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**INDONESIAN ISLAM AT WALI BAROKAH ISLAMIC BOARDING  
SCHOOL KEDIRI: Between Stigma and Reality of Implementing  
Religious Moderation in a Local Context**

**ISLAM KEINDONESIAAN DI PESANTREN WALI BAROKAH  
KEDIRI: Antara Stigma dan Realitas Implementasi Moderasi Beragama  
dalam Konteks Lokal**

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**ABSTRACT :**

This study aims to describe the implementation of religious moderation at Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri within the framework of Indonesian Islam and to explore the tension between public stigma and the actual spiritual practices at the pesantren. This study employs a qualitative case study method, utilizing participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. This study demonstrates that Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri has effectively implemented religious moderation through an integrated curriculum, inclusive worship practices, appreciation of local traditions, and character development programs that emphasize ethics, tolerance, and national commitment. The findings highlight the relevance of religious moderation theory, social perception theory, and the concept of Indonesian Islam in understanding the internal dynamics of the pesantren and its relationship with the surrounding community.

**Keywords:** *Indonesian Islam, religious moderation, Wali Barokah Kediri, social stigma.*

## INTRODUCTION

As traditional Islamic educational institutions, pesantren play a fundamental role in shaping the religious identity of Indonesian society.<sup>1</sup> From the pre-independence period to the modern era, pesantren have served as centers for the transmission of religious knowledge, character formation, and the preservation of local cultural value.<sup>2</sup> In Indonesia's socially, ethnically, and religiously plural context, pesantren function not only as institutions of learning but also as key actors in maintaining social cohesion and interreligious harmony.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, pesantren are often positioned as

<sup>1</sup> Husen, K., & Husni, M.. Peran Pesantren Dalam Meneguhkan Identitas Budaya Indonesia di Tengah Arus Modernisasi. *IHSAN: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), (2025).

<sup>2</sup> Hak, N., Mustaqim, A., Baidhowi, A., & Zuhri, S. Genealogi dan jaringan keilmuan pesantren modern: di Banten, Jawa Tengah, dan Jawa Timur. Waruwu, E. (2025). Strategies For Instilling Religious Moderation Understanding Among Church Congregations In Indonesia. *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO)*, 2(3), (2023): 3629.

<sup>3</sup> Rifki, M. *Pondok pesantren sebagai agen pembentukan karakter moderat santri: Penelitian di Pondok Pesantren Mahasiswa Universal Bandung* (Doctoral dissertation, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung). 2024

central pillars in addressing contemporary challenges such as radicalism, intolerance, and identity polarization.

In the past decade, the Indonesian government, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, has mainstreamed the concept of religious moderation as a strategic approach to fostering peaceful and inclusive religious life.<sup>4</sup> Religious moderation has become a national discourse aimed at preventing extremism, strengthening national commitment, and affirming Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) as the collective identity of Muslims in Indonesia.<sup>5</sup> Indonesian Islam refers to a form of religiosity that is compatible with local culture, democracy, and national values.<sup>6</sup> This concept rejects the dichotomy between religion and culture, while emphasizing that Islam has grown organically within the social context of Indonesian society.

Within the discourse on Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) and religious moderation, pesantren are often regarded as the most concrete manifestation of a moderate, tolerant, and locally grounded form of Islam.<sup>7</sup> However, empirical realities frequently reveal more complex dynamics. Not all pesantren share the same experiences; some encounter stigma or social prejudice stemming from organizational affiliations, pedagogical characteristics, or institutional histories.<sup>8</sup> One pesantren that has frequently attracted public attention is Pesantren Wali Barokah in Kediri. This pesantren possesses distinctive characteristics that set it apart from conventional pesantren models, ranging from its student development structure and internal teaching system to its organizational affiliation, which has contributed to the emergence of certain stigmas or misperceptions among segments of the public.

Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri, established in 1951 and currently accommodating approximately 4,000 students, was selected as the locus of this study for several strategic reasons.<sup>9</sup> First, as a leading LDII Islamic educational institution in East Java, the pesantren has produced thousands of alumni who occupy diverse positions in society, making it influential in shaping public perceptions of LDII. Second, located at Hos. Cokroaminoto Street Number 195, Burengan Village, Pesantren District, Kediri City, East Java. The pesantren is situated in a strategic area with

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<sup>4</sup> Waruwu, Elianus. "Strategies For Instilling Religious Moderation Understanding Among Church Congregations In Indonesia." *Multidisciplinary Indonesian Center Journal (MICJO)* 2, no. 3 (2025): 3629

<sup>5</sup> Sirajuddin, S. *Buku Literasi Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia*. Penerbit. Zigie Utama. 2020

<sup>6</sup> Mubarak, M. F., & Rahman, M. T. Membandingkan Konsep Islam Keindonesiaan dengan Islam Nusantara dalam Kerangka Pluralisme. *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas*, 1(4), (2021): 412

<sup>7</sup> Muhtarom, A., Fuad, S., & Latif, T. *Moderasi beragama: konsep, nilai, dan strategi pengembangannya di pesantren*. Yayasan Talibuana Nusantara. 2020

<sup>8</sup> Malik, A. Stigmatisasi Radikal Terhadap Pendidikan Islam: Critical Pedagogy pada Pendidikan dan Pengajaran Pesantren. *Media Penelitian Pendidikan: Jurnal Penelitian dalam Bidang Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 17(1), (2023): 12

<sup>9</sup> Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia (LDII) Kediri. Tiga Ponpes LDII di Kota Kediri Dilengkapi Posketren . LDII.or.id. 2024

strong interaction with the local community. Third, the pesantren integrates traditional Islamic learning with the context of modern Indonesia, making it a concrete representation of the implementation of Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) within an educational setting.

The stigma surrounding LDII within the broader community often includes assumptions of exclusivity, limited openness to external parties, or biased judgments regarding the religious orientation of the pesantren. However, many of these stigmas lack empirical foundation. In numerous cases, public perceptions are shaped more by media narratives, indirect experiences, or specific socio-political constructions.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, scholarly research is needed to provide an objective depiction of the religious life within Pesantren Wali Barokah, particularly concerning the implementation of religious moderation and Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan).

Furthermore, scholarly studies on Pesantren Wali Barokah remain relatively limited, particularly in academic discussions that link issues of social stigma with community-based practices of religious moderation. Research conducted by Asrori (2024) and Muna (2024) has primarily focused on the curriculum implemented at Pesantren Wali Barokah,<sup>11</sup> while only a few studies examine pesantren with distinct organizational models that are often overshadowed by negative public perception.<sup>12</sup> In light of the diverse landscape of pesantren in Indonesia, such studies are crucial for expanding our understanding of the spectrum of religious moderation across different types of pesantren.

Thus, this study is significant as it seeks to bridge the gap between stigma and reality through an academic approach. It not only describes how Pesantren Wali Barokah implements the values of religious moderation within its curriculum, traditions, and social practices, but also analyzes how the concept of Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) takes shape in its local context. Moreover, this study is expected to contribute to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of religious moderation and to enrich the literature on the role of pesantren as agents of social transformation in addressing contemporary religious challenges.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan)**

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<sup>10</sup> Maharani, A. P., & Tutrianto, R. Etika Media dalam Tinjauan Newsmaking Criminology: Studi Kasus Pemberitaan Kriminal di Kota Pekanbaru. *Deviance Jurnal Kriminologi*, 9(1), (2025): 51

<sup>11</sup> Asrori, A.. Model Kurikulum Pesantren Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia: Analisis Anatomi Kurikulum Pondok Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam Al-Thariqah* 9 (2), (2024): 272

<sup>12</sup> Munaa, Naylal. "Dakwah Sosial Keagamaan Pondok Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri." PhD diss., IAIN Kediri, 2024.

Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) is a concept that emphasizes that Islamic practice in Indonesia is not solely grounded in doctrine but is also rooted in local cultural values, national history, and the social constructions of society<sup>13</sup> This concept reflects a form of Islam that is cordial, adaptive, and appreciative of plurality. Indonesian Islam emerges from the dialectical interplay between universal Islamic teachings and Indonesia's social realities, resulting in a more inclusive and humanistic religious expression.<sup>14</sup> These characteristics distinguish Indonesian Islam from certain forms of Islam in the Middle Eastern context, which tend to be more scripturalist and literalis.

In the context of religious practice, Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) is reflected in the ability of Indonesian Muslims to harmonize religious values with local cultural traditions such as selamatan, tahlilan, and pilgrimage rituals. Rohman (2018) emphasizes that these cultural practices not only represent forms of acculturation but also serve as social mechanisms that strengthen community solidarity. Such grounded religious traditions constitute widely accepted expressions of Islamic practice among the populace and demonstrate that local culture can serve as an effective medium for disseminating Islamic teachings without diminishing their normative essence.

Machali (2021) demonstrates that religious moderation in the Indonesian context emerges from pesantren traditions that cultivate the values of tasamuh (tolerance), tawassuth (the middle path), and tawazun (balance) as foundational religious ethics.<sup>15</sup> Hasanah (2022) further asserts that pesantren play a central role in sustaining wasathiyah values through the teaching of classical Islamic texts and the habituation of ethical conduct, which in turn shapes a moderate mindset among students.<sup>16</sup>

Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) can be articulated into seven core values that complement one another and form the foundation of a moderate, contextual, and nationally aligned expression of Islam in Indonesia.

## **1. Wasathiyah (Moderation)**

The concept of moderation is rooted in Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 143, which describes Muslims as an 'ummatan wasathan', a community positioned in justice and balance. Wasathiyah

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<sup>13</sup> Azra, A. *Islam Indonesia: Kontribusi dan tantangan*. Jakarta: Kencana. 2019

<sup>14</sup> Hidayat, A., & Nurhasanah, I. Islam Keindonesiaan dalam perspektif sosial-keagamaan: Analisis historis dan sosiologis. *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, 14(1), (2020): 25

<sup>15</sup> Machali, R. Moderasi beragama sebagai paradigma keberislaman di Indonesia: Tinjauan dari tradisi pesantren. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Nusantara*, 6(1), (2021): 60

<sup>16</sup> Hasanah, U. "Peran Pesantren dalam Penguatan Moderasi Beragama di Masyarakat." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Indonesia*, 7(1), (2022): 47

requires Muslims to avoid two opposing extremes: rigid radicalism and liberalism that undermines fundamental religious principles. In the Indonesian context, moderation entails practicing an authentic form of Islam while remaining open to contemporary developments without compromising the essential tenets of the shari'a.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. Tasamuh (Tolerance)**

Tasamuh refers to an attitude of respecting diversity in beliefs, schools of thought, and differences of opinion within society. Tolerance does not imply accepting all beliefs as equally true, but rather allowing others the space to hold differing viewpoints and treating them with humanity. Within Islamic educational institutions and community organizations, tasamuh is manifested through interfaith dialogue and social activities that engage the public in an inclusive manner.<sup>18</sup>

## **3. Tawazun (Balance)**

Tawazun emphasizes the importance of maintaining balance in life-between worldly and spiritual pursuits, between rights and responsibilities, and between Islamic scholarly traditions and the demands of modernity. This value fosters a comprehensive perspective in responding to social dynamics, preventing individuals from becoming trapped in partial or one-sided interpretation.

## **4. Cultural Acculturation**

This value affirms that Islam is capable of engaging in dialogue with local culture without losing its identity. Acculturation does not imply total assimilation, but rather an integrative process that allows Islamic teachings to intermingle harmoniously with Nusantara traditions. This can be observed in the use of regional languages in religious instruction, the incorporation of traditional arts in Islamic preaching, and efforts to contextualize fiqh in accordance with Indonesia's social realities.

## **5. Nationalism**

Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan) also affirms a strong commitment to Pancasila and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) as national consensus. This sense of nationalism does not represent a departure from Islamic identity; rather, it reflects an effort to harmonize Islamic values with national identity in a constructive manner. Islamic identity and civic identity are viewed as mutually reinforcing, not contradictory.

## **6. Rahmatan lil 'Alamin**

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<sup>17</sup> Azra, A.. "Moderasi Beragama dalam Konteks Indonesia." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), (2019): 124

<sup>18</sup> Mudzhar, M. "Perkembangan Toleransi Beragama dalam Lembaga Sosial Islam di Indonesia." *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama*, 14(1), (2020): 54

Grounded in Qur'an Surah Al-Anbiya verse 107, Islam is understood as a mercy for all creation, not only for its adherents. This principle cultivates compassion and social responsibility that extend beyond religious, ethnic, or group boundaries. It serves as the core of a humanistic approach to religious practice and Islamic outreach.

## **7. Noble Character (Akhlaq Mulia)**

Ethical character constitutes a central pillar of Islamic life, encompassing integrity, trustworthiness, justice, empathy, and wisdom. Noble character serves as the foundation for cultivating healthy and peaceful social relations. These ethical values are not merely spiritual ideals but function as practical guidelines for everyday life within a diverse society.

Overall, these seven pillars are interrelated and collectively form the value framework of Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan), which is adaptable to modern life while serving as a counter-narrative to extremist ideologies that operate under the guise of religion.

## **Theory of Religious Moderation (Wasathiyah)**

According to the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (2019), religious moderation consists of four key indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture.<sup>19</sup> Moderation does not restrict religion; rather, it provides space for maintaining balance and avoiding extremism.<sup>20</sup> Conceptually, religious moderation refers to the principle of wasathiyah, which emphasizes equilibrium in religious practice and rejects all forms of radicalism and extremism. Wasathiyah serves as a foundational framework that guides Muslims to adopt a proportional approach in interpreting religious texts while remaining attentive to social contexts. Moderation is not synonymous with relativism, but represents an effort to ensure that religious teachings can be implemented without disrupting the social order or infringing upon the rights of other groups. Thus, religious moderation functions as an ethical basis for fostering harmonious interreligious life.

The implementation of religious moderation in Indonesia is strongly influenced by Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren. Pesantren play a central role in shaping a moderate mindset by strengthening values such as tolerance, mutual respect, and anti-violence attitudes. Through curricula grounded in classical Islamic texts (kitab kuning) and the habituation of ethical social behavior, pesantren function as social spaces for the internalization of moderation values.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia.. Moderasi beragama. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI. 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Mubarok, H., & Hasan, N. Moderasi beragama dan tantangan radikalisme di Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman*, 18(2), (2021): 215

<sup>21</sup> Wibisono, F., & Ramadhan, A. Peran pesantren dalam menumbuhkan moderasi beragama di kalangan santri. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Nusantara*, 7(1), (2022): 56

Students who receive education based on principles of religious moderation tend to demonstrate a stronger ability to prevent the spread of radical religious ideologies. Pesantren therefore hold significant potential as centers for cultivating religious moderation through moral education, scholarly traditions, and the influential role of the kyai as an authoritative figure.<sup>22</sup>

The theory of religious moderation plays a crucial role in this study, as religiously motivated radicalism and extremism continue to pose significant threats to social harmony and national security. Symptoms of extremism often emerge from disproportionate patterns of religious understanding, whether excessively rigid or overly permissive.<sup>23</sup> Islamic educational institutions such as pesantren that successfully implement the principles of moderation in a systematic and sustainable manner can serve as a counterforce in resisting the penetration of violent ideology.<sup>24</sup> In this context, Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri, which emphasizes the values of religious moderation, represents a model of Islamic education that holds strong potential for replication and development, thereby strengthening community resilience against extremist ideologies.<sup>25</sup>

### **Berry's Acculturation Theory: Integration Strategy as the Ideal Model**

Berry's acculturation theory explains that cultural change occurs when two distinct groups engage in sustained interaction. According to Berry, acculturation does not unfold in a linear manner; rather, it involves several possible outcomes depending on how each group maintains its original cultural identity and the extent to which they are willing to engage with the new cultur.

Berry identifies four acculturation strategies—integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. The integration strategy, which involves maintaining one's original cultural identity while actively engaging with other cultures, is regarded as the most socially and psychologically healthy approach. Contemporary research demonstrates that individuals who adopt an integration strategy tend to exhibit better mental well-being, a more stable sense of identity, and more positive social relationships compared to those employing other strategies.

In the context of Indonesian Islam, the integration strategy is reflected in the ability of Nusantara Muslims to uphold Islamic teachings while simultaneously embracing local traditions, giving rise to distinctive forms of religiosity such as Islam Nusantara or Islam Keindonesiaan. This model is highly relevant to analyzing the practices of Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri, which merges

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<sup>22</sup> Zuhri, S. Pesantren sebagai pusat moderasi beragama: Studi pada pesantren tradisional di Jawa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), (2020).

<sup>23</sup> Fauzia, A., & Fikri, M. "Moderasi Beragama dan Tantangan Ekstremisme di Indonesia." *Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, 20(2), (2021)

<sup>24</sup> Hanafi, M.. *Moderasi Beragama: Narasi Baru Keislaman Indonesia*. Jakarta: Litbang Kemenag RI. 2020

<sup>25</sup> Nurdin, A. "Pendidikan Islam sebagai Benteng Radikalisme di Era Digital." *Jurnal Sosial dan Agama*, 15(2), (2023).

Islamic teachings with local cultural elements through the use of regional languages in instruction, traditional arts, and a curriculum adapted to community contexts. This approach illustrates that the pesantren effectively implements the integration strategy as an adaptive form of acculturation.

### **Social Perception Theory of Religious Institutions: Between Perception Gaps and Lived Realities**

The social perception theory explains how individuals and groups form judgments, attitudes, and impressions of others through cognitive processes involving social categorization, schemas, and attribution.<sup>26</sup> In this process, society does not always evaluate based on objective facts but rather on available information, prior experiences, public narratives, and automatic cognitive biases. Social categorization leads people to place religious groups into simplified categories, thereby producing stereotypes that generalize across all members of the group.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, social schemas shaped by inherited stories or media narratives can reinforce particular perceptions, both positive and negative, often without verification.<sup>28</sup> Attribution processes also play a significant role, as the public tends to commit the fundamental attribution error, namely evaluating a group based on assumed internal traits (values, character) without considering the broader social context or the changes that may already have taken place.<sup>29</sup>

In the context of religious organizations in Indonesia, social perceptions are often shaped by unbalanced information exposure, media bias, and limited direct interaction between the public and these groups.<sup>30</sup> This condition produces information asymmetry that may lead to prejudice or stigma, particularly when the media tends to highlight controversial issues rather than positive activities.<sup>31</sup> The dynamics of ingroup–outgroup relations also contribute to this phenomenon, as majority groups often perceive minority or unfamiliar groups with greater scrutiny or suspicion, resulting in perceptions that do not necessarily reflect empirical realities.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, social perception theory elucidates that stereotypes directed at certain groups do not always stem from their doctrinal substance or religious practices, but rather from social constructions and inherent public evaluation biases.

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<sup>26</sup> Willis, J., & Todorov, A. “First Impressions: Rapid Formation of Social Perception.” *Psychological Science*, 31(1), (2020)

<sup>27</sup> Pickup, M., & van der Linden, S. Stereotypes and Social Categorization in Modern Society. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 35, (2020)

<sup>28</sup> Fiske, S. T. *Social Cognition and Social Perception*. Annual Review of Psychology, 73, (2022)

<sup>29</sup> Gawronski, B. “Social Cognition in Perspective.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(5), (2020)

<sup>30</sup> Maulana, A., & Munandar, A. Framing Media terhadap Kelompok Keagamaan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 10(1), (2022)

<sup>31</sup> Hasan, N. Media, Public Opinion, and Islamic Organizations in Indonesia. *Studia Islamika*, 27(3), (2020)

<sup>32</sup> Yustisia, W. Ingroup-Outgroup Dynamics dalam Persepsi Publik terhadap Organisasi Keagamaan. *Jurnal Psikologi Sosial*, 21(2), (2022)

Based on this framework, social perception theory is highly relevant for examining Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri, as the institution frequently encounters a discrepancy between its public image and its actual internal character, which is moderate, open, and grounded in national values. The stigma associated with LDII has been largely influenced by outdated cognitive schemas, misinterpretations of educational methods, and unbalanced media narratives. Through the lens of social perception theory, this study can analyze how public perceptions are formed, the factors that shape them, and the ways in which Pesantren Wali Barokah seeks to correct such misperceptions through its programs, pedagogical practices, and social engagement. Consequently, this theory provides a robust analytical foundation for understanding the gap between public perception and the empirical reality of Islamic education within the pesantren.

The gap between perception and reality typically emerges when information asymmetry occurs—that is, when the public does not receive adequate or balanced access to information about a particular group. In the context of LDII, public stereotypes may arise from several factors, including the circulation of outdated narratives passed down across generations without clear verification, misunderstandings of LDII's educational practices such as *manqul* and *isnad*, the limited dissemination of information regarding its activities and its inherently moderate and nationalist values, as well as media coverage that tends to highlight controversial issues rather than the positive programs the organization implements

## **METHODS**

This study uses a qualitative approach with a case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of religious moderation at Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri within the framework of Indonesian Islam (*Islam Keindonesiaan*). This approach is selected because it enables the researcher to capture the dynamics of social realities holistically, particularly those related to stigma and public perceptions that often diverge from empirical conditions in the field. The research site is located within the environment of Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri, East Java, with informants selected purposively, including the pesantren leaders, teachers (*ustadz–ustadzah*), students (*santri*), and surrounding community members who are directly connected to the pesantren's activities. Data collection techniques consist of in-depth interviews to explore the informants' views, experiences, and perceptions; participant observation of instructional activities, social interactions, and religious practices within the pesantren; and document analysis covering the curriculum, internal guidelines, activity archives, and other institutional documents. Data

analysis is conducted interactively following the model of Miles and Huberman (2014), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion.<sup>33</sup>

## **RESULT**

### **Implementation of Religious Moderation at Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri**

The findings of this study indicate that the implementation of religious moderation at Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri is carried out through various educational, social, and cultural mechanisms that are integrated into the daily life of the pesantren. Despite the fact that the pesantren frequently receives stigma from segments of the wider community, particularly related to organizational affiliation and perceived exclusivity, the empirical reality demonstrates a strong internalization of the values of Indonesian Islam (Islam Keindonesiaan). This aligns with the concept of religious moderation, which emphasizes balance, tolerance, and the acceptance of cultural diversity as integral components of everyday Islamic practice.<sup>34</sup>

Based on interviews with the leadership of Pesantren Wali Barokah, the curriculum implemented at the institution has been intentionally designed to reflect the values of religious moderation. The traditional kitab kuning instruction that characterizes pesantren education is combined with materials on nationalism, social ethics, and inclusive religious awareness. In several learning sessions, for instance, teachers emphasize the importance of prioritizing ethical conduct (akhlak) when responding to differences in fiqh opinions and khilafiyah. This approach aligns with Azra's (2019) research that the distinctiveness of Islam Nusantara is rooted in its capacity to adapt and embrace intellectual diversity. Students are also encouraged to engage with classical Islamic literature through a contextual lens, ensuring that religious values are not interpreted rigidly, but are instead aligned with the dynamics of contemporary society.

In addition to curriculum-related aspects, the religious practices and daily traditions of the pesantren reflect a strong commitment to the value of wasathiyah (the middle way). Observations indicate that worship activities and spiritual development are carried out with discipline while still allowing space for dialogue on differing viewpoints, particularly those related to specific religious practices. Teachers frequently emphasize that differences should not be a source of division, but rather a representation of Islam's intellectual richness. This aligns with Mubarok and Hasan's (2021) assertion that religious moderation emerges from the ability to accept diverse

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<sup>33</sup> Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook (3rd ed.)*. SAGE. 2014

<sup>34</sup> Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia.. *Moderasi beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI. 2019.

interpretations.<sup>35</sup> Traditions such as tahlilan, musyawarah, and Friday night gatherings are maintained as part of Javanese cultural identity, demonstrating the pesantren's accommodation of local wisdom. Such accommodation is consistent with the indicators of religious moderation, which position acceptance of local culture as an integral component of religious practice.<sup>36</sup>

On the other hand, the social interactions between the students and the surrounding community reveal a strong correlation between the concept of Islam Keindonesiaan and everyday realities. During the fieldwork, it was found that local residents experienced various benefits from the presence of the pesantren, such as community service activities, free health services, and collective work (gotong royong) during village events. These activities demonstrate the pesantren's role as a social agent that fosters communal harmony and solidarity. According to Zuhri (2020), pesantren carry a social function that can serve as an essential foundation for developing community-based religious moderation, and the field findings in this study reinforce that argument.<sup>37</sup>

### **Social Perceptions Developing Within the Community**

Community perceptions of Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri are shaped through cognitive processes influenced by direct experience, information circulating within the social environment, and media constructions. Social perception is never formed in a neutral manner; rather, it is shaped by stereotypes, cognitive schemas, and the dynamics of interaction between individuals and groups.<sup>38</sup> Interview findings with several local residents indicate that a portion of the community still holds conservative perceptions that are largely influenced by longstanding narratives about LDII. For instance, some informants stated that they “heard stories from their parents” or “simply follow what people have said for years,” suggesting that these perceptions are based more on hearsay than on personal experience. This aligns with Pickup and van der Linden's (2020) argument that when people lack direct information, they tend to rely on stereotypes as the basis for judgment.<sup>39</sup>

Field observations reveal a noticeable disparity between public perceptions and the actual practices within the pesantren. In their daily activities, the students of Pesantren Wali Barokah engage in educational programs, environmental sanitation, classical Islamic studies, religious

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<sup>35</sup> Mubarok, H., & Hasan, N. Moderasi beragama dan tantangan radikalisme di Indonesia. *Jurnal Penelitian Keislaman*, 18(2), (2021)

<sup>36</sup> Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia.. Moderasi beragama. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI. 2019

<sup>37</sup> Zuhri, S. Pesantren sebagai pusat moderasi beragama: Studi pada pesantren tradisional di Jawa. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 9(1), (2020)

<sup>38</sup> Fiske, S. T. *Social Cognition and Social Perception*. Annual Review of Psychology, 73, (2022)

<sup>39</sup> Pickup, M., & van der Linden, S. Stereotypes and Social Categorization in Modern Society. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 35, (2020)

moderation practices, and skills training—realities that contradict the negative stigma that at times persists outside the pesantren community. This discrepancy reflects the presence of an information gap or information asymmetry, as described by Sari (2021), in which positive information is not adequately communicated to the public, allowing outdated narratives or assumptions to fill the void.<sup>40</sup>

Ingroup–outgroup dynamics also emerged in interviews with local residents. Some informants who have no direct connection with the pesantren tended to position LDII as an “outgroup,” thereby reinforcing social distance and generating less accurate perceptions. Groups framed as outgroups are more vulnerable to stigmatization because the public tends to rely on emotional proximity rather than empirical evidence when forming judgments.<sup>41</sup> Conversely, informants who interact directly with the students or leaders of the pesantren expressed different views. They described the pesantren as an open, disciplined institution that actively participates in community-oriented activities. These findings indicate that direct contact plays a significant role in correcting initial misperception.

The media also serves as a powerful source in shaping public perceptions. Interviews with several local figures indicate that media coverage from past decades continues to influence public views today, even though the internal dynamics of LDII have undergone substantial changes. This aligns with the findings of Maulana and Munandar (2022), which show that media framing can produce long-term cognitive biases, particularly toward religious groups that have previously been involved in public controversy.<sup>42</sup> Researcher observations within the pesantren environment further reveal that positive activities, such as sanitation programs, environmental initiatives, moderate religious studies, and socio-economic programs remain largely unknown to the wider public due to limited exposure in mainstream media.

Thus, the community’s social perceptions of Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri are shaped by an interplay of historical narratives, media framing, and the limited direct experiences of local residents. Social perception theory is highly relevant to this study because it provides a framework for explaining how communities construct meaning about the pesantren, why perceptual distortions emerge, and how social contact and information dissemination contribute to the revision of these perceptions. Field findings, derived from both observations and interviews, clearly indicate that public perceptions often do not reflect the empirical reality of the pesantren,

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<sup>40</sup> Sari, R. Akses Informasi Publik dan Pembentukan Persepsi Sosial. *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif*, 15(2), (2021)

<sup>41</sup> Yustisia, W. Ingroup-Outgroup Dynamics dalam Persepsi Publik terhadap Organisasi Keagamaan. *Jurnal Psikologi Sosial*, 21(2), (2022).

<sup>42</sup> Maulana, A., & Munandar, A. Framing Media terhadap Kelompok Keagamaan di Indonesia. *Jurnal Komunikasi Indonesia*, 10(1), (2022)

which is now oriented toward moderate religious education, character development, and the strengthening of national values.

### **Indonesian Islam as the Framework of Pesantren Identity**

Furthermore, the study finds that the identity of Indonesian Islam within the pesantren is manifested through interactional patterns that prioritize courtesy, respect for local traditions, and a strong sense of national commitment. In the sermons delivered by the pesantren leaders, for instance, the importance of loving one's homeland as an integral part of faith is consistently emphasized, aligning with the principle of national commitment that serves as a key indicator of religious moderation.<sup>43</sup> The leaders also frequently stress that Islam should function as a solution to social issues rather than a source of division, a perspective that resonates with the principles of *Islam rahmatan lil 'alamin*, which characterizes *Islam Nusantara*.<sup>44</sup> This calm and non-confrontational preaching style constitutes one of the pesantren's strategic approaches to practicing Indonesian Islam in a contextual and grounded manner.

In this context, the implementation of religious moderation at Pesantren Wali Barokah does not remain at the conceptual level; rather, it is internalized within the daily habits, norms, and educational system practiced within the institution. This demonstrates that the pesantren can serve as a model for community-based religious moderation, one that responds to local needs while upholding inclusive religious values. These findings reinforce the argument that religious moderation can grow organically from pesantren culture, and that the stigma circulating outside the institution often fails to reflect its actual contemporary reality.

### **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that Pesantren Wali Barokah LDII Kediri has effectively implemented religious moderation through an integrated curriculum, inclusive religious practices, respect for local traditions, and character development that emphasizes ethics, tolerance, and national commitment. The identity of *Islam Keindonesiaan* is strongly reflected in the daily life of the pesantren through its gentle *da'wah* style, openness to Javanese cultural expressions, and reinforcement of national values in everyday educational activities. On the other hand, public social perceptions of the pesantren remain varied. Some community members who lack direct interaction with the institution continue to be influenced by outdated stereotypes and legacy media narratives, resulting in a noticeable gap between perception and reality. Conversely, individuals who interact

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<sup>43</sup> Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia.. *Moderasi beragama*. Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI. 2019.

<sup>44</sup> Azra, A.. "Moderasi Beragama dalam Konteks Indonesia." *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 11(2), (2019).

directly with the pesantren perceive Pesantren Wali Barokah as an open, disciplined, and socially engaged institution. This indicates that information asymmetry is the primary factor shaping inaccurate public perceptions.

Overall, Pesantren Wali Barokah Kediri stands as an effective example of community-based religious moderation, although there remains a need to strengthen public communication in order to reduce perceptual bias. These findings affirm the relevance of religious moderation theory, social perception theory, and the concept of Islam Keindonesiaan in understanding the internal dynamics of the pesantren and its relationship with the surrounding community.

The contribution of this research lies not only in its empirical findings but also in its significance for the development of academic discourse and Islamic educational practice in Indonesia. Theoretically, this article enriches discussions on religious moderation by introducing the perspective of a community-based pesantren, an area that has received limited scholarly attention. The study shows that religious moderation can be assessed not only through state policies or elite discourse but also through everyday educational practices. Moreover, this research expands the application of social perception theory within the context of religious institutions by highlighting the importance of direct interaction and the quality of public communication in shaping community perceptions. Practically, the study offers valuable insights for Islamic educational institutions, particularly pesantren, by presenting a contextual, inclusive, and culturally adaptive model of Islam Keindonesiaan. This model can serve as a reference for other Islamic educational institutions in designing curricula, character-building strategies, and social partnership frameworks that promote social harmony and strengthen national awareness

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