contextual account of the ways the value of becoming a moderate is internalized and enacted in daily life at the pesantren.

The importance of this research is twofold. From the theoretical perspective, this work is an innovation in Islamic education and character building through proposing an integrated ecosystem approach to value internalization. It goes past mere descriptions to an empirical exploration of the interlocking components of transformative leadership, institutionalization, critical curriculum dialogue, curriculum socialization, and their integrative functioning in a traditional pesantren context and setting. It adds to the theoretical discourse of transformative pedagogy and moral education in religious settings. From the practical side, the findings provide a model that Islamic educational institutions, educational policy makers, and curriculum specialists can adapt to promote religious moderation and sustainable deradicalization interventions. This research surfaces the enabling conditions and the barriers, thus aiding in the practical aspects of character education, social cohesion, and intervention program development that are culturally and contextually appropriate and relevant to peace building and peace sustaining at the national and international levels.

METHOD

This study is designed as a qualitative case study, following Yin (2009), to examine how the values of religious moderation are implemented in Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak in Kubu Raya Regency. It utilized multiple sources of data, including verbal and non-verbal data from observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The leaders of the pesantren, as well as the ustadz/ustadzah and santri who are actively engaged in the internalization of the religious moderation values, served as key informants.

The research material is based on triangulation data in three varieties. Verbal data were textualized into full transcripts of the in-depth interviews that also included a complete account from the informants in narrative, description, and conceptual knowledge of religious moderation (Knott et al., 2022). Observation consisted of comprehensive field notes on non-verbal language, social interaction, and education practices in the Islamic boarding school (Balcom et al., 2021).

Documentary data were the curriculum, the yellow book, written policies, and Islamic boarding school reports about the activities related to religious moderation (Abejuela et al., 2023). These three categories of data complement each other to obtain a more nuanced understanding of how the internalization process of such religious moderation values occurred.

The data was collected using three methods: Participant observation was conducted from January to June, 2025, in order to view firsthand learning, social interaction, and daily interactions in the pesantren; Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured form with 10 purposefully sampled respondents. This included one leader of the pesantren, three teachers, and six students, to gauge their experiences and understanding of the concept of religious moderation (Creswell & Poth, 2016); Documents included the analysis of the curricula, other lesson modules, and policies, as well as activity reports to ascertain the institutional stance on internalizing the values (Bowen, 2009).

The data were analyzed according to the thematic analysis framework, which Miles & Huberman (1984) describe data as being reduced and displayed in a way that leads to a conclusion. Data reduction involved extracting value internalization processes, wherein value internalization processes were synthesized and organized using relevant themes. As for data display, it meant that findings needed to be written out and described using narrative as well as tables to show patterns and relationships.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The purpose of this study was to trace the processes related to the internalization of the values of religious moderation at the Baitul Mubarak Islamic Boarding School. The collection of data was done over six months, including participant observation, extensive interviews with the administrators, teachers, and students, and examination of the curriculum and policy documentation. The conclusions provided in this paper are a synthesis of all data obtained, as well as a process of verification to ensure rigor. To facilitate the analysis and presentation of data, the most pertinent core data are organized in the table below.

Table 1. Value Moderation Religion Implementation Mechanisms at Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak, Kabupaten Kubu Raya

No	Implementation	Process	Influence	Challenge	Hindrance
1	Curriculum Integration	Role Modeling by Authority Figures	Practice of Active Tolerance	Cognitive Resistance	Digital Ecosystem
2	Institutional Policies	Institutionalized Habituation	Constructive Understanding of Pluralism	Pedagogic Capacity of Teachers	Socio-Political Pressures
3	Dialogue Programs	Critical Dialogue (Halaqah)	Resistance to Radicalism		
4	Inclusive Leadership	Curated Social Environment (24/7 Boarding)	Initiative in Social Harmony Activities		
5	Strategic Exposure		Positive Religious Self-Confidence		

Source: Primary data collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews with kiai and students, and analysis of curriculum documents and activity reports

Implementation of Religious Moderation

Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak applies the values of religious moderation with five basic strategies. The first value of balance (wasathiyah) is taught in the curriculum with Fiqh and Islamic History subjects by using the contextualization approach. The second value of justice (i'tidal) is reflected in the institutional policies and governance in daily routine, such as in the constructed conflict resolutions that emphasize deliberation (musyawarah) and the policies on the institution of violence. The third strategy is the conflict of the pesantren programs that include liqa' and halaqah, which are geared towards the examination of sensitive religious topics. The fourth strategy is the dissemination of the inclusive teachings of the leader of the pesantren through the use of advocacy by exceptional speakers, from which students are then enabled to obtain a wide range of new ideas. The last strategy stems from the outreach activities of the pesantren with the students who engage in pluralistic community service.

The Process of Adopting the Values of Moderate Religiousness

There are four interconnected ways in which these values are internalized. Firstly, and most basic of all, is the modeling practice which is pervasive within the Kiai and teachers (ustadz/ustadzah) and their everyday actions and relations. They behave in ways that level directly to their students. The second mechanism is the formation of habits, which is to say the practicing of various activities such as the daily routine of prayers, taking meals together, and performing communal service, all of which are indirect builders of the value of discipline, selflessness, and

cooperation. The third mechanism is critical dialogue, which is within the two parts of halaqah, focusing on instructing students on how to rationally and respectfully disagree, which is to hear differences and endure multiple perspectives on one and the same issue, even if it's religious. And fourth, all of them are supported by a tailored configuration of the social world, such as a boarding system (24/7) that enables interacting continuously in value-intensive environments, which supports students in internalizing their values.

Influence of Religiosity Moderation Values on Student Behavior

The incorporation of religious moderation values refined and redesigned the attitudes and actions of the students in five notable ways. First, the students began implementing the religious practice of active tolerance, which is understanding and practicing tolerance within actions and deeds that go beyond all religious divides. Second, students came to appreciate pluralism in its most constructive form, that is, the ability to tell the difference between the unity in diversity and the uniformity of diversity, and the acceptance of differences as a 'given' rather than a 'problem' to be solved. Third, the students exhibited the ability to counter and counter radical narratives that are prevalent on social media. They even took on the role of rehabilitation for peers who have been exposed to radicalized extremist narratives. Fourth, the 'student agency', as a result of internally adopted religious moderation values, took the form of active initiative to become the facilitators and organizers of a variety of activities designed to promote social harmony. Finally, and most importantly, the value internalization transformed the students to become religious self-confident. Most notable is the conviction that is open and willing to engage in dialogue, rather than being provoked and triggered to shut off.

Internal Challenge

As with any journey, there were challenges during the internalization process. The internal struggle came from the value of acceptance of tolerance, and inclusiveness, which was still seen as an ideology devoid of passion by some students with a more fundamentalist view. The barrier of inequitable pedagogical effectiveness among educators was problematic, as some still taught with expository methods, devoid of elements of shared inquiry, which fosters the internalization of complicated value systems.

External Obstacle

External barriers were faced by the pesantren as well. Most challenging was the clash of the digital ecosystem with the core values of the pesantren, where radical narratives from social media

and interactions with the 'outside' families competed and conflicted with the values being cultivated within the institution. The second obstacle concerned the socio-political girdle which, as is the case with other such institutions, forced the pesantren to prove its good faith and prudent use of moderation so as not to be accused of weakening the religion or being a tool for the political machinations of the state.

Discusions

Curriculum Integration and Institutional Policies

The findings in the study of Baitul Mubarak Islamic Boarding School, Kubu Raya Regency, suggest that the values of religious moderation are acquired through the inclusion of Fiqh and Islamic History using contextual paradigm teaching methods. In addition, the internalization of the value of Justice (I'tidal) is fostered by institutional practices such as resolving conflicts through musyawarah (deliberation) and policies that prohibit violence.

This aligns with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, which argues that the growth and development of a person is a result of the interaction between different, interrelated, surrounding systems. In this case, the pesantren's curriculum and policies serve as the mesosystem and exosystem intended to complement the values reinforced in the microsystem (the classroom, social, and everyday activities) at the classroom level. It also illustrates a value-infused organisational culture Ari et al. (2024) and Junaedi et al. (2024), which goes beyond the teaching of values to a situation in which every member of the institution, through policies and interactions, has the values deeply entrenched in them.

Apart from those above, the results bolster the arguments presented by Huda (2024) on 'institutionalization' posited by the daily practices of policies as rituals, prescriptions, and the subsequent changed dispositions which ensure moderation of behavior. This is the first of the many pillars undergirding this study, the second of which is its contribution to clarification, which, unlike in the work of Bosra & Umiarso (2021) In this case, it is on policy integration. In this case, it is not merely in the formal integration, but also in the contextualized policy interpretations of the religious texts, or the *kitab kuning*.

The data, however insufficient, has illustrated consequences on the instructional approach wherein spending integrative curricula modules regarding the religious texts, which are contextualized in this manner, face tremendous obstacles, over and above those which stem from Multi-Dimensional or the 'Relational' on the portrayal of the curriculum. Such obstacles emerge as

the routine expository-dominated instructional approach on curriculum transformations is more radical and focused on setting a more 'Shifted' Teacher-Guided model as dominant, thereby transcending the instructional barrier.

The Role of Modeling, Habituation, and Curated Social Environment

According to the results of field research at Baitul Mubarak Islamic Boarding School, Kubu Raya Regency, routine activities such as communal prayers and eating together, as well as 24/7 boarding environments which provide constant value reinforcement, are examples of internalization technology that are modeling and habituation implemented by the Kiai and ustadz/ustadzah. From the defining model, the Kiai and teachers are Social Learning Theory (Bandura & Walters, 1977) living 'moral exemplars' as described by Lickona (2022). In contrast, the 24/7 boarding environment supports Bourdieu (2020), who refers to the habitus as the environment that fosters the unconscious embracing of certain values through repetitive bodily actions. Bronfenbrenner (1979) controlled microsystems are idealistically viewed as 'total institutions' (Jr., 1982) for character building.

Recently, research by Liu (2022) and Safitri (2024) argued that the internalization of a concept requires a teacher's actions and words to be perfectly aligned. This study serves as a substantiating claim to that assertion. Within the findings central to the effectiveness of habituation, the research conducted by Riswadi et al. (2024) is also supported. What is indicative of this claim, however, is that it is the combined effect of these three (modeling, environment, and habituation), reinforcing the synergy of all three, that is lacking in the majority of research, which are regarded as more holistic educational ecosystems by their authors, unlike the previous studies, which focus on deficits.

This system's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. The central role Kiai is wielded may become an unsustainable position without succession planning. The strategic isolation within the pesantren also creates a 'bubble' that risks enclosing students within a 'bubble' and cutting them off from the intricate and diverse realities of the world outside. Thus, a more comprehensive strategy of controlled exposure is warranted.

Critical Dialogue and Its Impact on Student Behavior

For productive hesitations about delicate matters of faith, students for the purpose of and the religions teachings have their discussions in the forum with such sub-forums. Consequently, they not only reject such radical anti-rest narratives but also counter anti-rest narratives and even conduct activities for social peace.

The practice of such discussions is an example of practicing critical pedagogy in the pesantren environment. Mezirow (2000) In the Transformative Learning Theory, for instance, it critically examines the idea of one confirming and revising their meaning perspectives as justification for critical dialogue. In Resolution, santri have been able to cross the borders of their belief systems and have gone from a dogmatic understanding of religion to a much more critical, contextual one.

Berglund (2020) and Halstead (2021) In her work advocated for the existence of "safe spaces for difficult dialogues" in religious schooling. This piece responds to such an advocacy by presenting a practical, feasible model. The argument of santri as anti-radicalism proponents also links with Berkowitz (2022) It's the "value-based cognitive schemas" theory, where Berkowitz argues internalized values serve as cognitive filters to engage with external information, including radical social media content, as advocated by Rizky et al. (2024) social radicalism research.

The effectiveness of critical dialogue is contingent on the skill of the moderator (generally an ustadz), particularly on his or her ability to guide the discussion without taking control of it. The absence of a skillful facilitator may result in a discussion that serves as a new form of indoctrination, or worse, creates disorientation (cognitive dissonance). Therefore, to train teachers on dialogue facilitating is not an option, it is necessary.

Dynamics and Challenges of Internalization

The process of internalization was not without difficulties. Issues emerged internally from the mental resistance some santris had to profoundly fundamentalist ideals, while externally, issues arose from the competing digital narratives and the socio-political scrutiny of the pesantren's moderation intent, which questioned the school's commitment to moderation.

Cognitive resistance is understood by Festinger's (1959) Theory of Cognitive Dissonance. Accepting tolerant and inclusive values creates dissonance for santris subscribing to exclusivist ideologies. Resolving dissonance takes the form of the rejection of new values or the discomforting alteration of existing values. Islamy (2020) examined resistance in the shift of religious paradigm, and this is micro-level empirical proof. The finding on social media challenges corroborates the work of Rizky et al. (2024) while the socio-political scrutiny affirms the work of Munasir et al. (2024).

The research offers an opposite perspective to the numerous top-down and securitized approaches to deradicalization. From the research, Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak is an illustration of the fact that the most effective deradicalization is transformation and holistic character

education from within, rather than imposed from outside. The internal, tightly held values provide the source of the external pressure resiliency.

Limitations

There are some limitations to our study that need to be addressed. The first is the generalization power of one pesantren. In the second place, the qualitative methodology employed does not permit measuring long-run impact quantitatively. Third, the duration of the research is not long enough to grasp the sustainability of the religious moderation.

CONCLUSION

This investigation affirms that the enactment of internal values of religious moderation (wasathiyah, tasamuh, i'tidal, inclusivity), achieved at Pondok Pesantren Baitul Mubarak, is the result of an internalized abstracted synthesis of complex behavioral outcomes operationalized through a sophisticated intertwining articulation of a multi-mechanism approach. The research shows that internalization is more than cognitive understanding, but also 'adoption' of affective pull and enactment, as shown through the degrees of active tolerance, criticism of extremism, and social harmony promotion that are espoused by the students. The 'ecosystem' of the pesantren, with its congruence of leadership, habit, dialogue, and social practice, is demonstrated to be crucial for the maintenance of value equilibrium amidst internal and external turbulence. The research suggests the 'transformational' aspect of religion can be coached within Islamic educational practice that is born from a 'value' moderation proposition, the finding of which indicates the design must be multi-layered for impact as opposed to value-based character education as a singular approach.

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