

Kitab Kuning and Religious Moderation: A Study on State Islamic Universities in Indonesia

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Abstract

Indonesia is a multi-religious country that is constantly seeking ways to promote religious moderation. One of the recently adopted strategies is to empower Kitab Kuning, which are the classical source books used in pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), at Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah of State Islamic Universities. The objective of this study is to provide qualitative-descriptive analyses of the contents of *Kitab Kuning* related to religious moderation, the teaching methods of *Kitab Kuning*, and the extent to which moderation is practiced in Ma'had's daily life. The data for the study were obtained through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, site observations, and content analyses of related documents. The participants were heads of Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah, instructors, students, and administrators. The data was processed using the procedures suggested by Miles and Huberman. The findings indicate that Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah intentionally uses *Kitab Kuning* to propagate basic values of *Islam Wasatiyah*, such as love, respect, balance, modesty, justice, and fairness. The teaching strategies adopted at Ma'had are based on pesantren's tradition with a focus on contextualization, which enables the moderation values to be implemented in students' daily lives. These values have played a vital role in maintaining healthy relations between students from different cultural and religious backgrounds. Therefore, *Kitab Kuning* should be seen as an alternative strategy to ensure *Islam Wasatiyah* in Indonesia. The fact that the learners are university students is significant, as they can propagate moderation into the wider society once they graduate.

Keywords: *Islam Wasatiyah, Indonesia, Kitab Kuning, Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah, Mahasantri.*

Introduction

Religious moderation, also known as *Islam Wasatiyah*, is a popular theme in Indonesia.¹ This is due to the country's diversity,² which is multi-dimensional,³ including religious beliefs⁴ and ethnicity.⁵ To ensure that diversity becomes a positive factor for society, certain attitudes are required.⁶ Another reason for the popularity of religious moderation is the development of society, which may sometimes embody injustice. The factors that lead to the need for religious moderation can vary from one context to another.⁷ Therefore, many studies have focused on the roots of radicalism in Indonesia and have pointed out the alarming realities that need to be addressed.

Indonesian discussions on *Islam Wasatiyah* can be divided into two main clusters. The first refers to the discussion of the Western World, especially the United States. Moderate Islam is often discussed along with the contemporary dynamics of the Western World, especially in regard to terrorist attacks such as the 9/11 attack in New York, the Charlie Hebdo case that shocked France, and several other attacks in Germany, England, and Spain. The discussion of Islamic moderation is treated as part of the international discussion and is considered to be the antidote to terrorism.⁸ The second cluster is more

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¹ Imam Subchi et al. (2022), "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims," *Religions*, Vol. 13, No. 5, p. 1–11.

² Aris Ananta (2015), *Demography of Indonesia's Ethnicity*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p.76.

³ Choirul Fuad Yusuf (2013), *Konflik Benuansa Agama: Peta Konflik Berbagai Daerah Di Indonesia 1997-2005*, Jakarta: Puslitbang Lektor dan Khazanah Keagamaan, Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI.

⁴ Nuhriison (ed.) (2010), *Aliran-Aliran Keagamaan Aktual Di Indonesia*, Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, p. 76.

⁵ Aris Ananta (2015), *Demography of Indonesia's Ethnicity*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, p.76.

⁶ Bahari (ed.), (2010), *Pandangan Masyarakat Terhadap Tindak Kekerasan Atas Nama Agama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI).

⁷ Azyumardi Azra (2002), *Konflik Baru Antar Peradaban: Globalisasi, Radikalisme & Pluralitas* Jakarta: RajaGrafindo Persada, p. 87. See also: Muhammad Sirozi (2005), "The Intellectual Roots of Islamic Radicalism in Indonesia: Ja'far Umar Thalib of Laskar Jihad (Jihad Fighters) and His Educational Background." *The Muslim World*, Vol. 95, No. 1, p. 81–120; Martin van Bruinessen, (2002), "Genealogies of Islamic Radicalism in Post-Suharto Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* Vol. 10, No. 2; Ahmad Zainul Hamdi (2023), "The Radicalization of Contemporary Educated Indonesian: A Case Study of University Students in Yogyakarta." *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 155–162.

⁸ Muqtedar Khan (2008), "*Siapakah Muslim Moderat Itu?*," in Suaidi Asyari (ed.), *Siapakah Muslim Moderat*, Jakarta: Kultura, p. 44-53.

local and indigenous.⁹ Here, the discourses refer to and are based on local knowledge and experience. Included in this is the long tradition of *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) of teaching classical Islamic books, popularly called *Kitab Kuning* and practicing moderate Islamic understanding.¹⁰ The argument is that moderation is an originally Islamic character stated explicitly in the Qur'an (Surah Al-Baqarah/2: 143).

Various responses to Islamic moderation have been formulated and implemented, and this has involved various sectors across Indonesian society.¹¹ As such *Islam Wasatiyah* has been incorporated into Indonesia's National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) for 2020-2024 by the National Development Planning Agency (BAPPENAS RI). The Ministry of Religious Affairs is a key institution in conceptualizing the main ideas and implementing the programs on moderation.¹² The Ministry of Religious Affairs as the state institution that carries out Religious Education has also taken significant steps. *Islam Wasatiyah* has become part of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA) policy in both educational institutions and in a more general context.¹³ This can be seen from Minister of Religious Affairs Regulation No. 18 of 2020 concerning *Strategic Plans of the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the Years 2020-2024*.¹⁴ One of their main programs is to strengthen *Islam Wasatiyah*. The Ministry of Religious Affairs that strengthens *Islam Wasatiyah* has also produced a *Roadmap Document for Strengthening Religious Moderation 2020-2024* which has been published in 2020.¹⁵ As a follow-up to this policy, the Minister of Religious Affairs issued a Decree of the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia Number 93 of 2022 concerning *Guidelines for the Implementation of Strengthening Religious Moderation for Civil Servants of the Ministry of Religious Affairs*.

As part of its core program, the Ministry of Religious Affairs is undertaking efforts to bolster the concept of *Islam Wasatiyah* across all universities under its purview.¹⁶ Several State Islamic Universities have incorporated this concept into their vision and mission statements, either in an explicit or implicit manner.¹⁷ For instance, the State Islamic University of North Sumatra Medan has included *Islam Wasatiyah* as a key element of its vision, which aims to: "To become a center for integration of knowledge (*waḥdatul'ulūm*), community empowerment, and religious moderation." This notion is further reiterated in one of their missions, namely: "To realize religious moderation as the basis for the attitude of the entire academic community so that Islamic knowledge and its application bring goodness to everyone (*rahmatan li al-'ālamīn*) ..."¹⁸

By using different terminology, the concept of *Islam Wasatiyah* also appears in the vision, mission, and objectives of other major State Islamic Universities (UINs). In the Alauddin State Islamic University of Makassar, the message of *Islam Wasatiyah* is one of the educational philosophies, emphasizing that education "... is carried out in a democratic and fair and non-discriminatory manner by upholding human rights, religious values, cultural values, and national pluralism."¹⁹

The main issue with promoting *Islam Wasatiyah* programs is that they mostly refer to the Western discussion, which is a part of the Western culture. This poses certain problems. Firstly, only a small number of people in Indonesian society have access to the Western discussion and can dominate the formal discussion. Secondly, the discourse does not reach the majority of the Indonesian Muslim community. Western-based discourse is not common among most Indonesian Muslims, and

⁹ Hasnah Nasution (2021), *Moderasi Beragama Sumatera Utara: Kontribusi Awal Tjong A Fie* Jakarta: Prenada.

¹⁰ Wawan Hernawan, Irma Riyani, and Busro Busro (2021), "Religious Moderation in Naskah Wawacan Babad Walangsungang: A Sundanese Religious Diversity Wisdom," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, Vol. 77, No. 4, p. 1–13.

¹¹ Heri Gunawan, Mahlil Nurul Ihsan, and Encep Supriatin Jaya (2021), "Internalisasi Nilai-Nilai Moderasi Beragama Dalam Pembelajaran PAI Di SMA Al-Biruni Cerdas Mulia Kota Bandung," *Athulab: Islamic Religion Teaching and Learning Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, p. 14–25.

¹² Ismatu Ropi (2019), "Whither Religious Moderation? The State and Management of Religious Affairs in Contemporary Indonesia," *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 26, No. 3, p. 597–601.

¹³ Edi Junaedi (2019), "Nilah Moderasi Beragama Perspektif Kemenag," *Harmoni*, Vol. 18, No. 2, p. 182–86.

¹⁴ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia (2020), *Renstra Strategis Kementerian Agama, Tahun 2020 – 2025*, Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, p. 1.

¹⁵ Tim Moderasi Beragama Kementerian Agama RI. (2020), *Peta Jalan Penguatan Moderasi Beragama 2020-2024*, Jakarta: Kementerian Agama RI., p. 2.

¹⁶ Chabib and Mevi Eka Nurhazlizah Musthofa, ed. (2020), *Menggelorakan Moderasi Beragama Untuk Indonesia Hebat*, Jakarta: Prenada, p. 76.

¹⁷ Zulkarnain Yani (2022), "Strengthening Religious Moderation At UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung: Study At Religious Moderation House," *Penamas*, Vol. 35, No. 1, p. 99–112.

¹⁸ Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, (2022), "Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 9 Tahun 2022 Tentang Perubahan Atas Peraturan Menteri Agama Nomor 14 Tahun 2020 Tentang Statuta Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara Medan" Jakarta: Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, Articles 3 and 4.

¹⁹ UIN Alauddin Makassar (n.d.), <https://Uin-Alauddin.Ac.Id/Profil/Visi-Misi-Dan-Tujuan>.

misunderstandings are widespread. Thirdly, some parties reject the discussion of *Islam Wasatiyah* solely because it originates from the West. This rejection is usually from those who have limited cultural access to Western discussions and have strong traditional roots. Fourthly, a discussion that is too Western-focused does not provide enough space for indigenous Indonesian traditions (local wisdom).

It is important to recognize the limitations of Western-based discussions on *Islam Wasatiyah* (moderate Islam). Instead, we should focus on strengthening the discourse based on authentic Indonesian traditions. Moderate Islam has been a long-standing topic of discussion and an essential part of the curriculum in Islamic boarding schools. The main learning resource in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), *Kitab Kuning*, also promotes moderation.²⁰ This is because the main theme of *Kitab Kuning*, which underlies the culture of Islamic boarding schools, is derived from the treasures of *Ahl al-Sunnahwa al-Jamā'ah*, which are generally moderate in character.²¹ The Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI), many of whose members and leaders are *pesantren* alumni, has been actively propagating moderate Islam.²²

The aim of this study is to explain how the *pesantren* tradition is being used by Islamic universities to support *Islam Wasatiyah*. This is relevant in the present discourse on the topic, which has been mostly dominated by Western perspectives. Additionally, it is interesting as it connects the local Islamic tradition of *Kitab Kuning* with the modernizing Islamic universities. The study focuses on three aspects: the Islamic Wasatiyah contents of *Kitab Kuning*, the teaching methods of *Kitab Kuning*, and the practices of *Islam Wasatiyah* in daily life of Islamic colleges.

Jan argues that moderation is at the heart of being a Muslim, i.e. being Muslim means being moderate.²³ This shows how moderation is essentially integrated in Islam,²⁴ as emphasized in Surah Al-Baqarah/2: 143:²⁵ “Thus, have We made of you an *Ummat* justly balanced, that ye might be witnesses over the nations, and the Messenger a witness over yourselves...”²⁶

The teaching of moderation could also be found in the prophetic tradition where the Prophet Muhammad once said: “The best of all things are in moderation.”²⁷

Al-Ṭabari, a top classical commentator of the Qur'an, explains that ‘*wasat*’ in the verse has a broad meaning in its application, ranging from matters of a religious nature to matters of social relations.²⁸ However, similar explanations could also be found in the works of more recent scholars, such as Muhammad Rasyid Riḍā²⁹ and Abdullah Yusuf Ali³⁰ where arguably the best contemporary summary and analysis of the theme is to be found.³¹ Indonesian Muslims base their philosophy of “*Wasatiyah*” on the teachings of the Qur'an, the practices of the Prophet, and the experiences of the Muslim community. This philosophy promotes balance and moderation in all aspects of life. of Wasatiyah philosophy among Indonesian Muslims.³²

²⁰ Al Rasyidin (2017), “Pembelajaran Kitab Kuning Di Pesantren Musthafawiyah, Mandailing Natal,” *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 4.

²¹ Martin van Bruinessen (1995), *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam Di Indonesia*, Bandung: Mizan, p. 158-163.

²² Ichwan M. (2013), *Towards a Puritanical Moderate Islam: The Majelis Ulama Indonesia and the Politics of Religious Orthodoxy*, Singapore: ISEAS, p. 181.

²³ Abid Ullah Jan (2008), *Menjadi Muslim Berarti Menjadi Moderat*, In Suaidi Asyari (Ed.). *Siapakah Muslim Moderat*, Jakarta: Kultura, p. 35.

²⁴ Mahyudin Ritonga and Ahmad Lahmi and Rosniati Hakim (2021), “The Existence of Yellow Books (Kitab Kuning) as the Sources of Islamic Studies at Islamic Boarding Schools Within the Industrial Revolution Dialectics,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, p. 3516–3523.; Inayatillah, Kamaruddin, and M. Anzaikhan (2022), “The History of Moderate Islam in Indonesia and Its Influence on the Content of National Education,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun*, Vol. 17, No. 19, p. 213–26.

²⁵ Yusuf Hanafi et al. (2022), “Students’ Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, Vol. 78, No. 1, p. 1–7.

²⁶ Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946), *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Lahore: Islamic Propagation Centre International, p. 241.

²⁷ Imām Al-Hafiz Muhammad bin Abd al-Rohmān al-Sakhāwī al-Hafiz Al-Sakhāwī (1971), *Al-Maqāṣid Al-Ḥasanah Fī Bayāni Kaṣīrin Min Al-Aḥādīs Al-Musytahirah ‘Alā Al-Asinah*, Libanon: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, p. 134.

²⁸ Abu Ja’far ibn Jarīr Al-Ṭabari (2001), *Jāmi’ Al-Bayān ‘an Ta’wīl Āy Al-Qur’ān*, Kairo: Dār al-Hijrah, p.136.

²⁹ Muhammad Rasyid Riḍā (1947), *Tafsīr Al-Manār*, Cairo: Dār al-Manār, p.76.

³⁰ Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946), *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Lahore: Islamic Propagation Centre International, p. 167.

³¹ Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2015), *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur’anic Principle of Wasatiyyah*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 137.

³² Mudjahirin Thohir and M. Lukluk Atsmara Anjaina (2022), “Moderation of Religiosity in the View of Islam Nusantara,” *E3S Web of Conferences* Vol. 359, No. 1 May, p. 3–5.; Khairan Muhammad Arif (2020), “Islamic Moderation Concepts in Thought,” *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 37–44.

The concept of religious moderation is rooted in the Islamic belief that the Prophet Muḥammad holds a significant position among the previous prophets.³³ In Islam, all the early prophets are believed to have been sent by the same God and to have had the same mission at their core. The Islamic faith has incorporated the teachings and writings of the earlier prophets to such an extent that they are now considered integral parts of Islam. This is confirmed in Surah Al-Baqarah/2: 285: “The Messenger believeth in what hath been revealed to him from his Lord, as do the men of faith. Each one (of them) believeth in Allah, His angels, His books, and His Messengers. “We make no distinction (they say) between one and another of His messengers.” And they say: “We hear, and we obey: (We seek) Thy forgiveness, our Lord, and to Thee is the end of all journeys.”³⁴

The fundamental teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophet’s traditions are also found in the religious concepts present in the *Kitab Kuning*. These concepts promote balance, tolerance, and a peaceful way of life.³⁵ The *Kitab Kuning* has always been the primary source and foundation of the *pesantren* curriculum.³⁶ This text-focused curriculum is taught in a structured environment and has been able to adapt to changing times while preserving its values and distinctiveness.³⁷

From a certain perspective, the strong roots of *Islam Wasatiyah* in the *Kitab Kuning* tradition serve as a counter-balance to Western-styled moderation discussion. *Islam Wasatiyah* has become a political jargon and in principle means “a pro-United States interpretation of Islam”³⁸ and is therefore widely rejected. It is in this connection that the explanation of religious moderation based on Islamic traditions, especially the *Kitab Kuning* becomes very relevant.³⁹ That also explains why more and more supporters of religious moderation come from Islamic boarding schools with the *Kitab Kuning* tradition.⁴⁰ It must be remembered, however, that the effectiveness of the teaching of *Kitab Kuning* relies heavily on the roles played by *kyais* inside and outside of the *pesantrens*.⁴¹

Later, such a tradition was adopted by State Islamic Universities, with the development of *Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah*. At this time *Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah* (Boarding School of State Islamic Universities) has become a formal policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and spreading moderate Islam is one of its important goals. Although the development of *Ma’had* varies across State Islamic Universities, some have developed very rapidly and contributed to the spread of moderate Islam. When compared with *pesantren*, *Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah* has its advantages. State Islamic Universities offer several advantages for the discussion of Islamic moderation. Firstly, the higher education level and maturity of the students allow for more in-depth discussions. Secondly, these universities have a wider scientific network, which provides a varied background for the discussion of Islamic moderation. This leads to a richer conceptual and sociological understanding of the topic. Thirdly, the alumni of State Islamic Universities can become agents of moderate Islam in their communities. As a result, the values of moderation that students learn can be applied and have a significant impact.

To have a comparative advantage in the field, one needs to have a good understanding of *Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah* and the process of internalizing moderate Islamic values implemented in them. This article presents a model for developing Islamic moderation through learning the *Kitab Kuning* combined with the unique environment of *Ma’had al-Jāmi’ah*. This means that *Islam Wasatiyah* will be seen at the level of the formal curriculum as well as part of the *Ma’had* life. This research aims to contribute academically to the discourse of *Islam Wasatiyah*, which is based on local beliefs, and support the Ministry of Religious Affairs’ policy on moderate Islam in Indonesia. However, it should be noted that

³³ Abd. Moq̄sith Ghazali (2009), *Argumen Pluralisme Agama: Membangun Toleransi Berbasis Al-Qur’an*, Depok: Kata Kita, p. 78.

³⁴ Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946), *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Lahore: Islamic Propagation Centre International, p. 312.

³⁵ Badrus Sholeh (2007), *Budaya Damai Komunitas Pesantren*, Jakarta: LP3ES, p.112.

³⁶ Martin van Bruinessen (1995), *Kitab Kuning, Pesantren Dan Tarekat: Tradisi-Tradisi Islam Di Indonesia*, Bandung: Mizan, p. 158-163.

³⁷ Ronald A. Lukens-Bull (1999), “The Pesantren Tradition: A Study of the Role of the Kyai in the Maintenance of the Traditional Ideology of Islam in Java. By Zamakhsyari Dhofier. Tempe: Arizona State University Program for Southeast Asian Studies Monograph Series, Xxxi, 254, p. 19.” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4, p. 80–92.

³⁸ Carol Kersten (2015), *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values*, London: Hurst & Company, p.82.

³⁹ Amrizal (2017), “Eksistensi Tradisi Kajian Kitab Kuning Dalam Lingkup Perubahan Sosial (Studi Kasus Di Pesantren Darun Nahdhah, Darel Hikmah, Dan Babussalam),” *Sosial Budaya*, Vol. 13, No. 1, p. 73–88.

⁴⁰ Carol Kersten (2015), *Islam in Indonesia: The Contest for Society, Ideas and Values*, London: Hurst & Company, p.121.

⁴¹ Ahmad Faisal et al. (2022), “Strengthening Religious Moderatism through the Traditional Authority of Kiai in Indonesia,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 1–15.

there will always be factions in society who disagree with moderate Islam and choose other path.⁴² The ultimate goal of this research is to complement the strategy of strengthening moderate Islam throughout Indonesia.

Method

This study is based on qualitative-descriptive research, which involves a deep exploration of field and real-life situations. The research data in this study is qualitative data and focuses on the internalization of religious moderation through learning the *Kitab Kuning* in Indonesian State Islamic Universities.

This research was carried out in four *Ma'hads* across four State Islamic campuses: 1) *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Cot Kala State Institute of Islamic Studies Langsa, Aceh; 2) *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya, East Java; 3) *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* Datokarama State Islamic University Palu, Central Sulawesi; and 4) *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of State Islamic University of Mataram, West Nusa Tenggara. The four campuses are considered to be representative of their geographical distribution that extends from West to East Indonesia. In addition, they represent small campuses (Cot Kala State Institute of Islamic Studies of Langsa and Datokarama the State Islamic University of Palu), medium campuses (State Islamic University of Mataram), and large campus (Sunan Ampel State Islamic University of Surabaya).

The study gathered data from interviews with around 20 individuals directly involved in managing the *Ma'hads*. These included heads of *Ma'hads*, instructors (*mudarris*), assistant instructors (*murabbī*), students, and administrators (*mushrif*). Observations were made during activities such as prayer times, teaching sessions, meal times, leisure times, and queuing. The study also conducted three offline FGDs in Langsa, Surabaya, and Mataram, and an online FGD with informants from Palu. The purpose of these interviews and observations was to collect data on the internalization of *Islam Wasatiyah*. The study also used related documents, including the *Kitab Kuning* collection, manuals, and guidebooks. The observations focused on behaviors that promote respect and politeness, such as greeting and sitting regularly, lecturers giving students equal opportunities to give their opinions, and students getting along with each other despite differences in ethnicity and tribe. Additionally, the study noted that the environment around the *Ma'hads* should indicate the internalization of *Islam Wasatiyah*. The research data was analyzed using the Miles and Huberman analysis technique, which involved the following steps:

1. Collection of data from twenty informants including the head of *Ma'had*, instructors (*mudarris*), assistant instructors (*murabbī*), students, and administrators (*mushrif*) through interviews.
2. Data reduction to ensure that the most relevant data is used to address the research problem.
3. Presentation of data based on the reduction results, which are divided into three subcategories:
 - (a) *Islam Wasatiyah* in *Kitab Kuning* used at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*,
 - (b) Traditional approach of studying *Kitab Kuning*, and
 - (c) The practice of moderation in *Ma'had*'s daily life.
4. Drawing conclusions by referring to the results and discussion of the research to answer the research question, which is how the internalization of religious moderation is achieved through *Kitab Kuning* learning at State Islamic Universities in Indonesia.

The data was validated through cross-checking between informants as well as between interview data and observation data.

Results and Discussion

The section below presents a detailed discussion of the primary outcomes of this research. The discussion is structured based on the problem, which includes the following three key aspects: the

⁴² Muhammad Wildan (2013), *Mapping Radical Islam: A Study of the Proliferation of Radical Islam in Solo, Central Java*, in Martin van Bruinessen (Ed.) *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"*, Singapore: ISEAS, p.98.

concept of *Islam Wasatiyah* in *Kitab Kuning* used at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, the traditional approach of studying *Kitab Kuning*, and the application of moderation in the daily life of *Ma'had*.

Islam Wasatiyah in Kitab Kuning used at Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah

The Islamic classical and medieval civilization is well-known for its remarkable intellectual productivity, resulting in a vast collection of *Kitab Kuning* in various fields of knowledge. The *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* at Indonesian State Islamic Universities utilizes the *Kitab Kuning* extensively:

1. *Kifāyah al- 'Awwām fī-mā Yajibu 'Alaihim min 'Ilmi al-Kalām;*
2. *Mau 'izah al-Mu'minīn min Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn;*
3. *Kifāyah al-Akhyār fī Hall Ghāyat al-Ikhtisār;*
4. *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid al-Mursalīn;*
5. *Minhāj al- 'Ābidīn ilā Jannati Rabb al- 'Ālamīn;*
6. *Bidāyah al-Hidāyah;*
7. *Fath al-Qarīb Mujīb fī Sharḥ Alfāz al-Taqrīb;*
8. *Risālah Ahl Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah;*
9. *Tafsīr Āyāt al-Aḥkām, vol. I and II;*
10. *Tafsīr al-Mauḍū'ī, vol. I and II;*
11. *Aurād Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah fī al-Azkar wa al- 'Ubudīyah;*
12. *Taisīr Aḥkām al-Tajwīd;*
13. *Hadīṣ Arba'in al-Nawawīyah;*
14. *Mukhtaṣar Jiddan;*
15. *Amsīlah Tasrīfīyah;*
16. *Ta'īm al-Muta'allim Ṭarīq al-Ta'allum;*
17. *Ḥadīṣ Nuzhah al-Muttaqīn Sharḥ Riyād al-Ṣāliḥīn min Kalām Sayyid al-Mursalīn;*
18. *Kitāb al-Mu'tamad fī al-Fiqh al-Shāfi'ī;*
19. *Taisīr Aḥkām al-Tajwīd.*

These books have met the requirements of the *Kitab Kuning*, as defined by Rahardjo that the *Kitab Kuning* is "...a book compiled in Arabic script by Islamic scholars in the Middle Ages."⁴³ Madjid argues that only those written in Arabic are included in the *Kitab Kuning* category,⁴⁴ and even⁴⁵ expands it to include classical texts in Malay, Javanese, or other regional languages as long as they are written in Arabic script.

The *Kitab Kuning* selection at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Indonesian State Islamic Universities varies from campus to campus. Each campus may prefer a certain book to teach a specific field of knowledge, such as Islamic Theology. However, the entire collection falls under the moderate tradition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*, which is followed by Indonesian Muslims in general. Furthermore, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has issued general guidelines for *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, which require all campuses to include *Islam Wasatiyah* in their respective curriculum.

After analyzing the texts used in *Kitab Kuning* at State Islamic Universities in Indonesia, which contain the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*, we found the following results through observations and content analysis:

1. In the introduction of *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid al-Mursalīn*,⁴⁶ it is written:

It means:

Islam is not only a religion of law but also a religion that regulates manners and morals. This concept can be understood from the purpose of the Prophet Muḥammad existence for the whole universe; Where is the life of the Messenger full of morals/politeness, both individually and in society; such as tolerance and fairness in dealing with others, especially toward Allah.

⁴³ M. Dawam Rahardjo (1985), *Pergulatan Dunia Pesantren: Membangun Dari Bawah*, Jakarta: Perhimpunan Pengembangan Pesantren dan Masyarakat, p.173.

⁴⁴ Nurholis Madjid (1997), *Bilik-Bilik Pesantren: Sebuah Potret Perjalanan*, Jakarta: Paramadina, p.112.

⁴⁵ Azyumardi Azra (2001), *Pendidikan Islam: Tradisi dan Modernisasi Menuju Milenium Baru*, Jakarta: Kalimah, p.111.

⁴⁶ Abdul Mujib Adnan (2020), *Ādāb Al-Ṭālibīn Fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid Al-Mursalīn*, VII, Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Press, p. 67.

Based on this thought, the compilers wrote the book “*Adab al-Thālibīn*” which includes hadiths and Tafsir verses related to morals and Islamic fiqh. All texts in this book are referred to several books that are relevant to the teaching material. We hope that Allah will give His guidance with the presence of this book, especially for all new/first-year students at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya.” This text contains the value of *Islam Wasatiyah*, namely “tolerance and fairness in dealing with others.”⁴⁷ The Messenger has exemplified this behavior in his life; he not only associates with fellow Muslims but also associates with non-Muslim communities.⁴⁸ Being fair is a form of moderation as mentioned in Surah An-Nahl/16: 90: “Indeed, Allah orders (you) to act justly and do good, to give to relatives, and Allah forbids cruelty, evil, and enmity. He teaches you so that you can take lessons.”⁴⁹

It is important for every university student living at *Ma’had* to internalize morals of tolerance and fairness in socializing. This will allow them to interact safely and comfortably with the wider community when they leave the campus world. Limiting oneself in social interaction is an intolerant attitude that can damage the harmony in people’s lives. Feeling self-righteous in one’s thinking is also an indication of potential intolerance that can harm togetherness in differences. Khan has mentioned that tolerance is one of the characteristics of moderate people. Moderates have the ability to tolerate differences based on open-mindedness and a willingness to listen to different views. They can accommodate differences without immediately seeing them as a threat.⁵⁰

2. In the introduction by the Chancellor of Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya for the Book of *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta’ālim Sayyid al-Mursalīn*⁵¹ as follows:

It means:

The development of the university is based on the attainment of intelligence, attitude, and spirituality. Therefore, all students are required to build character, so that they are able to implement Islamic values in a good way, such as an attitude of compassion, moderation, and far from extreme thoughts and behavior.

This text highlights the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*, which advocate for a compassionate, moderate, and non-extremist approach to thoughts and behavior. These attitudes are crucial for promoting the development of a civil society that is harmonious and civilized. Without mutual affection, conflicts often arise, especially when religion is understood in an extreme way - whether on the extreme right or the extreme left. Such attitudes and behaviors only serve to justify one’s own opinions and reject the truth of others’ opinions.

In a hadith, it is found that Ibn ‘Abbas reported that the Messenger once said: “O people avoid exaggeration (exceeding the limit) because the previous peoples perished because of the attitude of exceeding the limits in religion.”⁵²

3. In the Book of *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta’ālim Sayyid al-Mursalīn*⁵³ it is written:

It means:

Moderation in wearing a dress

“From Mu’az bin Anas the Messenger said: “Whoever leaves (good) clothes because he wants to humble himself before Allah, while he is actually able, Allah will call him on the Day of Resurrection in front of all creatures and he is asked to choose which type of clothing he wants to wear.” (HR. Turmudzi).⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Hasse Jubba et al. (2022), “The Contestation between Conservative and Moderate Muslims in Promoting Islamic Moderatism in Indonesia,” *Cogent Social Sciences*, Vol. 8, No. 1, p. 1–14.

⁴⁸ Yusuf Hanafi et al. (2022), “Students’ Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, Vol. 78, No. 1, p. 1–7.

⁴⁹ Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1946), *The Meaning of the Glorious Quran: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Lahore: Islamic Propagation Centre International, p. 311.

⁵⁰ Khan, “*Siapakah Muslim Moderat Itu?*,” in Suaidi Asyari (ed.), *Siapakah Muslim Moderat*.

⁵¹ Abdul Mujib Adnan (2020), *Ādāb Al-Ṭālibīn Fī Ta’ālimi Sayyid Al-Mursalīn*, VII, Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Press, p. 80.

⁵² Muḥammad Abi Abdilāh Ibnu Mājah (1406 H), *Sunan Ibnu Mājah*, Riyad: Maktabah al-Ma’ārif, No. Hadits: 3029, <https://dorar.net/h/9TYPNfJA>.

⁵³ Abdul Mujib Adnan (2020), *Ādāb Al-Ṭālibīn Fī Ta’ālimi Sayyid Al-Mursalīn*, VII, Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Press, p. 90.

⁵⁴ Abu ‘Isā Muhammad bin ‘Isā Al-Turmuziy (1996), *Al-Jāmi’ Al-Kabīr (Sunan Al-Turmuzi)*, Beirut: Dār al-Ghar Al-Islāmi, No. Hadits 2481, <https://dorar.net/h/LpjiXneT>.

In the first hadith, it is recommended that people in the middle and lower-middle-class of society should avoid wearing expensive clothes. On the other hand, those who belong to the middle to upper-middle-class economy should wear good and expensive clothes to show gratitude for the blessings Allah has bestowed upon them.

Especially for students, it is advised to wear simple clothes. This is because students come from diverse backgrounds, including rich, middle-class, and poor families. Therefore, it is important to wear similar clothes so that there is no visible difference in economic status that can hurt anyone's feelings.

It is recommended to be modest in many aspects of life, including clothing choices, food and drink preferences, and places to stay. However, if you live in a wealthy society, your lifestyle may need to adjust accordingly. Nonetheless, this does not justify being arrogant toward others or using accessories that are prohibited in Islam, such as gold necklaces for men.

The purpose of promoting moderation in religion through this text is to encourage individuals to adopt a balanced and uncomplicated approach in their attitudes and behaviors, including their clothing choices, food and beverage consumption, and selection of living arrangements. This involves making choices that are appropriate and suitable for the given situations and circumstances. This is in accordance with the Prophetic saying related by 'Abdullah bin Mas'ud which said that the Messenger of Allah, once said: "Perish those who transgress limits," (he repeated it three times)." (HR. An-Nasāi).⁵⁵

The term "relevant" implies that simplicity should be understood in the context of the situation and the conditions of the environment, society, or group to which we belong. The goal is to avoid being an extreme group, characterized by either excess or deficiency.

4. In the Book of *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid al-Mursalīn*⁵⁶ it is written.

It means:

Prohibition of doing harm

From Abu Sa'id, Sa'ad bin Sinan Al-Khudri RA., Verily the Messenger of Allah, said: "It is not permissible to do harmful acts that harm oneself and others."⁵⁷ (Hadith Hasan narrated by Ibn Mājah and Daruqutni and in addition to a continuous chain, also narrated by Imam Malik in Muwattho' Mursal from Amr bin Yahya from his father from the Messenger of Allah, he did not mention Abu Sa'id. However, he has a way - a way that strengthens some over others).

The aversion to harm affirms that Islam is a religion of mercy and ease, and does not burden a person with anything he cannot bear. There is not to be found in Islamic rules any injunctions that are harmful or forbid something which achieves the most probable interests...

This Hadith not only emphasizes the importance of avoiding harm as per the Shari'ah, but also prohibits causing harm to others. This forms the cornerstone of a great religion. When individuals prioritize protecting the rights of others and refrain from causing harm, it leads to a reduction in disputes among people. This, in turn, builds a society based on mutual respect among its members.

The text emphasizes the importance of *Islam Wasatiyah* values, which prohibit hurting others. The Arabic word "Islam" means "peace and safety," and by practicing the true teachings of Islam, its followers can experience a sense of inner peace and safety both in this world and the hereafter. This is in line with Raehan research, which suggests that religious moderation is a crucial element for promoting a moderate perspective in society and prevents radicalism while still upholding Islamic values, even in the face of diverse opinions.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Abu Abd. Al-Rahmān Al-Nasāi (1417), *Sunan An-Nasāi*, Riyad: Maktabah al-Ma'arif, No. Hadits 3057, <https://dorar.net/h/VixAAV9i>.

⁵⁶ Abdul Mujib Adnan (2020), *Ādāb Al-Ṭālibīn Fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid Al-Mursalīn*, VII, Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Press, p. 95.

⁵⁷ Abu Abdullah Mālik bin Anas bin Mālik bin Abu Amir Al-Ashbāhi (2004), *Al-Muwatthaha'* Beirut: Bait al-Afkar Al-Dauliyah, No. Hadits: 745, <https://dorar.net/h/SHDP3XYH>.

⁵⁸ Raehan Royan (2022), "The Revitalization of Religious Moderation To Realize The Character of Muslim Ummatan Wasathan In The Era of Digital Transformation," *Annual International Conference on Islamic Education for Students* Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 138-147.

As a manifestation of this sense of peace, it is actualized in daily Muslim behavior by avoiding attitudes that harm other people, both fellow Muslims and non-Muslims. As mentioned by Jan (2008), moderation is one of the most important cores of being a Muslim. Moderation is essentially something that is built-in in Islam itself.⁵⁹

5. In the Book of *Ādāb al-Ṭālibīn fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid al-Mursalīn*⁶⁰ it is written:

It means:

From Abu Hamza – Anas bin Malik radhiyallahu ‘anhu – the assistant of the Messenger of Allah, from the Prophet Sallallahu ‘alaihiwasallam, he said: “No one of you believes (with perfect faith) until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself alone.”⁶¹

If we analyze the hadith mentioned above, we can conclude that demonstrating the perfection of faith in oneself requires one to exhibit good behavior in society and possess high moral values. This, in turn, encourages others to treat that person in the same manner. Such a behavior necessitates an individual to be patient in the face of others’ bad conduct, to forgive those who wrong them, and to share both their joys and sorrows with their brothers and sisters. They should also visit the sick, comfort the needy, support orphaned children, widows, and provide assistance to the best of their ability with a cheerful face and an open heart. Moreover, the hadith’s meaning expands to include doing good to non-Muslims as well. Thus, one should strive to earn Allah’s blessings of faith.

The values of *Islam Wasatiyah* promote the spreading of love among all people, regardless of their religious background. This love is expressed through patient, forgiving, generous, cheerful, and open-hearted behavior toward others.

6. In *Tafsīr al-Mauḍū‘ī*, commenting on Q.S Al-Baqarah/2:143 the author of *Tafsīr al-Mauḍū‘ī* writes as follows:⁶²

It means:

Moderate People. Moderate means just and the chosen people, Allah said: “The most moderate of them,” i.e. the best and fairest, the best work is moderate. Al-Kalabiy said: that is a moderate religious expert between excess and lack because these two qualities are reproached in religion.

In this text, the word “moderate” is repeated as a form of attitude and behavior of the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*. This is in accordance with Fauziah Nurdin’s research, saying that the Al-Quran and Hadith are not inviting Muslims to commit violence, or to be extreme in religious affairs⁶³. This finding is in line with that of previous research that has shown the relevance of reading and understanding the Qur’an as a strategy to cultivate a moderate attitude.⁶⁴

The non-moderate attitude in religion takes the form of imposing obligations that are not mandated by Allah and His messengers. According to Al-Qardhawi, this attitude is characterized by: (1) fanaticism toward an opinion, (2) imposing obligations on humans that are not required by Allah, (3) aggravating situations unnecessarily, (4) displaying rough attitude, (5) harboring bad prejudices against humans, and (6) falling into disbelief.⁶⁵ The aforementioned points serve as evidence that the *Kitab Kuning* books taught at *Ma’had* are imbued with the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*. In fact, the principle of moderation is evident throughout the books.

⁵⁹ Imam Subchi et al. (2022) “Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims,” *Religions*, Vol. 13, No. 5, p. 1–11.

⁶⁰ Abdul Mujib Adnan (2020), *Ādāb Al-Ṭālibīn Fī Ta'ālīm Sayyid Al-Mursalīn*, VII, Surabaya: UIN Sunan Ampel Press, p. 78.

⁶¹ Muḥammad Ibn Ismāil Al-Bukhārī (1400 H), *Al-Jāmi' Al-Shahīh*, Kairo: Al-Matba'ah al-Salafiyah, No. Hadits: 13, <https://dorar.net/h/T6nBsJcP>.

⁶² Lalu Ahmad Basyiriy (2020), *Tafsīr Al-Mauḍū'iy Li Ṭalabati Ma'had Al-Jāmi'ah Jāmi'ah Mataram Al-Islāmiyah Al-Hukūmiyah Muqtasabāt Min Kitāb Al-Tafsīr*, Mataram: UIN Mataram Press, p. 45.

⁶³ Fauziah Nurdin (2021), “Moderasi Beragama Menurut Al-Qur’an Dan Hadist,” *Jurnal Ilmiah Al-Mu'ashirah*, Vol. 18, No. 1, p. 59.

⁶⁴ Yusuf Hanafi et al. (2022), “Students’ Perspectives on Religious Moderation: A Qualitative Study into Religious Literacy Processes,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, Vol. 78, No. 1, p. 1–7.

⁶⁵ Yūsuf Al-Qardāwī (1982), *Al-Ṣahwah Al-Islāmiyah Bain Al-Juhūd Wa Al-Taṭarruf*, III, Qatar: Kitāb al-Ummah.

Sometimes it is explicitly stated, while at other times it is implied in the text. Nonetheless, the content of the *Kitab Kuning* taught at *Ma'had* effectively deters students from adopting radicalism and fundamentalism, which ultimately leads to violence and destruction.⁶⁶

Traditional Approach of Study *Kitab Kuning*

The *Kitab Kuning* teaching methods are based on the *pesantren* tradition. The *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of State Islamic Universities still uses these methods but with minor modifications. These conventional methods have been used for centuries in teaching the *Kitab Kuning*. One of the most popular methods is the Bandongan method where the teacher reads a certain text and the students follow along on their own copies of the same text. The Sorogan method is based on independent study of the *Kitab Kuning* by the student, who then presents themselves to a teacher for checking and to ensure they have understood accurately. Another method is the Lecturing Method, where the teacher delivers a lecture based on a certain text to a group of students. Lastly, the *qawā'idwa al-tarjamah* method combines discussions of the meaning contained in the text with grammatical-linguistic analysis to improve reading skills.

The most significant methodological modifications made by *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* are the emphases on the interpretation of *Kitab Kuning* texts (as opposed to simply reading the texts as they are) and suiting their contents to present-day life. Naturally *Kitab Kuning* texts were produced in a certain background different to the present day. By way of interpretation, the messages of the texts are read and made relevant to present-day situations. The main modus of the interpretation is finding contemporary parallels to situations and examples presented in the *Kitab Kuning* texts. To overcome the shortage of lecturers *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* implemented a peer tutorial in which more senior students—technically called *Musyrif* and *Musyrifah*—with high ability in *Kitab Kuning* are assigned to guide their juniors.

By way of observation, it is found that *Kitab Kuning* is used as a learning source in two ways. First, the lecturer reads from a text directly while students listen to the lecturer and take notes. Students do not have their own copies of the book. This is the practice at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* Cot Kala State Institute of Islamic Studies of Langsa. Its head of the *Ma'had* adds that sometimes a lecturer refers to several texts at the same time to enrich the lesson. Second, the lecturer reads from a particular text and every student follows the reading through his or her own copy of the text. Apparently having their copies help students greatly. This second model—traditionally called *Bandongan*—is practiced at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, the State Islamic University of Mataram, and the Datokarama State Islamic University of Palu.

The difference in how to use the *Kitab Kuning* is due to the availability of the *Kitab Kuning* for use by each student. All UINs that were research locations were able to provide these books for use by each student of course because it is supported by sufficient funding. The reading ability (*mahārahqirā'ah*) of the students is a consideration in using the *Kitab Kuning* directly. The ability to read Arabic is strongly influenced by educational background. Those with a *pesantren* background are generally more ready to take *Kitab Kuning* based classes. However, more and more students of State Islamic Universities are coming from general high schools as well as from vocational schools.

According to the Head of the *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Cot Kala State Institute of Islamic Studies of Langsa: “The background of the students at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* is very diverse, some students graduated from madrasa and some students graduated from general high school, which means their ability to understand the *Kitab Kuning* material is not similar.” The same reason is also mentioned by the Head of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Datokarama State the Islamic University of Palu. He summarizes the considerations for choosing books as 1) to increase the spirituality of students, 2) to increase the competence of basic religious knowledge, 3) the language is not too difficult to study, and 4) the content of the book that is very relevant to the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*.

The *Kitab Kuning* is widely used for learning at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of Indonesian State Islamic Universities, making it a defining characteristic of the institution. This is in accordance with the provisions contained in the *Module for the Implementation of Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah in State Islamic Universities* published by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia 2021: “More

⁶⁶ Ahmad Zainul Hamdi (2023), “The Radicalization of Contemporary Educated Indonesian: A Case Study of University Students in Yogyakarta,” *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 155–162.

Kitab Kuning and Religious Moderation: A Study on State Islamic Universities in Indonesia specifically, teaching materials relating to the field of religious science (Islam), *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* applies various literature based on the *Kitab Kuning* which allows students to gain 2 (two) benefits at once, namely language skills and scientific understanding.”⁶⁷

It has been mentioned that the term “*Kitab Kuning*” refers to classical books or those passed down from previous scholars. At *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, it is mandatory for all “*mahasantri*” to study these books. Additionally, they will also be provided with materials from contemporary books and other sources that support the learning outcomes and goals of scientific integration and “*Islam Wasatiyah*.” The entire *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, where this research was conducted, uses the *Kitab Kuning* as a reference for studying various fields of knowledge.

The Practice of Moderation in Ma'had's Daily Life

It should be noted that the internalization of *Islam Wasatiyah* through *Kitab Kuning* lessons at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* has resulted in positive changes in the attitudes and behavior of students when it comes to handling differences and building a sense of togetherness. *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* is home to students from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds. Even though it is a small campus in Langsa, it accommodates students of four different ethnicities - Acehnese, Malays, Bataks, and Minangkabaus, each with their own unique language and culture. The heads of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* of all campuses emphasize that the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*, which are embedded in the *Kitab Kuning*, have played a significant role in maintaining order and a peaceful environment at the institution. This finding is supported by Jamaluddin's research, which shows that many universities are promoting the development of religious moderation.⁶⁸

At *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, the values of moderation were observed in various ways. No incidents of conflict based on ethnicity have been recorded among students. On the contrary, there are examples where students have learned a second language from their roommates. Some students also visited their friends' houses during day-offs, which provided them with more opportunities to experience new cultures first-hand. As a result, there were cases where an Acehnese student fluently spoke Javanese, or a Javanese student who could speak Malay and so on.⁶⁹ The appreciation of local cultures and traditions such as languages is one the foundation of *Islam Wasatiyah* in an Indonesian context. The heads of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* report that most students behave according to the rules. They wake up early in the morning according to schedule, take turns in using the bathrooms, have meals, and maintain order very well. Based on observations of formal learning sessions, it was noticed that students arrived on time, greeted the class, and seated themselves in an orderly manner. During discussion time, the teacher treated all students fairly and allocated time in a way that maximized their engagement. Students were seen communicating using appropriate language during both formal class sessions and informal times. During mealtime, students would proceed to the eating hall in a line to take their portion of food and then sit around a table to enjoy their meals. It was quite normal to see them sharing food and drinks, just like they shared all other available facilities. The management of *Ma'had* ensured that students ate properly and moderately, as suggested by Islam. As a general rule, students wore modest clothing and were discouraged from using expensive or luxurious items. Although students came from various economic backgrounds, it was hardly noticeable from their daily appearance. Humility, an important moral concept in Islam, was proven to be contributive in strengthening moderation.⁷⁰

It has been observed that students of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* consistently perform well academically. They are also known for their ability to adjust to new environments and maintain good relationships with other students who don't reside in *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*, as well as with the society at large. These findings support the view that *Kitab Kuning* has the potential to contribute to solving practical contemporary challenges, as suggested by Ritonga, Lahmi, and Hakim.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Hisny Fajrussalam (2020), “Core Moderation Values Dalam Tradisi Kitab Kuning di Pondok Pesantren,” *Athulab*, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 210–240.

⁶⁸ Adon Nasurullah Jamaludin (2022), “Religious Moderation: The Concept and Practice in Higher Education Institutions” Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 539–48.

⁶⁹ Ropi, Ismatu (2019). “Whither Religious Moderation? State and Management of Religious Affairs in Contemporary Indonesia.” *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 26, No. 3, p. 597–601.

⁷⁰ Hadi Pajarianto, Imam Pribadi, and Nur S. Galugu (2023), “Youth Religious Moderation Model and Tolerance Strengthening through Intellectual Humility,” *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, Vol. 79, No. 1, p. 1–10.

⁷¹ Mahyudin Ritonga and Ahmad Lahmi and Rosniati Hakim (2021), “The Existence of Yellow Books (Kitab Kuning) as the Sources of Islamic Studies at Islamic Boarding Schools Within the Industrial Revolution Dialectics,” *SSRN Electronic Journal*, p. 3516–3523.

Another study has established that a combination of religious and academic values forms a strong foundation for moderate thinking and attitude.⁷² Religiosity (a very strong trait of *Ma'had* life) is very positive in supporting *Islam Wasatiyah*, tolerance, and harmony. The findings align with Subchi's conclusion that a better understanding of one's religious teachings and higher engagement in religious services play important roles in preventing radicalism. It is very clear that the whole programs of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* focus on these dimensions of learning the teachings of Islam and at the same time practicing them in a controlled milieu. This study further emphasizes the findings of earlier studies on the importance of a good milieu just to promote religious moderation.⁷³ Religion and religiosity are instrumental in providing mental and social balance.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Moderation is an inherent concept in Islamic teachings, which can be found in the Qur'an, the prophetic tradition, and the *Kitab Kuning*. *Pesantren*'s long-standing tradition easily adopts the *Kitab Kuning* into the curriculum of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*. Following the policy of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, special care has been taken to ensure that the *Kitab Kuning* used at *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* facilitates the dissemination and internalization of the values of *Islam Wasatiyah*. As a result, students practice values such as respect, love, respect for others, simplicity according to the situation and conditions, moderate thinking, and fairness in their daily lives, both inside and outside the *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah*. Additionally, their ability to adapt to new situations has been recognized as an added value that helps them succeed in their academic undertakings.

The results of this research are highly relevant to the current state of *Islam Wasatiyah* in Indonesia. The argument in favor of moderation, based on the indigenous tradition of *Kitab Kuning*, is likely to be well understood and accepted by most Indonesian Muslims. Therefore, it can be considered an alternative strategy in promoting *Islam Wasatiyah*. To achieve this, campuses must play a significant role in executing the strategy to the fullest extent possible. This includes expanding and intensifying existing efforts and encouraging new campuses to follow suit. Additionally, it may be beneficial to direct attention to high schools to ensure that *Islam Wasatiyah* is instilled at a younger, more receptive age.⁷⁵ However, more comprehensive research involving wider samples of *Ma'had al-Jāmi'ah* should be undertaken before generalizing the findings.⁷⁶

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⁷² Subchi et al., "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Muslims."

⁷³ Faisal S. Kamaludin, Tata S. Purnama, and Zirmansyah (2021), "Religious Moderation Strategy in the Virtual Era and Its Implication To Improving the Quality of Education," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 7, No. 2, p. 205–16.

⁷⁴ Laura E. Captari et al. (2022), "Religious/Spiritual Struggles and Depression During COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdowns in the Global South: Evidence of Moderation by Positive Religious Coping and Hope," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 325–37.

⁷⁵ Ngainun Naim, Abdul Aziz, and Teguh Teguh (2022), "Integration of Madrasah Diniyah Learning Systems for Strengthening Religious Moderation in Indonesian Universities," *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, Vol. 11, Issue 1, p. 108–119.

⁷⁶ Martin Kustati et al. (2023), "The Effect of National Insight and Religious Moderation on Radical Behavior of Secondary School Students," *Education Research International*, Vol. 2023, p. 1-13.

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