

Religious Moderation in Indonesian Islamic Universities: Policy Implementation and Identity Formation at IAIN Ponorogo

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This study investigates the implementation of religious moderation policies in IAIN Ponorogo, Indonesia, and their impact on fostering social cohesion and cultivating a moderate identity within the academic community. Employing a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through comprehensive interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and document reviews. The findings revealed significant progress in integrating religious moderation values into the curriculum, research activities, and community service programs. The establishment of the Religious Moderation House (RMB) has been instrumental in reinforcing these values through seminars, workshops, and outreach. However, challenges persist in achieving a consistent understanding and application of moderation principles among academic stakeholders. The survey results indicate that while a majority of students, faculty, and staff report positive changes in attitudes after participating in moderation programs, some individuals still struggle to fully grasp and internalize these values. Psychological and cultural factors, along with varying levels of commitment across faculties, present additional barriers to comprehensive adoption of a moderate identity. Despite these challenges, this study highlights the positive impact of religious moderation initiatives on promoting tolerance, reducing social tension, and preparing students for engagement with broader societal diversity. The findings emphasize the need for enhanced coordination, practical incentives, and continuous monitoring and evaluation to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of these programmes. By embedding religious moderation into its core strategic plans, IAIN Ponorogo could continue to empower its academic community to embody these values, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

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Public Interest Statement

This study explores the implementation of religious moderation in IAIN Ponorogo, addressing the growing issue of radicalism in higher education. It highlights how integrating religious moderation into academic activities fosters social cohesion and moderate identity within the academic community. By focusing on practical strategies such as the establishment of the Religious Moderation House, this research fills a gap in the literature on educational efforts to counter extremism. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers and educators on the importance of sustainable religious moderation initiatives in promoting tolerance and harmony within higher education institutions.



Introduction

Indonesia, a multicultural nation with diverse ethnicities, religions, and cultural practices, faces unique challenges in maintaining harmony among its people. As Thomas (2017) describes, the diversity of Indonesia is often celebrated as a "jewel of pluralism," yet it brings with it complex societal challenges. Religious differences are an inherent part of Indonesian life, with people embracing Islam, Christianity, and others, each with distinct practices and beliefs (Saerozi 2004). However, these differences have the potential to create social tension, particularly when certain groups adopt an exclusive, narrow view of their faith, which can lead to extremism and intolerance (Ramakrishna 2022).

Over the past decade, radicalism and exclusivism have permeated academic institutions. Universities, traditionally seen as spaces of open thought and diversity, have become grounds for the spread of exclusivist ideologies, particularly among student activists (Kartawidjaja, 2020). Saputra et al. (2018) and Nashori et al. (2024) underscored that Muslim student activists often demonstrate exclusivist behavior, limiting engagement with individuals outside their religious group. The spread of these ideologies on campus has significant implications, not only for the academic climate, but also for broader social cohesion within Indonesia.

In response to this growing challenge, the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs launched a national policy to promote religious moderation. This policy is rooted in balancing exclusive religious practices with inclusive respect for others, fostering a middle path between extremism and secular liberalism (Kemenag RI, n.d.; Kementerian Agama, 2019). It aims to counteract radical tendencies, encourage tolerance, and promote coexistence in educational environments. Religious moderation serves not only as a response to extremism, but also as a foundation for building peaceful and inclusive communities.

Islamic higher education institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam, PTKI) play a crucial role in implementing this policy, as they are responsible for educating future religious scholars and leaders (Harmi, 2022). A key initiative promoted by the Ministry of Religious Affairs is the establishment of religious moderation houses (Rumah Moderasi Beragama). These institutions are tasked with promoting religious moderation through education, research and community services. As an integral part of the academic ecosystem, these houses function as hubs to develop moderate attitudes among students and foster social cohesion (Rambe et al., 2023).

At IAIN Ponorogo, the implementation of religious moderation took various forms, including integrating moderation values across the curriculum, research projects, and community service activities. Additionally, the establishment of the Religious Moderation House aims to serve as a center for promoting moderate behaviors and attitudes among both students and faculty. Despite these efforts, challenges persist in ensuring a comprehensive understanding and consistent application of these values among academic stakeholders (Arisona, 2019). Research indicates that about 20% of students at IAIN Ponorogo still struggle to grasp multicultural values, while nearly 25% demonstrate an insufficient understanding of Pancasila's principles (Hakim & Ekapti, 2019). These findings highlight the need for continuous reinforcement and deeper engagement in religious moderation initiatives to achieve sustainable outcomes.

While previous studies have explored the implementation of religious moderation in various academic settings, much of the focus has been on the administrative perspective—how institutions integrate these values into their curricula or utilize digital platforms to promote moderation (Suprpto, 2020; Utomo et al., 2021). However, there remains a significant research gap in understanding how these policies influence students' and faculty's attitudes and behaviors and whether they effectively foster social cohesion and counteract exclusivism. Furthermore, earlier studies have not adequately examined the long-term impact of these initiatives on academic environments or the broader community.

This study seeks to fill existing knowledge gaps by investigating the implementation of religious moderation policies at IAIN Ponorogo and their effect on cultivating a moderate identity among students and staff. This study aimed to investigate the policy implementation model used by the institution, evaluate its efficacy, and uncover the challenges encountered during the process. Using a qualitative case study methodology, data were collected through comprehensive interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGD), and document reviews. By examining both policy documents and stakeholder viewpoints, this investigation provides a thorough understanding of how religious moderation is practised within the academic community.

The results of this study provide crucial information to policy creators, educators, and academic leaders. This emphasizes the vital function of higher education institutions in promoting tolerance and combating radicalism through specific policies and initiatives. The practical implications of this research indicate that the long-term implementation of religious moderation necessitates ongoing reinforcement, active involvement of all stakeholders, and continuous assessment to address emerging obstacles.

This study aims to enhance the expanding body of knowledge on religious moderation by offering an in-depth analysis of its implementation at IAIN Ponorogo. The insights gained will guide future approaches to incorporating religious moderation into higher education and promoting social harmony in Indonesia's diverse societies.

Literature Review

Religious moderation has emerged as a significant concept in response to the rising challenges of extremism and exclusivism, particularly in religiously plural societies, such as Indonesia. As defined by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs, religious moderation is a balanced approach that avoids extremism and liberalism (Kemenag RI, n.d.; Kementerian Agama, 2019). It reflects the principle of *wasathiyah* in Islam, emphasizing the importance of balance in all aspects of life, including the spiritual, social, and intellectual domains (Putrawan & Gafur, 2021). Moderation is rooted in several key principles, such as justice (*adalah*), tolerance (*tasamuh*), and maintaining equilibrium (*tawazun*), which are essential in nurturing respect for diversity and social harmony (Zamimah, 2018).

Islamic higher education institutions, or Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam (PTKI), have been identified as strategic platforms to promote these values. These institutions are pivotal not only in fostering intellectual growth but also in developing character and inculcating moderate behaviors among students (Harmi, 2022). The Ministry of Religious Affairs has emphasized the role of PTKI in building religious moderation through policies such as the establishment of Religious Moderation Houses (*Rumah Moderasi Beragama*). These houses serve as centers for educational, research, and social activities aimed at strengthening moderate values (Rambe et al. 2023). At IAIN Ponorogo, the principles of religious moderation were embedded in the curriculum, research activities, and community service programs. However, despite these efforts, challenges persist in ensuring that these values are fully understood and consistently practiced by all the members of the academic community (Arisona, 2019).

The integration of religious moderation in education extends beyond formal curricula, incorporating hidden curricula and extracurricular activities that reflect tolerance and inclusivity. Research by (Adi Hr, 2024) highlights how these approaches provide opportunities for students to internalize the values of religious moderation. In addition to traditional methods, digital platforms have also been utilized to disseminate these values, as demonstrated by studies on the use of messaging and specialized applications for promoting moderation in educational settings (Adi Hr, 2024; Utomo et al., 2021). These efforts illustrate the evolving strategies employed by PTKI to foster a moderate identity among students (Wahid & Kususiyanah, n.d.).

However, implementing religious moderation is not a challenge. Research indicates that a significant proportion of students struggle to grasp multicultural values, with studies reporting that up to 20% of students at IAIN Ponorogo have difficulty understanding the concept of diversity (Arisona, 2019). Furthermore, approximately 25% of students exhibit a limited understanding of the core principles of Pancasila, the ideological foundation of Indonesia (Hakim & Ekapti, 2019). These findings suggest that efforts to embed religious moderation in academic life require continuous reinforcement and more effective engagement strategies. Additionally, resistance to change among certain student groups and faculty members presents another hurdle to achieving comprehensive implementation.

Beyond individual attitudes, religious moderation plays a critical role in fostering social cohesion in the academic environment. (Sumarto, 2021) argues that moderation serves as a vital tool for preventing radicalism and promoting harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society. Suprpto (2020) further emphasizes the relationship between religious moderation and social cohesion, (Suprpto, 2020) suggesting that educational systems can serve as critical spaces for countering extremism. By promoting tolerance and respect for diversity, the PTKI can contribute to the broader goal of building a peaceful and cohesive society. Research on community service initiatives also highlights the potential of these programs to reinforce moderate values by engaging students in activities that promote harmony and understanding (Virdaus and Khaidarulloh 2021).

Empirical studies on the implementation of religious moderation have revealed both successes and challenges. Engriyani (2022) documented the positive outcomes of moderation programs in religious institutions, such as the Religious Affairs Office in Banjarmasin, where increased tolerance and reduced radical tendencies were observed. However, long-term sustainability remains a concern as some institutions struggle to maintain momentum after the initial implementation phase (Santoso et al., 2022). Similarly, Hefni and Uyun (2020) noted that, while religious moderation initiatives have positively influenced students' behavior, continuous monitoring and evaluation are necessary to ensure consistent outcomes.

The literature emphasizes the crucial role of religious moderation in promoting social unity and developing a well-rounded identity among students in Islamic higher education. Although substantial advancements have been made in incorporating these principles into academic programs at institutions such as IAIN Ponorogo, obstacles remain, including students' limited comprehension and resistance to change. This overview emphasizes the necessity of

ongoing reinforcement, efficient engagement tactics, and continuous assessment to maintain the longevity of religious moderation initiatives. Through these endeavors, PTKI can significantly contribute to cultivating moderate identities and encouraging harmony, both within and beyond academic settings.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative approach that combines both normative and empirical methods. The normative component evaluates how religious moderation policies at IAIN Ponorogo align with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' guidelines and institutional strategies. Concurrently, the empirical aspect explores behavioral shifts among students, faculty, and staff. Information was collected from policy documents, including RENSTRA and RENOP, through in-depth interviews and FGDs with key participants. IAIN Ponorogo was selected as the study location based on previous research indicating difficulties in promoting multicultural understanding among students, with 20% still grappling with these concepts and only 75% demonstrating adequate understanding of Pancasila.

Data analysis followed Miles and Huberman's (1984) qualitative content analysis framework, beginning with open coding and progressing to theory-based coding using legal policy theory and Bourdieu's framework of habitus, field, capital, and doxa. This layered approach ensures a thorough understanding of both the implementation model and its impact on stakeholder behavior. Ethical approval was obtained from IAIN Ponorogo's Research Ethics Committee, and informed consent was obtained from the participants. Anonymized interview transcripts are available upon request, subject to institutional permissions, ensuring data transparency, while maintaining confidentiality.

Result

4.1 Implementation of Religious Moderation at IAIN Ponorogo

The implementation of religious moderation at IAIN Ponorogo involves various academic and institutional initiatives aligned with policies from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, particularly Circular Letter No. B-2 3663.1/Dj.I/BA.02/10/2019. Religious moderation values were integrated into the curriculum, research activities, and community service programs. Through these initiatives, IAIN Ponorogo aims to foster a campus culture of moderation by organizing regular training sessions and workshops for both faculty members and students. One of the prominent training sessions was Religious Moderation Training for New Students (BOPTN 2022), which focused on introducing the fundamentals of moderation to new students and building awareness of the importance of tolerance within academic settings (Muhsin et al., n.d.).

In addition to these training sessions, a collaborative Workshop on Religious Moderation was held in 2021 by the Religious Moderation House (RMB) in partnership with the Student Council (DEMA). This workshop created a platform for dialogue between lecturers, students, and academic staff, fostering discussions on the role of moderation in academic life. The workshop aimed to promote practical applications of moderation principles in daily academic interactions and to encourage cross-departmental collaboration to strengthen the overall religious moderation agenda at IAIN Ponorogo.

The values of Religious Moderation are further reflected in the Community Service Program (KKN) on Religious Moderation. This program involves students directly engaging with local communities, such as Klepu Village, Ponorogo, to promote diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect. The KKN programme serves as a bridge between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation, allowing students to experience the challenges and opportunities of fostering religious moderation in diverse social contexts. Students participating in the KKN program act as agents of change, aiming to mitigate radical tendencies by actively promoting moderation through educational activities and community interactions.

The establishment of the Religious Moderation House (RMB) is a key institutional initiative for consolidating religious moderation efforts. The RMB functions as a central hub for education, facilitation, and outreach programmes related to religious moderation. It has hosted several national seminars and workshops, as well as capacity-building programs for Madrasa teachers, aimed at strengthening their understanding and teaching of religious moderation principles. Furthermore, the RMB extends its outreach by conducting mentoring programs in surrounding communities, such as in Klepu Village, ensuring that the impact of religious moderation efforts extends beyond the campus environment.

Despite these efforts, challenges remain in the implementation process. One of the significant challenges lies in achieving a consistent understanding of religious moderation among academic stakeholders. While some students, particularly those newly enrolled, face difficulties in fully grasping the concept of religious moderation, there are variations in how different academic departments implement these policies. Some faculties have been proactive in integrating religious moderation into their curricula, whereas others are still in the initial stages of adoption. The

inconsistency in applications across departments indicates the need for further alignment and reinforcement of moderation initiatives throughout the institution.

These findings highlight that, while IAIN Ponorogo has made considerable progress in promoting religious moderation through various programs, challenges related to understanding and consistency still need to be addressed. Enhanced coordination among academic units and active involvement of students and faculty members are essential for ensuring the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives. The institutionalization of religious moderation through structures such as the RMB provides a strong foundation, but ongoing efforts are needed to effectively engage the entire academic community in these programs.

4.2 Challenges in Implementation

This research identified several challenges in the implementation of religious moderation policies at IAIN Ponorogo. One of the main challenges is the uneven understanding and application of moderating values among students and academic staff. Figure 1 show that 64.1% of students rated their understanding of religious moderation as "Good," while 17.9% categorized their understanding as "Very Good." However, 17.9% of students indicated that their understanding was still at a "Moderate" level. These findings suggest that a more intensive approach to education and communication is needed to ensure consistent understanding among all academic stakeholders.

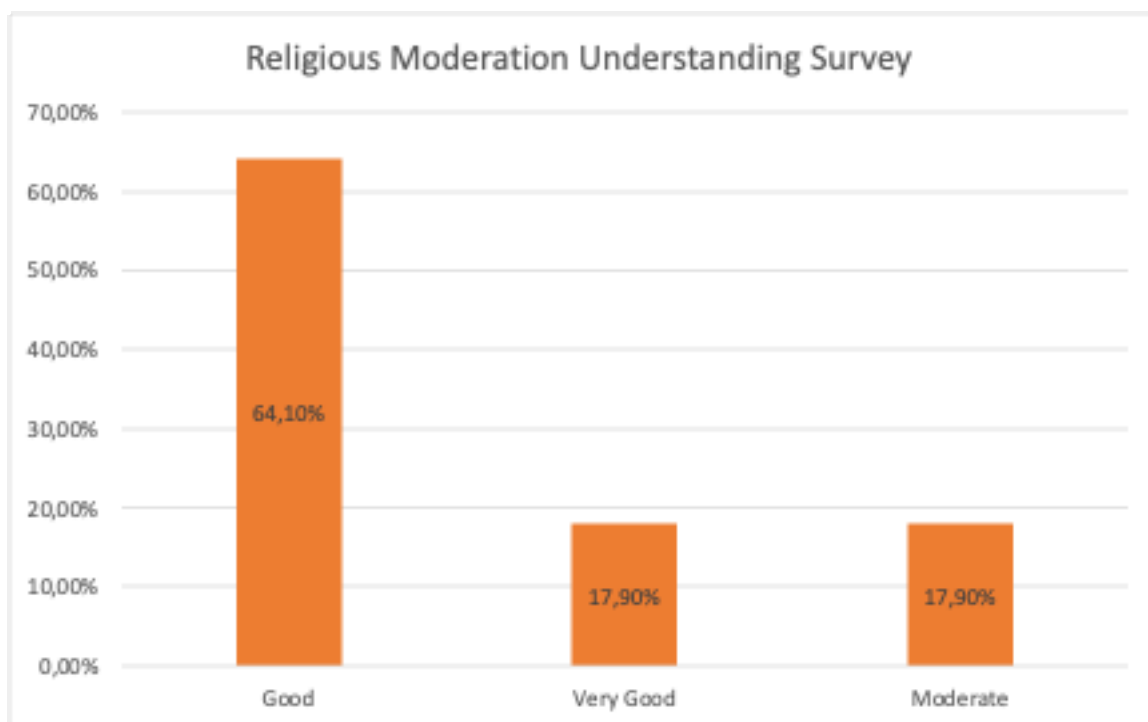


Figure 1. Religious Moderation Understanding Survey

In addition to challenges related to comprehension, some students expressed resistance to certain moderation principles introduced within academic programs. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants revealed that a segment of students perceived some moderation principles as conflicting with their previously held religious beliefs, resulting in reluctance to adopt these values in their academic and social interactions.

Structural challenges were also highlighted, particularly in the coordination between the faculties and departments. While some faculties have actively integrated moderation values into their curricula, others are still in their early stages of implementation. The data show that 55% of faculties have adopted religious moderation principles in their curricula, while the remaining faculties are either still developing or have not yet initiated similar efforts (Muhsin et al., n.d.). The lack of standardized guidelines and incentives for academic units has slowed the policy implementation process across institutions.

4.3 Impact on Social Cohesion and Identity Formation

Despite these challenges, the implementation of religious moderation policies has had a significantly positive impact on social cohesion and the formation of a moderate identity within the academic community. Survey data showed that 100% of faculty members (lecturers) reported a positive response toward the implementation of religious moderation programs. Similarly, 94.9% of students and 90.9% of administrative staff and leaders (Pimpinan/Tendik)

responded positively to these programs, with only a small percentage (5.1% of students and 9.1% of administrative staff) showing no positive change.

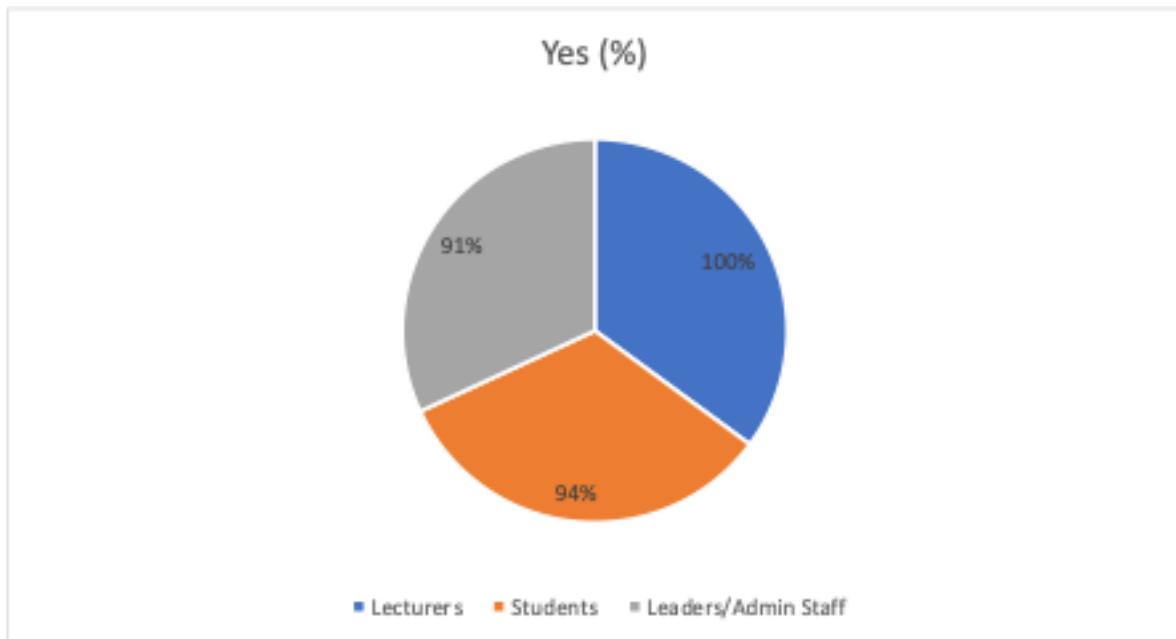


Figure 2. Survey Results on Group Responses (Yes/No)

The establishment of the Religious Moderation House (RMB) was instrumental in reinforcing moderation values on campus. The survey results in Figure 3 indicate a strong demand for special training programs among the academic community in IAIN Ponorogo. A significant majority (63%) of the respondents expressed the need for such training to support the implementation of religious moderation policies. However, 37% of respondents believed that no additional training was required. These findings suggest that while most communities acknowledge the value of specialized training to enhance the understanding and application of religious moderation values, there is still a portion that feels that the existing initiatives may be sufficient. While the establishment of the RMB laid the foundation for promoting moderation values, it was essential to assess the academic community's readiness and the need for further support in implementing these principles.

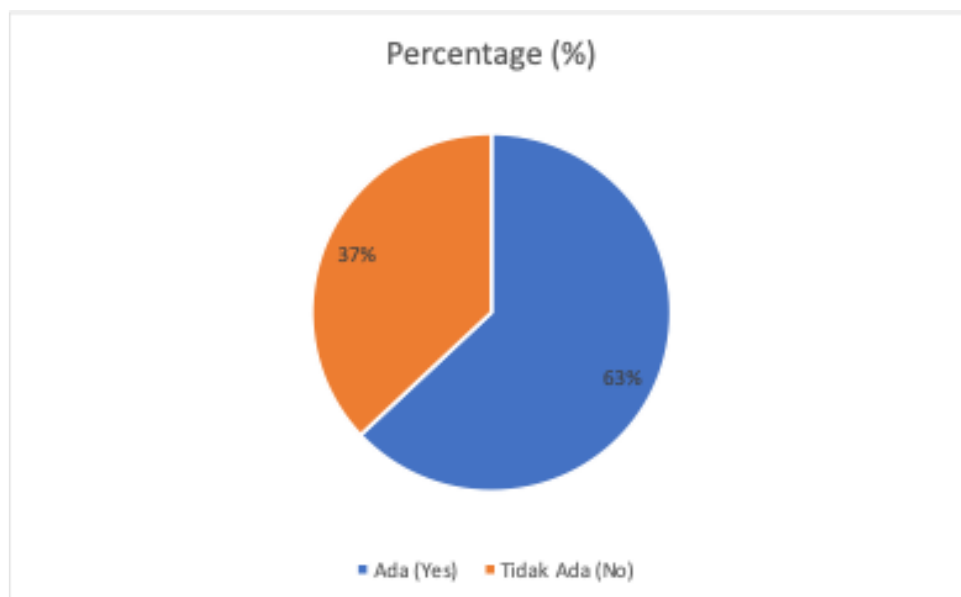


Figure 3. Special Training in Religious Moderation

This divide highlights the importance of tailoring training programs to address the diverse needs and perspectives within the academic community. Building on the insights gained from the survey, IAIN Ponorogo implemented practical initiatives to reinforce religious moderation values beyond the classroom setting.

The Community Service Program (KKN) on Religious Moderation further exemplifies the practical application of these values. Through KKN, students engage with local communities, such as those in Klepu Village and Ponorogo, to promote diversity, tolerance, and mutual respect. These programs allow students to bridge theory and practice by acting as change agents who encourage moderate attitudes within the society. The students' involvement in real-world settings provides an invaluable experience in promoting harmonious relationships in multi-faith and multicultural environments. These hands-on experiences not only complement the theoretical knowledge gained through the RMB, but also demonstrate the institution's commitment to fostering religious moderation at both the campus and community levels.

4.4 Future Directions and Sustainability

The findings also emphasize the importance of strengthening and sustaining religious moderation policies. Some respondents highlighted the need for expanded training programs to ensure consistent understanding of moderation values among all members of the academic community. Enhanced coordination between academic units is required to ensure uniform policy application across all faculties and departments.

Routine monitoring and evaluation have been identified as crucial elements for policy success. Periodic assessments will enable faculties and departments to ensure that religious moderation policies are implemented effectively and adjusted to meet evolving needs and challenges. The feedback obtained from these evaluations can serve as the foundation for refining policies and developing strategies for continuous improvement.

Moreover, several academic units have recommended the development of clearer guidelines on how to incorporate religious moderation principles into extracurricular activities and classroom teaching. This will provide a concrete direction for lecturers and students to apply these values to various academic and non-academic activities. These structured efforts are expected to support the long-term sustainability of religious moderation initiatives in IAIN Ponorogo.

Discussion

The implementation of religious moderation policies in IAIN Ponorogo has shown significant progress, although challenges remain in certain areas. The values of religious moderation have been integrated into key components of higher education, such as the curriculum, research, and community services. The Religious Moderation House (RMB) serves as the central hub for these efforts, playing a crucial role in supporting policy implementation and fostering moderate attitudes among students, faculty and staff.

5.1 Achievements in Policy Implementation

The initial success of the religious moderation policy can be observed in various activities initiated by the Religious Moderation House (RMB), such as seminars and training sessions involving students, lecturers, and administrative staff. According to the survey data, 100% of lecturers, 94.9% of students, and 90.9% of administrative staff (Pimpinan/Tendik) reported positive changes in attitudes after participating in activities related to religious moderation. This overwhelming support from all groups indicates that the policy had a tangible impact on campus life.

In addition to academic settings, the policy's influence extends beyond the campus. The Community Service Program (KKN) on Religious Moderation, conducted in villages around Ponorogo, is an example of how this policy has been implemented in wider communities. Through this program, students interacted with local residents, helping to promote and strengthen the values of tolerance and moderation.

However, the success of these initiatives is not uniform. Despite the generally positive response, about 5.1% of the students and 9.1% of the administrative staff indicated that they did not observe significant behavioral changes after participating in these programs. This variation in outcomes raises critical questions regarding the effectiveness of the current approach. The disparity in understanding and behavior among participants highlights the need for a more consistent, targeted communication strategy to ensure that the values of religious moderation are fully understood and internalized by all members of the academic community.

Additionally, as indicated by another survey, 63% of the respondents felt that there was a need for special training programs to further enhance the understanding and application of religious moderation policies. To address these issues, strategies such as strengthening teacher training, collaborating with external parties, and utilizing educational technology are recommended to improve the quality of learning and foster a moderate character in students (Afriantoni et al., 2023).

Tailored religious moderation training can include needs assessments, modular content, practical exercises, and flexible in-person/online formats for all groups (Hanafi et al., 2024). Implementing such tailored training

opportunities could involve conducting needs assessments for each group, designing modular content that can be adapted to various skill levels and areas of focus, and incorporating hands-on practical exercises relevant to each group's day-to-day responsibilities. Additionally, offering a mix of in-person and online training options as well as mentoring programs could further support the diverse learning preferences and schedules of students, faculty, and staff.

5.2 The Role of the Religious Moderation House and Implementation Challenges

The Religious Moderation House (RMB) has become a key platform for educational initiatives and discussions aimed at reinforcing moderation values in IAIN Ponorogo. The RMB organizes various programs, including national seminars and thematic workshops, to enhance students' and staff members' understanding of the importance of adopting moderate attitudes in academic and social life. Moreover, the RMB ensures that these policies are not only discussed theoretically, but also implemented in practical ways across the campus environment. While the RMB at IAIN Ponorogo serves as a local example, it is part of a broader initiative across Indonesia's State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN).

Despite the positive initiatives and efforts of Religious Moderation Houses across various institutions, the implementation of religious moderation is not without challenges. The Religious Moderation House plays a crucial role in promoting and implementing religious moderation within State Islamic Religious Universities (PTKIN) in Indonesia. Established by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, these houses aim to foster religious harmony and moderation through inclusive state policies and collaborative efforts with stakeholders (Hidayah et al. 2024). At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, the Religious Moderation House strengthened religious moderation by conveying messages of peace and tolerance to lecturers and students. It has published five modules for implementing activities and has programmatically carried out various initiatives in accordance with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' policy (Yani, 2022). Similarly, at PTKIN Aceh, the Religious Moderation House plays a significant role in promoting Islamic washatiah values among students, facilitating easier understanding and implementation in daily life (Mulasi & Saputra, 2024). However, the implementation of religious moderation has several challenges. These include skepticism and negative perceptions of religious moderation (Baba et al., 2023), the need to accept the term within the context of local wisdom, and avoidance of the perception of moderation as a new religious project (Mulasi & Saputra, 2024). Additionally, limited resources and the influence of students' social environment outside school can hinder the implementation of religious moderation (Shalahuddin et al., 2024). In conclusion, while the Religious Moderation House serves as an essential tool for promoting religious moderation at Indonesian universities, its effectiveness depends on overcoming various challenges. Strategies such as preparing curricula based on Islamic tolerance, strengthening the role of these houses, and optimizing supporting factors while innovating solutions to overcome obstacles are crucial for successful implementation (Mulasi & Saputra, 2024; Shalahuddin et al., 2024). Reflecting on these broader challenges and strategies, it is important to consider how they manifest in specific institutional contexts such as IAIN Ponorogo.

While the RMB at IAIN Ponorogo has made significant progress in promoting religious moderation, it has encountered a distinct set of challenges. Notwithstanding the RMB's positive influence, obstacles persist, particularly uneven participation and commitment across faculties and departments. Although certain faculties have successfully integrated moderating values into their curricula, not all academic units have exhibited the same level of commitment. Furthermore, enhanced coordination among faculty members is necessary to ensure consistent policy implementation throughout an institution.

5.3 Evaluating Integration in Curriculum, Research, and Community Service on Religious Moderation Programs

The policy of religious moderation has been incorporated into various courses and extracurricular activities, with some faculties demonstrating high commitment to teaching these values. However, 45% of the faculties are still in the early stages of implementation and require additional guidance and support to ensure effective integration.

Efforts to implement religious moderation (RM) in Islamic higher education have revealed complexities and varying levels of success. RM is integrated into courses, research, and community service programs; however, challenges persist. In education, RM is incorporated through course insertion, training workshops, and extracurricular activities (Ulinuha, 2022). Some institutions have redesigned their graduation achievements and competency standards to align with RM principles (Suyudi & Putra, 2022). Implementation strategies include integrating RM values into curricula, evaluation techniques, and daily practices (Ratnah et al., 2024). However, the academic community's understanding of RM remains low (Ulinuha, 2022).

Religious moderation principles are integrated into community engagement efforts, including activities conducted by Islamic organizations, community service lectures, and social services (Sudarsana et al., 2022; Suyudi & Putra, 2022).

Some institutions organize curriculum workshops to develop courses based on RM values (Barizi et al., 2023). However, contradictions and challenges in RM implementation persist because of insufficient support from various internal and external factors classified as lacking ((Ulinuha, 2022). Limited resources and the influence of students' social environments outside school further hinder RM implementation (Shalahuddin et al., 2024). Despite these efforts, the implementation of religious moderation faces significant obstacles, suggesting the need for more comprehensive strategies and support systems to ensure its success in Islamic higher education (Muhlisin et al., 2023; Shalahuddin et al., 2024; Ulinuha, 2022).

The findings of this study further illustrate both the progress made and persistent challenges in implementing religious moderation, particularly in research and community service contexts. In this study, religious moderation values have become the focus of both student and faculty research projects, addressing themes such as diversity and tolerance. Community service programs such as the KKN on Religious Moderation have also contributed to building harmonious relationships between students and local communities. However, some challenges remain, such as the gap between faculties that have made significant progress and those that still need further assistance in consistently adopting these values.

5.4 Impact on Social Cohesion and Identity Formation

Religious moderation programs at IAIN Ponorogo have contributed substantially to fostering social cohesion and cultivating a moderate identity within the academic community. The integration of these values into the curriculum, research, and extracurricular activities has created opportunities for interaction and dialogue, promoting mutual respect and reducing social tensions. These efforts are designed not only to address internal dynamics within the institution but also to prepare students for engagement with broader societal diversity.

While these programs have shown promise in fostering a moderate identity within the academic setting, their effectiveness in promoting long-term behavioral changes remains a challenge. The KKN (community services) on Religious Moderation serves as a practical avenue for students to apply moderation principles in real-world settings. Interaction with diverse local communities exposes students to varied perspectives, challenges preconceived notions, and encourages attitudes toward tolerance and acceptance. These interactions are instrumental in bridging social divides and fostering harmonious relationships both on- and off-campus (Mulasi & Saputra, 2024). However, some students reported difficulties translating these experiences into long-term behavioral changes, highlighting the complexity of internalizing moderation values within individual identity frameworks (Shalahuddin et al., 2024).

Building on the experiences gained through community engagement, the Religious Moderation House (RMB) further reinforces the principles of moderation within the institution (Ilmudinulloh et al., 2023). The Religious Moderation House (RMB) plays a central role in shaping moderate attitudes of students and staff (Aditya & Mayasari, 2022). Through structured training sessions, workshops, and seminars, the RMB facilitated continuous learning and reflection. Participants gained exposure to diverse viewpoints, contributing to the development of a more inclusive academic culture. Nevertheless, there are challenges in ensuring that the moderate identity fostered through these programmes extends beyond the institutional context. Some faculty members and students expressed concerns about the consistency of these values when they were applied outside formal settings, indicating a gap between theoretical understanding and practical application.

Despite the structured efforts of the RMB, the internalization of moderate values faces several obstacles, particularly in the realms of individual psychology and cultural backgrounds (Yani, 2022). Psychological and cultural factors present additional barriers to full adoption of a moderate identity. Some participants, particularly those from more conservative backgrounds, encountered internal resistance when confronted with values that may differ from their prior beliefs. This resistance underscores the need for a nuanced approach to promoting religious moderation, considering the varied personal and cultural histories of the participants. Furthermore, certain students reported experiencing social pressure from peers, complicating their efforts to consistently embody moderate attitudes. These challenges highlight the need for targeted interventions that address both the individual and group dynamics within the academic community.

The challenges in adopting a moderate identity are not limited to personal factors, but also extend to the institutional level, where varying degrees of program implementation affect overall cohesion. The impact of these programs on social cohesion is also influenced by institutional structures and support mechanisms (Roelen et al., 2022). While certain faculties embrace the principles of religious moderation more actively, others remain in the initial stages of adoption, resulting in uneven participation across institutions. This variability affects the overall coherence of the academic environment, underscoring the importance of institutional alignment and strategic coordination in reinforcing the moderation values across all units.

These multifaceted challenges underscore the complexity of fostering social cohesion through religious moderation programmes, highlighting the need for a comprehensive and nuanced approach that addresses both individual and institutional factors. In addition to formal programs, informal interactions within the campus environment play a critical role in shaping the social fabric. Peer influence, social activities, and group dynamics contribute to the formation of a shared identity centered on inclusiveness and mutual respect. However, the persistence of exclusive mindsets among some individuals indicates that the process of identity transformation is gradual and requires sustained effort.

5.6 Policy Recommendations and Sustainability Strategies

The successful implementation of religious moderation policies at IAIN Ponorogo requires more than isolated initiatives; it demands cohesive coordination across academic units, consistent policy applications, and long-term sustainability strategies. One of the primary challenges is the varying levels of commitment and integration among different faculties and departments. To address these inconsistencies, it is essential to establish clear frameworks for inter-departmental collaboration with leadership roles assigned to effectively coordinate and align efforts. This coordination will ensure that moderation values are not only articulated in policy, but are also actively practiced in both academic and non-academic activities.

A key policy recommendation is to develop practical guidelines that standardize the application of religious moderation across all faculties. These guidelines should outline specific strategies for integrating moderation values into curricula, research activities, and community engagement programmes. Ensuring consistency in policy implementation requires not only formal structures, but also informal mechanisms for continuous dialogue among faculty members and administrators. Regular coordination meetings, working groups, and peer-review systems can foster a culture of shared responsibility and alignment across departments.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are essential to sustain the impact of religious moderation initiatives. IAIN Ponorogo should implement a comprehensive evaluation framework that tracks progress, identifies gaps, and measures the outcomes. This framework should include both quantitative indicators such as participation rates and survey responses, and qualitative assessments gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews. Continuous monitoring will allow institutions to adapt their strategies in response to emerging challenges, ensuring that programs remain relevant and impactful over time.

Training quality is another critical component of such initiatives. Current programs have shown positive outcomes; however, there is room for improvement in terms of content depth and delivery methods. Expanding the training modules to include practical case studies, interactive workshops, and cross-cultural dialogue sessions will enhance participants' engagement and understanding. Additionally, faculty development programs focused on religious moderation will empower educators to effectively integrate these values into their teaching practices.

Incentivizing participation is a strategic approach to encourage greater involvement from the faculty and departments. Offering research grants, professional development opportunities, and performance-based rewards motivates academic units to actively engage in moderation initiatives. For example, faculties that demonstrate significant progress in promoting moderation value could receive additional funding for research or access to exclusive training programs. These incentives will not only foster competition, but also create a sense of collective purpose in advancing the institution's mission to promote religious tolerance.

Furthermore, IAIN Ponorogo should explore strategic partnerships with external organizations, including government agencies, NGOs, and community groups. These partnerships can provide additional resources, expertise, and platforms for students and faculty members to engage in real-world applications of religious moderation. Collaborative projects with external stakeholders will also extend the reach and impact of the institution's programs beyond campus, reinforcing the societal relevance of moderation values.

The sustainability of religious moderation initiatives depends on their integration into an institution's strategic planning and performance targets. Embedding these values into institutional documents, such as vision and mission statements, ensures that religious moderation is not treated as an add-on program, but as a core component of the institution's identity. Long-term commitment to these values requires continuous reinforcement through leadership engagement, resource allocation, and policy alignment across all levels of an institution.

Conclusion

Despite ongoing challenges, the implementation of religious moderation policies at IAIN Ponorogo has made notable progress in fostering social cohesion and cultivating a moderate identity within the academic community. Through initiatives such as the Religious Moderation House (RMB) and KKN on Religious Moderation, these policies have integrated moderation values into academic and community practices, promoting tolerance and mutual respect.

However, inconsistencies in faculty commitment, psychological and cultural resistance, and the need for stronger coordination, highlight the complexity of sustaining these efforts. Moving forward, enhancing monitoring and evaluation frameworks, fostering inter-departmental collaboration, and providing practical incentives are essential to ensuring the longevity and effectiveness of these programs. By embedding religious moderation into its core strategic plans, IAIN Ponorogo can continue to empower students, faculty, and staff to embody these values, thereby contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious educational environment.

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