

Traditional Authority of Kyai and Its Impact on Religious Moderation in East Java Pesantren

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Abstract:

The traditional authority of *kyai* in pesantren significantly influences religious moderation in East Java, making it a crucial issue to study amidst growing social harmony and diversity challenges. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the educational and spiritual aspects of pesantren without delving deeply into the role of *kyai* in shaping values of moderation. This research aims to analyze how the traditional authority of *kyai* in pesantren influences the practice of religious moderation, particularly in the context of East Java's local culture. A descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach was employed. The research focused on pesantren in East Java, known for their strong influence in local communities. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies. Data analysis involved reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that *kyai* play a central role as social mediators, integrating local culture to foster harmony. The novelty of this research lies in showing how tradition and local wisdom can be adapted to reinforce religious moderation in the context of globalization.

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INTRODUCTION

Pesantren in East Java plays a strategic role in the formation of religious understanding and the character of society, with a *kyai* as the leading traditional authority. Indeed, the leadership of the *kyai* is beyond religious issues because the *kyai* stands at the forefront of religious moderation guidance within the *pesantren* environment.¹ In Indonesia's pluralistic

¹ S S Supriyanto et al., "The Role of Kyai in Pesantren Business Development: A Case Study on Leadership in The Traditional Pesantrens," *Sigmatagri*, 2022, <http://ojs.unwaha.ac.id/index.php/sigmatagri/article/view/671>; A Nasith, "The Role of Kyai's Charismatic Leadership in Mitigating Religious Intolerance and Radicalism in

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context, *kyai* gain much influence on how to deal with socio-religious challenges like radicalization and intolerance.² The diverse interpretations of religious teachings in *pesantren* are often guided by *kyai*, who are at once spiritual and social leaders.³ It, therefore, speaks to how the traditional authority of *kyai* can impact religious moderation within *pesantren*, which is important in underpinning social harmony in Indonesia.

The tradition of *kyai* authority in East Java *pesantren* has long been a subject of academic study, particularly regarding their role in fostering religious moderation amidst the diversity of society. Research shows that the traditional authority of *kyai* is rooted not only in their scholarly expertise but also in the social legitimacy built through *pesantren* networks and patronage relationships. This is significant because *kyai* often serve as central figures in shaping religious discourse within their communities. A study by Wekke and Ilyas (2020) found that *kyai* substantially influences the promotion of moderation values through education based on local wisdom.⁴ They employ a dialogical approach to address potential ideological conflicts. Similarly, Haryanto's (2021) research demonstrates that *pesantren* in East Java actively promote tolerance through community-based programs involving interfaith interactions.⁵ However, Hermawan (2023) identified challenges such as radicalism and limited access to modern information, which still hinder the effectiveness of *kyai* in addressing global issues.⁶ While many studies have discussed the role of *kyai* in moderation, few focus on how they navigate traditional authority in the digital era. Thus, this study explores *kyai* strategies in bridging conventional values with modern needs more deeply.

This research highlights the gap in understanding the role of *kyai*'s traditional authority in supporting religious moderation within *pesantren*, particularly in East Java. While many

Pesantren," *International Journal of Social Science and Religion* ..., 2024, <http://www.ijssr.net/index.php/ijssr/article/view/238>; W A Wahab and M H Umar, "The Leadership Vision of Charismatic Kyai in the Implementation of Religious Moderation Values in Al-Baqiyatush Shalihah Islamic Boarding School, Jambi Province," *International Journal of Islamic* ..., 2024, <https://journal.yaspim.org/index.php/IJIERM/article/view/336>; P Parmoko, M Muntholib, and ..., "Kiai Leadership in Implementing Religious Moderation in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Journal of* ..., 2024, <https://journal.centristm.or.id/index.php/jocis/article/view/308>.

² N M Yusak, M Y Madrah, and M N Ardi, "Islamic Education for a Resilient Faith Communities: A Study of Religious Literacy Practices in Pesantren," *Indonesian Journal of ...* (ejournal.uinsaid.ac.id, 2021), <https://ejournal.uinsaid.ac.id/index.php/islimus/article/download/5949/2388>; A Faisal et al., "Strengthening Religious Moderatism through the Traditional Authority of Kiai in Indonesia," *Cogent Social* ..., 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2150450>; A Hannan, "The Political Ethics of Kiai," *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik Kajian Islam Dan Tafsir*, 2023, <http://www.sophist.or.id/index.php/js/article/view/94>.

³ A Musaddad, "Leadership in Pesantren: Educational Management Approaches for Spiritual and Academic Development," *AKSI: Jurnal Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 2024, <http://ejournal.staiha.ac.id/index.php/aksi/article/view/455>; M Abdullah and K Kusaeri, "Cultural Transformation of Kiai Leadership in Madura: From Religious Educators to Political Leaders," *AL-ISHLAH: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 2024, <http://journal.staihubbulwathan.id/index.php/alishlah/article/view/5333>; S Futaqi and S Mashuri, "Multicultural Leadership of Kiai for Managing Diversity in Indonesian Context: Spiritual, Intellectual, and Social Integration," *Cultural Management: Science and Education* 6, no. 2 (2022): 57–73, <https://doi.org/10.30819/cmse.6-2.04>.

⁴ H Sugianto, M Muhaemin, and ..., "The Construction of Moderation in Religious Education Based on Local Wisdom," *PEDAGOGIK: Jurnal* ..., 2024, <https://ejournal.unuja.ac.id/index.php/pedagogik/article/view/8117>.

⁵ W N Robaeah, I Irawan, and T M Nasir, "Charismatic Kyai Leadership and Its Relationship to the Character Building of Santri at Islamic Boarding Schools in Plered Purwakarta District," *ISLAMIKA*, 2023, <https://ejournal.stitpn.ac.id/index.php/islamika/article/view/3155>.

⁶ C B Gama, M F Farhan Farabi, and F Fuady, "ROLES AND CHALLENGES OF PESANTREN INTELLECTUAL NETWORKS," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 2 (2024): 453–70, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i2.23134>.

studies have explored *pesantren* as Islamic educational institutions, the unique role of *kyai* in addressing the challenges of religious extremism and social change remains underexplored. Rapid social change and digitalization have challenged the traditional authority of *kyai*, yet their role remains crucial in preventing social conflict and promoting religious tolerance.⁷ Previous research shows that *kyai* play a central role as conflict mediators in interfaith interactions and family disputes in South Sulawesi.⁸ However, how this approach is adopted in East Java has not been explored. The *kyai*'s authority in disseminating moderation values through the *pesantren* education system has fostered tolerance among *santri*.⁹ However, integrating these values within the broader society requires further investigation. *Kyai* also utilizes local languages to convey moderation messages to the community, demonstrating cultural adaptability.¹⁰ This study will provide a unique contribution by delving deeper into how the traditional authority of *kyai* in East Java effectively integrates religious moderation values in facing local and global challenges, enriching the academic discourse on moderate Islam.

Research on the traditional authority of *kyai* in *pesantren* and its impact on religious moderation is crucial. This is because *kyai* plays a strategic role in teaching values of tolerance and inclusivity within *pesantren*, which serve as centers of education and social transformation as charismatic leaders, *kyai* preserve religious traditions and promote interfaith harmony through religious moderation education.¹¹ Studies show that *kyai* facilitates interfaith dialogue and shapes organizational cultures based on *wasathiyah* values.¹² *Pesantren* in East Java, such as in Kediri, have successfully integrated religious moderation education into their curriculum to counter radicalism.¹³ This research is relevant for contributing to developing educational

⁷ M Haris, H Mufidah, and A Umam, "Implementation of Strengthening Religious Tolerance Character in Indonesian Pesantren," ... of Islamic Studies and Educational ..., 2024, <https://jurnal.ut.ac.id/index.php/jiser/article/view/10250>; Z Efendi and A Ansori, "Tolerance Education for Islamic Boarding School Students on Lombok Island," *Kawanua International Journal of ...*, 2023, <https://ejournal.iain-manado.ac.id/index.php/KIJMS/article/view/626>.

⁸ Haris, Mufidah, and Umam, "Implementation of Strengthening Religious Tolerance Character in Indonesian Pesantren"; Efendi and Ansori, "Tolerance Education for Islamic Boarding School Students on Lombok Island."

⁹ Haris, Mufidah, and Umam, "Implementation of Strengthening Religious Tolerance Character in Indonesian Pesantren"; Y A Bashori, K Umami, and S H Wahid, "Maqasid Shariah-Based Digital Economy Model: Integration, Sustainability And Transformation," *Malaysian Journal of Syariah and Law* 12, no. 2 (2024): 405–25, <https://doi.org/10.33102/mjssl.vol12no2.647>.

¹⁰ H Pajarianto, I Pribad, and P Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 2022, <https://www.ajol.info/Index.Php/Hts/Article/View/246802>; M Nasir and M K Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213–41, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.213-241>.

¹¹ Pajarianto, Pribad, and Sari, "Tolerance between Religions through the Role of Local Wisdom and Religious Moderation"; Nasir and Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia"; Robaeah, Irawan, and Nasir, "Charismatic Kyai Leadership and Its Relationship to the Character Building of Santri at Islamic Boarding Schools in Plered Purwakarta District"; M M Huda and M N Musyarrof, "Ma'had Aly: Integration of Islamic Universities and Islamic Boarding Schools," *IJIBS* (ijibs.uinkhas.ac.id, 2023), <https://ijibs.uinkhas.ac.id/index.php/ijibs/article/download/24/15>.

¹² M Huda, "Strengthening Religious Moderation Through the Core Values of Islamic Boarding School Education," *Al-Hayat: Journal of Islamic Education*, 2024, <https://www.alhayat.or.id/index.php/alhayat/article/view/458>; A M Ali and F Halim, "The Role of Pesantren and Its Literacy Culture in Strengthening Moderate Islam in Indonesia," *Edukasia Islamika: Jurnal Pendidikan ...*, 2023, <https://e-journal.uingusdur.ac.id/edukasiaislamika/article/view/1729>.

¹³ M Alam, "A Collaborative Action in the Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education to Counter Radicalism," *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and ...* (ijicc.net, 2020), https://www.ijicc.net/images/vol11iss7/11742_Alam_2020_E_R.pdf; M T Yani, M Hazin, and Y Hanafi,

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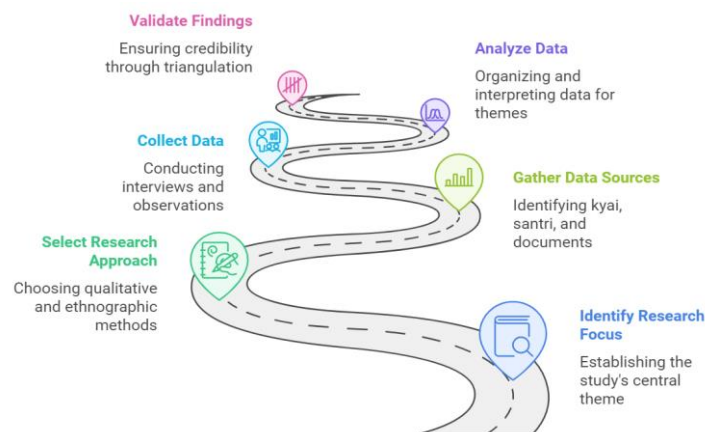
strategies for religious moderation, particularly in *pesantren*, which support social stability and religious tolerance in Indonesia.

This study aims to understand the traditional authority of *kyai* in East Java *pesantren* and its impact on religious moderation. First, it explores the role of *kyai* in upholding moderate Islamic values through *pesantren* education.¹⁴ Second, it analyzes *kyai's* strategies in addressing the challenges of modernization without losing traditional Islamic values.¹⁵ Third, it evaluates the relationship between *kyai* authority and the development of tolerance among communities within the *pesantren* environment.¹⁶ Using a qualitative approach, this research seeks to provide new insights into how *kyai* authority influences social harmony in the context of religious pluralism in Indonesia.¹⁷ Thus, the study contributes to the academic discourse on religious moderation and the role of traditional institutions in a global context.

METHOD

The research methodology for the study titled "Traditional Authority of Kyai and Its Impact on Religious Moderation in East Java *Pesantren*" is illustrated in the chart below:

Figure 1: Research on Kyai's Role in Religious Moderation



“Insertion Model of Religious Moderation and National Defence as Efforts to Prevent Radicalism and Communism via Islamic Religious Education Instructions,” *Arts Educa* (artseduca.com, 2023), <https://artseduca.com/submissions/index.php/ae/article/download/113/100>.

¹⁴ N Khasanah, A I Hamzani, and ..., “Religious Moderation in the Islamic Education System in Indonesia,” ... , *Sosial, Dan Agama*, 2023, <https://ejournal.insuriponorogo.ac.id/index.php/qalamuna/article/view/4115>; R Mulyana, “Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia,” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v79i1.8592>.

¹⁵ I Rosidi et al., “Negotiating Traditional Religious Authority In Indonesian Islam: The Case Of Madani Village,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 24, no. 1 (2024): 51–66, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v24i1.17320>.

¹⁶ Nasith, “The Role of Kyai’s Charismatic Leadership in Mitigating Religious Intolerance and Radicalism in Pesantren”; I Mujahid, “Islamic Orthodoxy-Based Character Education: Creating Moderate Muslim in a Modern Pesantren in Indonesia,” *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 185–212, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v11i2.185-212>.

¹⁷ T M Mazya, K Ridho, and A Irfani, “Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia: Dynamics of Acceptance and Conflict in a Multidimensional Perspective,” *International Journal of Current ...* (researchgate.net, 2024), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kholis-Ridho-2/publication/382199893_Religious_and_Cultural_Diversity_in_Indonesia_Dynamics_of_Acceptance_and_Conflict_in_a_Multidimensional_Perspective/links/66928771af9e615a15e3285b/Religious-and-Cultural-Diversity-i;

K Khotimah, “The Role of Religious Leaders in Social Development and Religious Harmony: A Historical Sociological Study of Islamic Religious Leaders in the 21st Century,” *Jurnal Indonesia Studi Moderasi Beragama*, 2024, <https://ojs.aeducia.org/index.php/jismb/article/view/99>; R Saehu and I H Muchtar, “Religious Pluralism and Harmony among Buddhist-Muslim Communities Living in East Lampung, Indonesia,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and ...*, 2023, <https://journals.umt.edu.pk/index.php/JITC/article/view/3200>.

As explained by the chart, this research focuses on the traditional authority of *kyai* and its impact on religious moderation in East Java *pesantren*, as this phenomenon is relevant to understanding the relationship between religion and culture in a multicultural society.¹⁸ The role of *kyai* as *pesantren* leaders is considered strategic in integrating traditional values with the principles of religious moderation, which is essential for maintaining social harmony.¹⁹ Furthermore, East Java is known as the center of *pesantren* in Indonesia, making it an ideal location to explore this issue in depth.²⁰ The selection of this issue also considers the relevance of *kyai* in national discourse and the promotion of tolerance values in the face of globalization challenges.

This research adopts a qualitative approach with an ethnographic design to understand the phenomenon holistically within a specific cultural context.²¹ The primary data consists of in-depth interviews, direct observation, and document analysis reflecting the practice of religious moderation in *pesantren*.²² Data sources include *kyai*, *santri*, and religious documents used in *pesantren* education.²³ The selection of data sources is purposive to ensure relevance to

¹⁸ Mazya, Ridho, and Irfani, "Religious and Cultural Diversity in Indonesia: Dynamics of Acceptance and Conflict in a Multidimensional Perspective"; M Saihu et al., "Religion As A Cultural System: A Multiculturalism Education Model In Bali Based On Local Tradition," *Psychology And Education* (academia.edu, 2021), <https://www.academia.edu/download/80840167/1291.pdf>.

¹⁹ S Halimah, A Yusuf, and K Safiudin, "Pesantren Education Management: The Transformation of Religious Learning Culture in the Age of Disruption," *Nidhomul Haq: Jurnal ...*, 2024, <https://nidhomulhaq.uacmjk.ac.id/index.php/ndh/article/view/16>; Musaddad, "Leadership in Pesantren: Educational Management Approaches for Spiritual and Academic Development."

²⁰ T Thoriquattyas and F Hanun, "Amplifying the Religious Moderation from Pesantren: A Sketch of Pesantren's Experience in Kediri, East Java," ... of *Social Science and Religion*, 2020, <https://journal.blasemarang.id/index.php/analisa/article/view/1147>; C Rois, M S Dewi, and N Robaniyah, "The History of Pesantren: An Overview of Civilizational Discourse and the Religious Moderation Among Santri," *Progresiva: Jurnal Pemikiran ...*, 2023, <https://ejournal.umm.ac.id/index.php/progresiva/article/view/24473>; S Khoiriyah, A M Noor, and ..., "Dynamics of Religious Thought in Pesantrens in Indonesia: Between Radicalism, Moderation, and Liberalism," *Al Ulya: Jurnal Pendidikan ...*, 2024, <https://journal.unugiri.ac.id/index.php/al-ulya/article/view/2958>.

²¹ G King, R O Keohane, and S Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (books.google.com, 2021), <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=RFMgEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR9&dq=qualitative+inquiry+and+research+design&ots=z1mjSwT-Mc&sig=zntbGULw98Dfe0dtqv0wuMUSpuQ>; A Edwards, "Qualitative Designs and Analysis," *Doing Early Childhood Research*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003115403-11>; U Flick, *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research Design* (torrossa.com, 2022), <https://www.torrossa.com/it/resources/an/5282289>.

²² A T Hasibuan et al., "Konsep Dan Karakteristik Penelitian Kualitatif Serta Perbedaannya Dengan Penelitian Kuantitatif," *Jurnal Pendidikan ...*, 2022, <https://jptam.org/index.php/jptam/article/view/3730>; A Adil et al., "Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif Dan Kualitatif: Teori Dan Praktik," *Jakarta: Get Press ...* (researchgate.net, 2023), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Moh-Rohman-3/publication/377329440_Metode_Penelitian_Kuantitatif_Dan_Kualitatif_Teori_Dan_Praktik_Get_Press_Indonesia/Links/65a0309740ce1c5902d51bc9/Metode-Penelitian-Kuantitatif-Dan-Kualitatif-Teori-Dan-Praktik-Get-Pr.

²³ Gama, Farhan Farabi, and Fuady, "Roles and Challenges of Pesantren Intellectual Networks"; M A Islam and F M F Aldaihani, "Justification for Adopting Qualitative Research Method, Research Approaches, Sampling Strategy, Sample Size, Interview Method, Saturation, and Data Analysis," *Journal of International Business and ...* (researchgate.net, 2022), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Md-Islam-394/publication/357352896_Justification_for_Adopting_Qualitative_Research_Method_Research_Approaches_Sampling_Strategy_Sample_Size_Interview_Method_Saturation_and_Data_Analysis/links/61c9ed5ab8305f7c4b05d50c/J; J N Lester, Y Cho, and ..., "Learning to Do Qualitative Data Analysis: A Starting Point," *Human Resource ...*, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484320903890>.

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the research issue, focusing on *pesantren* known for their significant influence in shaping religious moderation.

The data collection techniques employed include semi-structured interviews to explore the perspectives of *kyai* and *santri* regarding religious moderation.²⁴ Direct observation is conducted to understand the context of social interactions and religious rituals in the *pesantren*.²⁵ In addition, documents such as *kitab kuning* and the *pesantren* curriculum are analyzed to explore the narratives of religious moderation being taught.²⁶ The data analysis process involves organizing the data, identifying key themes, and interpreting the findings within the context of traditional authority theory.²⁷ The credibility of the collected data is tested through source and method triangulation to ensure the validity of the research findings.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

1. The Role of Kyai in Upholding Moderate Islamic Values through Pesantren Education

Observations at *Pesantren Baitullisan* in Jember, East Java, reveal that *kyai* play a central role in fostering moderate Islamic values through *pesantren* education. For instance, in one of the regular *Kitab Kuning* studies, KH. Syamsul Anam emphasized the importance of interfaith tolerance by quoting the verse "*lakum dīnukum waliya dīn.*" In an interview, KH. Syamsul Anam stated,

"Pesantren is a place to cultivate compassion. We teach students to respect differences, as diversity is a blessing." (Anam, interview, October 12, 2024).

Below is a table showing *pesantren* activities related to religious moderation:

Table 1: Pesantren Activities

Activity	Purpose	Time
Kitab Kuning Study	Instilling an understanding of moderate Islam	Every Saturday
Interfaith Discussions	Promoting tolerance	Quarterly

²⁴ K Schoch, "Case Study Research," *Research Design and Methods: An Applied Guide for ...* (researchgate.net, 2020), https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Subhash-Basu-3/post/How_do_i_determine_the_sample_size_for_a_study_looking_at_the_treatment_outcomes_of_mental_health_patients_in_a_community_house/attachment/5ebbae3eead4db0001551c21/AS%3A890646755811328%4015893581423.

²⁵ E Kang and H J Hwang, "Ethical Conducts in Qualitative Research Methodology: Participant Observation and Interview Process," *Journal of Research and Publication Ethics*, 2021, <https://koreascience.kr/article/JAKO202130550806959.page>; L Busetto, W Wick, and C Gumbinger, "How to Use and Assess Qualitative Research Methods," *Neurological Research and Practice* (Springer, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42466-020-00059-z>.

²⁶ J Schütz, M Uslar, and J Meister, "A Case Study Research on Interoperability Improvement in Smart Grids: State-of-the-Art and Further Opportunities," ... *Research ...* (open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu, 2021), <https://open-research-europe.ec.europa.eu/articles/1-33>; A R W Takahashi and L Araujo, "Case Study Research: Opening up Research Opportunities," *RAUSP Management Journal* (SciELO Brasil, 2020), <https://www.scielo.br/j/rmj/a/HsgJqXyP8yYcMnQMCCmB7Xt/>.

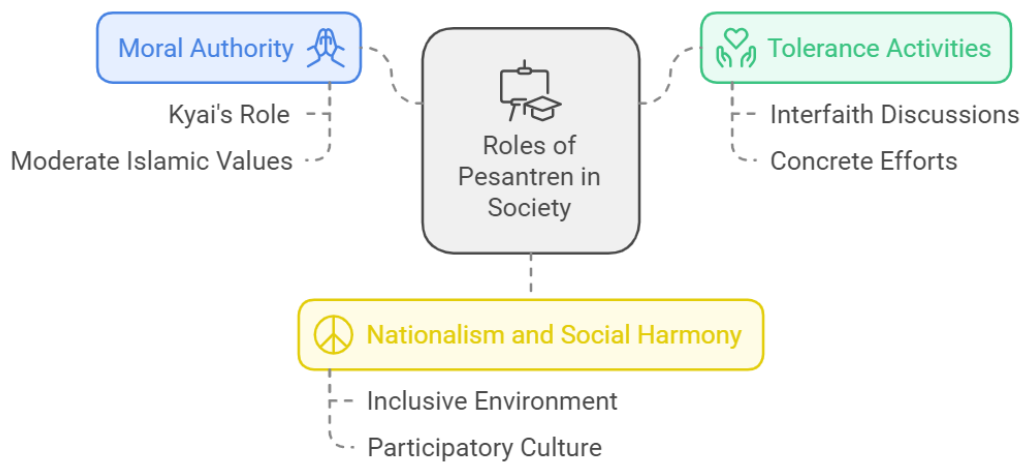
²⁷ C M Paul, "Competing Paradigms: Employing Quantitative Methods to Operationalize and Validate a Pedagogy of Critical Literacy," *Reading Research Quarterly*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.453>; D L Morgan, "Paradigms in Mixed Methods Research," ... *for Advancing Integration in Mixed Methods Research*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429432828-10>.

Islamic Holiday Celebrations	Strengthening Islamic brotherhood (<i>ukhuwah</i>)	According to Hijri calendar
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The data above shows that the role of *kyai* in *pesantren* is not only as religious educators but also as leaders who cultivate values of tolerance and moderation. Through *kitab kuning* studies and other interactive activities, *kyai* provides deep insights into how Islam teaches compassion and respect for differences. *Pesantren* also serves as a platform for interfaith discussions, indirectly educating students to live harmoniously alongside diverse communities. These activities are supported by documentation that reflects an inclusive atmosphere within the *pesantren* environment.

From the data obtained, three main trends are depicted in the following chart:

Figure 2: The Role of *Kyai* in *Pesantren*



The data above illustrates that, *first*, *kyai* in *pesantren* hold significant moral authority in internalizing moderate Islamic values among students through in-depth religious studies. *Second*, *pesantren* actively facilitate activities that instill values of tolerance, such as interfaith discussions, as a concrete effort to practice the teachings of moderate Islam. *Third*, *pesantren's* inclusive and participatory environment reflects the strengthening of national values and social harmony. This demonstrates that *pesantren* function as educational institutions and agents of social change, which is highly relevant in multicultural societies.

2. The *Kyai's* Strategies for Addressing Modernization Challenges Without Losing Traditional Islamic Values

The results of observations at *Pesantren Hubbul Qur'an*, Jombang, East Java, show that *kyai* employs various strategies to address the challenges of modernization without sacrificing traditional Islamic values. One strategy is curriculum renewal, which integrates religious knowledge with modern technology. In an interview, KH. Miftahul Huda Yassalaam explained, "We cannot avoid modernization, but we must adapt it to Islamic principles. For instance, we teach students to master technology while adhering to moderate religious teachings" (Huda, interview, October 14, 2024).

The following table outlines the strategies implemented at the *pesantren*:

Table 2: the strategies implemented at the *pesantren*

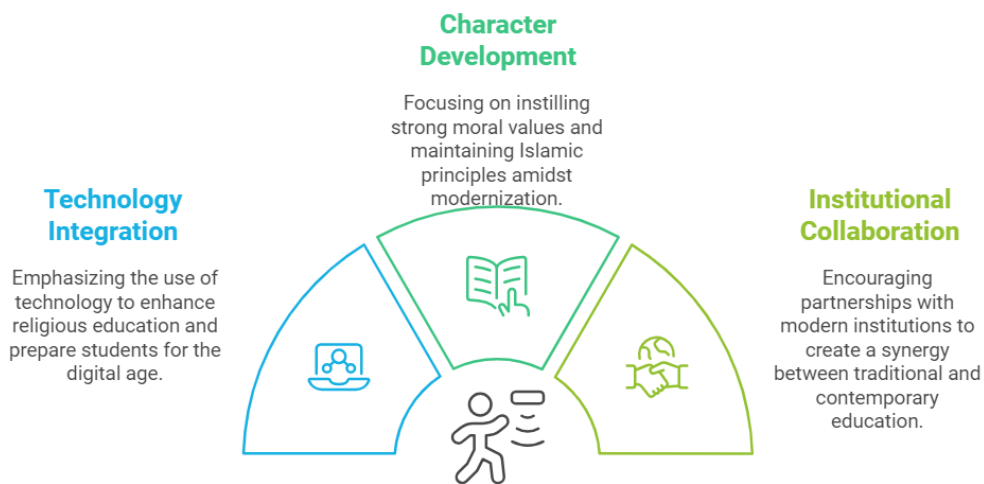
Curriculum Integration	Combining religious knowledge with technology	Technology training programs
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Student Character Development	Instilling Islamic moral and social values	Regular activities and mentoring.
Increasing Collaboration with Society	Building partnerships with modern institutions and social media	Digital-based social activities
Curriculum Integration	Combining religious knowledge with technology	Technology training programs

The data above shows that the *kyai* at *Pesantren Hubbul Qur'an* have successfully developed strategies to address the challenges of modernization while preserving traditional Islamic values. They have integrated technology into the pesantren curriculum to ensure that students keep pace with the times. The *kyai* also emphasize the importance of character development based on Islamic moral and social values. Additionally, the *pesantren* has become more open to collaboration with modern institutions and the use of social media to build wider networks, allowing students to learn and grow in line with contemporary challenges without neglecting religious teachings.

Figure 3: *Pesantren* Adaptation Strategies



The data reveals three main tendencies. First, *kyai* in *pesantren* implements strategies prioritizing technological adaptation by integrating religious education with technology, ensuring students are prepared for the digital era. Second, *pesantren* greatly emphasizes character development to preserve morality and Islamic values amidst modernization. Third, *kyai* encourages collaboration with various modern institutions to create synergy between traditional education and contemporary developments, allowing *pesantren* to remain relevant without losing their traditional roots. This reflects the efforts of *pesantren* to maintain their role as educational institutions that are both relevant and adaptive to the changing times.

3. The Relationship Between *Kyai's* Authority and the Formation of Inter-Community Tolerance in the *Pesantren* Environment.

Observations at the *Itqonullisan* Arabic Language *Pesantren* in Malang, East Java, show that the authority of the *kyai* plays a significant role in shaping inter-community tolerance within the *pesantren* environment. *Kyai* Nur Qomari, in an interview, explained:

"We teach students to respect differences because Islam teaches that diversity is a blessing. This pesantren is open to various beliefs and always promotes dialogue to create peace" (Qomari, interview, October 15, 2024).

The following table outlines several pesantren activities that support the development of tolerance:

Table 3: several pesantren activities

Activity	Purpose	Participants
Interfaith Dialogue	Enhancing understanding of other beliefs	of Students and the community.
Joint Social Activities	Fostering a sense of brotherhood and unity	Students from various backgrounds
Joint Religious Celebrations	Strengthening Interfaith Solidarity	All religious communities

The data above shows that the authority of the *kyai* at the *Itqonullisan* Arabic Language *Pesantren* plays a crucial role in shaping inter-community tolerance. By teaching the importance of respecting differences, the *kyai* guides the students in learning religious teachings and interacting with diverse communities. Activities such as interfaith dialogue, joint social initiatives, and celebrating religious holidays strengthen relationships between religious groups within the *pesantren* environment. This reflects how the *pesantren* functions as a platform for fostering peace and harmony among communities.

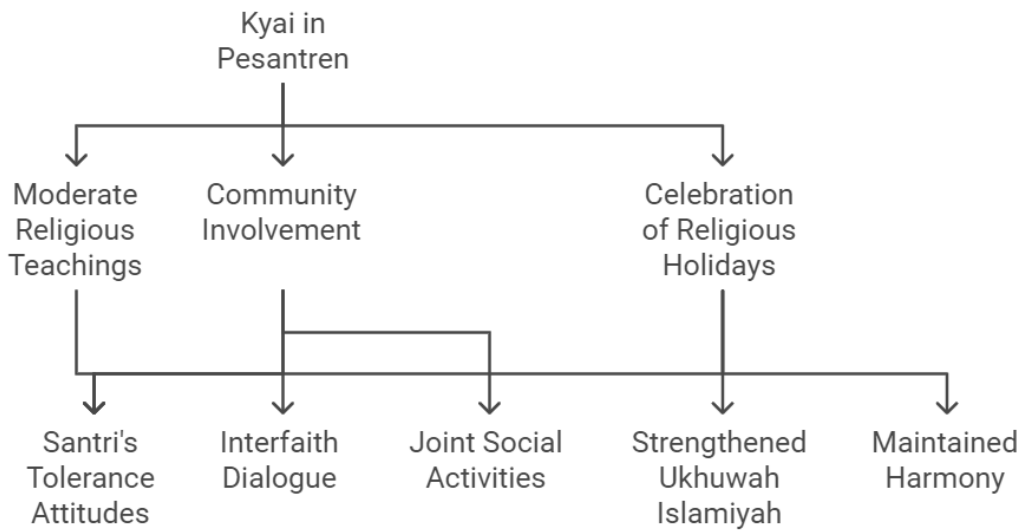
Figure 4. participating in inter-sectarian dialogues



The documentation above showcases students from diverse backgrounds actively participating in inter-sectarian dialogues organized by the *pesantren*. These interactions foster an intense atmosphere of tolerance, promoting mutual understanding and respect among students. Such initiatives highlight the *pesantren*'s commitment to nurturing harmony and unity within a pluralistic society.

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Diagram 1: *Kyai* Authority



The data reveals three main tendencies. *First*, *kyai* in the pesantren significantly influences students' attitudes of tolerance through moderate religious teachings and the values of respecting differences. *Second*, the *Itqonullisan Arabic Language Pesantren* actively engages students and the community in activities that foster brotherhood, such as interfaith dialogue and joint social initiatives. *Third*, the joint celebration of religious holidays also strengthens *ukhuwah Islamiyah* and maintains harmony among different religious groups. This indicates that the *pesantren* provides religious education and is essential in fostering social peace through tolerance.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the role of *kyai* in *pesantren* is crucial in shaping religious moderation, preserving moderate Islamic values, and fostering interfaith tolerance. At *Pesantren Hubbul Qur'an*, the *kyai* implements a strategy that integrates the religious curriculum with technology,²⁸ ensuring that students are equipped to face modernization without sacrificing traditional Islamic values. At *Itqonullisan Arabic Language Pesantren*, the *kyai's* authority significantly facilitates interfaith dialogues and strengthens relationships between religious communities, creating an inclusive and harmonious environment.²⁹ These findings highlight that *pesantren* provide spiritual education and serve as vital institutions for fostering social peace through religious moderation and tolerance.

The primary cause behind the phenomena revealed in this research is the moral and religious authority held by the *kyai* within the *pesantren*. The *kyai* not only teaches religious knowledge but also acts as a leader who instills the students' values of moderation and tolerance. This may be related to the *pesantren's* culture, which emphasizes direct learning through

²⁸ H H Zuhri and M Huda, "Enhancing Educational Ecosystems: Implementing Peter Senge's Learning Organization Model in Islamic Boarding Schools," *Munaddhomah* 5, no. 2 (2024): 222–34, <https://doi.org/10.31538/munaddhomah.v5i2.1030>; Ahmad Faisal, "Evaluasi Pembelajaran Di Pondok Pesantren," *Research in Education and Technology (REGY)* (PT The Collaboration UVW, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.62590/regy.v1i2.26>.

²⁹ Huda, "Strengthening Religious Moderation Through the Core Values of Islamic Boarding School Education"; Mulyana, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Education Textbook and Implementation in Indonesia"; Khoiriyah, Noor, and ..., "Dynamics of Religious Thought in Pesantrens in Indonesia: Between Radicalism, Moderation, and Liberalism."

personal interaction, allowing the *kyai* to influence students' behavior easily. Additionally, the importance of integrating technology with religious values, along with character development for students, enables the *pesantren* to adapt and thrive amid the challenges of modernization.³⁰ These *pesantren* also embrace inclusivity and dialogue as shared norms, creating a space for all communities to interact peacefully.

As a result of the strategies implemented by the *kyai* in this *pesantren*, students are proficient in religious knowledge and capable of adapting to the evolving times. Integrating technology with religious teachings helps students understand the concept of moderation in Islam and apply it in their daily lives.³¹ Furthermore, the tolerance fostered through interfaith dialogue and joint social activities strengthens social cohesion among students from various backgrounds. This creates a harmonious atmosphere within the *pesantren*, positioning them as agents of social peace in a pluralistic society. Thus, the moderation strategies practiced in these *pesantren* can be seen as an effective model for fostering peace among religious communities.

The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies on the role of *pesantren* in promoting moderation and tolerance. Several studies by Huda (2022) and Putra (2021) have also shown that *kyai* plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes of moderation through *pesantren* education. However, this research adds a new dimension: integrating technology in the *pesantren* curriculum and more intensive interfaith dialogue.³² Compared to previous studies, which focus on traditional religious teachings, these findings demonstrate a broader adaptation to the challenges faced by *pesantren* at the time. Therefore, while there is a shared focus on moderation and tolerance, the emphasis on technological adaptation and openness to interfaith dialogue provides an important contribution in the context of this research.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made. First, there is a need to enhance the integration of the *pesantren* curriculum with more innovative technologies to prepare students for global challenges.³³ Additionally, policies supporting students' character development based on moderate Islamic values should be strengthened through character-building programs and social activities involving various groups. The government and religious education institutions can further support *pesantren* by providing facilities that allow access to technology and additional training for *kyai* and students. Moreover, this approach should be balanced with the strengthening of open and inclusive interfaith dialogue, ensuring that

³⁰ Asep Fahrurroji, "Pembelajaran Era Digital (Studi Di Pondok Pesantren Kun Karima Kabupaten Pandeglang)," *Aksioma Ad-Diniyah* (La Tansa Mashiro, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.55171/jad.v9i1.532>; H F Zarkasyi, "Imam Zarkasyi's Modernization of Pesantren in Indonesia: (A Case Study of Darussalam Gontor)," *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies* 8, no. 1 (2020): 161–200, <https://doi.org/10.21043/QIJS.V8I1.5760>.

³¹ Samsul Arifin, "Internalisasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Kurikulum Pesantren," *EDUKASIA: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Pembelajaran* (LP. Ma'arif Nahdlatul Ulama Janggan, 2023), <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v4i2.532>; N Azizah et al., "Religious Moderation in The Industrial Era 4.0: Deradicalization Through The Development of Intellectual Traditions at Fadhlul Fadhlul Islamic Boarding School Semarang," *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam* 20, no. 2 (2023): 233–46, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jpai.v20i2.7771>.

³² H Alizai, "Impact of Islamophobia on Post-Secondary Muslim Students Attending Ontario Universities," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 24, no. 3 (2021): 357–74, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2020.1798388>; T Green, "Interfaith Etiquette in an Age of Islamophobia," *Dialog* 58, no. 3 (2019): 212–16, <https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12491>.

³³ G Cooper and K.-S. Tang, "Pixels and Pedagogy: Examining Science Education Imagery by Generative Artificial Intelligence," *Journal of Science Education and Technology* 33, no. 4 (2024): 556–68, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10956-024-10104-0>.

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pesantren continue to serve as agents of change in fostering social peace within a multicultural society.

CONCLUSION

This research finds that the role of *kyai* (Islamic scholars) in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) is highly significant in maintaining moderate Islamic values and fostering tolerance between religious communities. The *kyai* serve as religious educators and leaders who provide concrete examples of teaching moderation through various activities within the *pesantren*. In this regard, the study of classical Islamic texts (*kitab kuning*), interfaith discussions, and collaboration with modern institutions are essential mediums for internalizing values of tolerance and respect for differences among students. Additionally, the *kyai* play a pivotal role in adapting the *pesantren's* educational curriculum to modern developments, particularly in addressing the challenges of modernization and technology. These findings highlight that *pesantren* are not merely religious, educational institutions but also act as agents of social change, fostering harmony in a multicultural society.

Conceptually, this study contributes to understanding the relationship between the *kyai's* authority and religious moderation and the importance of integrating technology into *pesantren* education. This study adds a new dimension to *pesantren* research by emphasizing the efforts of *pesantren* to remain relevant in contemporary times through the application of technology while upholding moderate religious values. The methodology, which involved direct observation and in-depth interviews with *kyai* and students, provides empirical insights into how *pesantren* can play a crucial role in creating social peace and fostering tolerance. Therefore, these findings enrich the literature on religious moderation in the context of *pesantren* education and provide a solid foundation for developing more adaptive and inclusive religious education policies.

However, despite offering in-depth insights into the role of *kyai* in *pesantren*, this research has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, the limited scope of the study, focusing only on a few *pesantren* in East Java, means that these findings only partially represent the condition of *pesantren* across Indonesia. Future research should expand the geographical and demographic scope to obtain a more representative picture. Second, this study primarily focuses on the *kyai's* perspective, while students' role in shaping moderation and tolerance attitudes has yet to be deeply explored. Thus, future studies should consider the students' perspectives and involvement in the educational process. Finally, although this research suggests the need to increase technology integration into the curriculum, further research is required to examine the appropriate implementation of technology in *pesantren* to ensure it effectively helps students face the challenges of modernization without compromising moderate religious values.

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