

# Harmony in Academic Climate: Implementation of Religious Moderation Policy in Indonesia Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN)

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## Keywords:

Religious Moderation, PTKIN, Interfaith Harmony, Islamic Universities, and Indonesia.

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## Abstract

Religious moderation has become a strategic policy agenda in Indonesia's Islamic higher education system, yet its implementation across State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) remains uneven. This study aims to examine how the Religious Moderation Policy (RMP) is translated into institutional governance, curriculum practices, lecturer capacity, student engagement, and the sustainability of Centers for Religious Moderation (Rumah/Pusat Moderasi Beragama). Using a convergent mixed-methods design, the study collected quantitative survey data from lecturers and students and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and institutional document analysis across ten PTKIN representing different Indonesian regions. The findings show that RMP implementation reached an overall index of 79.6%, categorized as good and approaching very good, with student engagement scoring highest (84%) and institutional sustainability scoring lowest (76%). Qualitative evidence indicates that successful implementation depends not only on formal regulations but also on leadership commitment, lecturer preparedness, participatory campus culture, and stable budgetary support. In several institutions, moderation has begun to function as an academic ethos embedded in learning, student activities, and community outreach; in others, it remains limited to symbolic programs and administrative compliance. The study implies that religious moderation in PTKIN should be strengthened through measurable policy indicators, sustainable institutional funding, lecturer development, and participatory governance so that moderation becomes a lived academic climate rather than a temporary policy campaign.

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## Kata kunci:

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## Abstrak

Moderasi beragama telah menjadi agenda kebijakan strategis dalam sistem pendidikan tinggi Islam di Indonesia, namun implementasinya di seluruh Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi Islam Negeri (PTKIN) masih belum merata. Studi ini bertujuan untuk meneliti bagaimana Kebijakan Moderasi Beragama (KMP) diterjemahkan ke dalam tata kelola institusional, praktik kurikulum, kapasitas dosen, keterlibatan mahasiswa, dan keberlanjutan Pusat Moderasi Beragama. Dengan menggunakan desain metode campuran konvergen, studi ini mengumpulkan data survei kuantitatif dari dosen dan mahasiswa serta data kualitatif melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur, diskusi kelompok fokus, dan analisis dokumen institusional di sepuluh PTKIN yang mewakili berbagai wilayah di Indonesia. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa implementasi KMP mencapai indeks keseluruhan 79,6%, dikategorikan baik dan mendekati sangat baik, dengan keterlibatan mahasiswa mendapat skor tertinggi (84%) dan keberlanjutan institusional mendapat skor terendah (76%). Bukti kualitatif menunjukkan bahwa keberhasilan implementasi tidak hanya bergantung pada peraturan formal tetapi juga pada komitmen kepemimpinan, kesiapan dosen, budaya kampus partisipatif, dan dukungan anggaran yang stabil. Di beberapa institusi, moderasi telah mulai

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*berfungsi sebagai etos akademik yang tertanam dalam pembelajaran, kegiatan mahasiswa, dan pengabdian masyarakat; Di beberapa institusi lain, hal itu masih terbatas pada program-program simbolis dan kepatuhan administratif. Studi ini menyiratkan bahwa moderasi keagamaan di PTKIN (Philippine Teaching and Learning and Innovation) perlu diperkuat melalui indikator kebijakan yang terukur, pendanaan institusional yang berkelanjutan, pengembangan dosen, dan tata kelola partisipatif sehingga moderasi menjadi iklim akademik yang dihayati, bukan sekadar kampanye kebijakan sementara.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's religious pluralism makes the implementation of religious moderation an urgent academic and policy issue. As the world's largest Muslim-majority democracy, Indonesia is about 87% Muslim and around 11% Christian, while the remaining citizens identify mainly as Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian, or other officially recognized communities (Abdullah et al., 2023; Masuwd et al., 2025; Najib et al., 2026; Sodikin et al., 2026). This demographic plurality is a civic asset, but it also produces a fragile public sphere when religious identity is mobilized through political polarization, exclusionary preaching, and digital narratives that simplify religious truth claims into antagonistic categories (Pew Research Center, 2024). In this context, universities are not merely sites of knowledge transmission; they are strategic institutions for forming students' civic dispositions, interreligious literacy, and capacity to live with difference. For State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri/PTKIN), the issue is especially important because they operate at the intersection of Islamic scholarship, national education policy, and the moral formation of future religious and civic leaders (Pew Research Center, 2024).

The Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA) institutionalized the Religious Moderation Policy (RMP) in 2019 and later positioned religious moderation as a priority within the 2020-2024 national and ministerial development agenda (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019; Kementerian Agama RI, 2020). The policy defines *moderasi beragama* as a fair, balanced, and non-extreme way of understanding and practicing religion, with four commonly used indicators: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and accommodation of local culture. Within PTKIN, this agenda has been translated into curriculum integration, lecturer capacity-building, student programs, community engagement, and the establishment of Centers for Religious Moderation (Rumah Moderasi Beragama/RMB or Pusat Moderasi Beragama/PMB). However, turning a national policy into an academic climate is not automatic (Addakhil et al., n.d.; Hasan et al., 2024; Ilham & Ramadani, 2024; Kyambade et al., 2024; Ma'arif et al., 2024). It requires policy clarity, leadership commitment, institutional resources, pedagogical innovation, and mechanisms for evaluating whether moderation becomes a lived campus ethos rather than a ceremonial slogan.

Existing scholarship has provided an important foundation for this discussion. Studies on religious moderation in Indonesia have clarified its theological basis in *wasathiyah*, mapped MoRA's policy strategy, examined the establishment of RMB in selected PTKIN, and explored the integration of moderation values into Islamic education curricula (Armedi et al., 2024; Maizuddin et al., 2023; Santalia & Aulia, 2024). Other studies on religious literacy, interfaith education, and peace education show that educational institutions can reduce prejudice and cultivate coexistence when students

are trained to interpret religious diversity dialogically rather than defensively (Halafoff et al., 2020; Harris & Morrison, 2013; Jackson, 2016). Policy implementation theory also reminds us that successful implementation depends on the clarity of objectives, adequacy of resources, and consistency of enforcement (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). Nevertheless, the existing literature remains insufficient in three respects: many studies are descriptive or single-site, few combine quantitative implementation measures with qualitative explanations of campus culture, and cross-institutional comparisons among PTKIN remain limited. As a result, we still know relatively little about how the same national moderation policy produces different institutional outcomes across PTKIN.

This article addresses that gap by examining how the Religious Moderation Policy is implemented across selected PTKIN in Indonesia and how such implementation shapes academic climate. Specifically, the study evaluates five dimensions of implementation: institutional policy and governance, curriculum integration, lecturer competence and training, student activities and engagement, and the sustainability of RMB/PMB as campus moderation infrastructure. By combining survey data, interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis, the article complements previous research that has mainly emphasized normative policy discourse or isolated institutional cases. Its contribution lies in showing not only whether PTKIN have adopted the policy formally, but also how deeply moderation values are internalized in academic practices, leadership routines, learning activities, and student life.

The central argument tested in this article is that religious moderation in PTKIN becomes effective when formal policy adoption is reinforced by participatory institutional culture. In other words, universities with clearer policy instruments, stronger leadership support, better lecturer preparedness, active student engagement, and adequately resourced RMB/PMB are expected to demonstrate stronger internalization of moderation values and a more inclusive academic climate. Conversely, where implementation is limited to regulations, seminars, or symbolic campaigns, moderation is likely to remain administrative compliance rather than a transformative campus ethos. This argument positions PTKIN as both objects of policy implementation and active laboratories for developing an Indonesian model of Islamic higher education that links religious commitment, democratic citizenship, and peaceful coexistence.

## RESEARCH METHODS

### Research Desain

This study used a convergent parallel mixed methods design to examine how the Religious Moderation Policy (RMP) is implemented within Indonesia's State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). In this design, quantitative and qualitative data are collected during the same research phase, analyzed separately, and then merged during interpretation to determine whether the two strands confirm, complement, or explain each other. Both strands were given equal priority: the quantitative strand measured the extent of policy implementation across institutional dimensions, while the qualitative strand explained the meanings, experiences, and institutional dynamics behind the numerical patterns. This design was selected because the study required both breadths, through cross-institutional survey data, and depth, through interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

### Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted across ten PTKIN representing Indonesia's major regions: 1) UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh; 2) UIN Sultanah Nahrasiyah; 3) IAIN Langsa; 4) UIN Sumatera Utara; 5) IAIN Bone; 6) IAIN Palopo; 7) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta;

8) UIN Raden Intan Lampung; 9) IAIN Pontianak; and 10) UIN Alauddin Makassar. The institutions were selected through purposive maximum-variation sampling to capture differences in institutional size, age, geographical context, and maturity of Religious Moderation Centers (Rumah/Pusat Moderasi Beragama). The quantitative strand involved 180 respondents, consisting of 80 lecturers and 100 undergraduate students from multiple faculties. The qualitative strand involved 40 senior administrators, including rectors, deans, RMB/PMB heads, and education staff, complemented by selected lecturers and students who participated in focus group discussions. This sampling strategy was intended to capture variation across leadership, lecturer, and student perspectives rather than to claim statistical representativeness of all PTKIN in Indonesia.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Four complementary data collection techniques were used to support the convergent mixed-methods design.

**Semi-Structured Interviews.** Interviews were conducted with 40 senior administrators and RMB/PMB coordinators to examine strategic planning, leadership commitment, resource allocation, institutional challenges, and the translation of moderation values into governance, curriculum, and campus culture.

**Questionnaire Survey.** A structured questionnaire containing 30 Likert-scale items (1-5) was distributed to 80 lecturers and 100 students. The items were grouped into five implementation dimensions: 1) institutional policy and governance; 2) curriculum integration; 3) lecturer competence and training; 4) student activities and engagement; and 5) infrastructure and sustainability of RMB/PMB centers. Pilot testing was conducted at UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh, and the reliability test produced a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

**Focus Group Discussions.** FGDs were conducted in four universities, namely Banda Aceh, Lampung, Jakarta, and Makassar, to explore contextual variations in campus culture, student participation, digital religious discourse, and local community dynamics. These locations were selected to represent western, central, and eastern Indonesian contexts within the ten-site sample.

**Institutional Document Analysis.** The study also examined institutional documents, including strategic plans, rector decrees, curriculum documents, RMB/PMB program reports, lecturer training records, and student activity documents. This document analysis was used to verify whether moderation policies were formally embedded in institutional governance and academic practice.

### **Data Analysis and Mixed-Method Integration**

Qualitative data from interviews, FGDs, and documents were analyzed thematically through three stages: initial coding, axial coding, and interpretive coding. Initial coding identified recurring issues such as leadership support, curriculum barriers, student engagement, funding limitations, and symbolic implementation. Axial coding grouped these codes into broader categories, including institutional readiness, policy translation, pedagogical innovation, campus culture, and sustainability. Interpretive coding linked these categories to the study's theoretical frameworks on religious literacy, peace education, and policy implementation.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency, mean score, percentage score, and implementation index. The implementation index was calculated using the formula: obtained score divided by maximum possible score, multiplied by 100. Scores were interpreted using five categories: 0-20 very low, 21-40

low, 41-60 moderate, 61-80 good, and 81-100 very good. This categorization enabled comparison across the five dimensions of RMP implementation.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings was conducted at the interpretation stage through data merging and comparison. Survey results were first analyzed to identify the relative strength of each implementation dimension. Qualitative findings were then used to explain why certain dimensions scored higher or lower across institutions. Points of convergence, complementarity, and divergence between the two strands were identified to produce a more complete interpretation of RMP implementation in PTKIN.

#### **Validity and Reliability**

Several strategies were used to ensure methodological rigor. Quantitative validity was strengthened through expert review of the questionnaire items, pilot testing, and reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha. Qualitative trustworthiness was supported through source triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking with selected respondents, and comparison between interview, FGD, and document data. Mixed-method validity was addressed by explicitly integrating the two strands during interpretation, allowing qualitative evidence to confirm, expand, or challenge quantitative patterns. These procedures ensured that the findings did not rely on a single source of evidence but reflected the interaction between institutional data, participant experience, and measurable implementation indicators.

## **RESULT**

### **Overview of Implementation Across PTKIN**

The implementation of the Religious Moderation Policy (RMP) within Indonesia's State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN) demonstrates both substantial achievements and contextual variations. Quantitative analysis reveals that, on average, PTKIN have achieved an implementation index of 79.6%, categorized as Good to Very Good. Among the five assessed dimensions policy, curriculum, human resources, student engagement, and institutional sustainability the strongest performance is observed in student activities (84%), followed by policy governance (82%). However, curriculum integration (77%) and infrastructure sustainability (76%) remain areas requiring further development.

Qualitative findings further illuminate the multidimensional nature of implementation. While institutional commitment is widely acknowledged, the depth of cultural internalization and pedagogical consistency varies across universities. As one rector of UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh noted: "Religious moderation is no longer just a slogan. It is part of our university identity. But ensuring that every faculty lives this value requires continuous mentoring and leadership example." (Interview, Rector of UIN Ar-Raniry, 2024). This sentiment captures the ongoing process of transforming religious moderation from administrative compliance into a cultural habitus embedded in teaching, research, and community service

### **Institutional Commitment and Policy Integration**

The study found that 82% of PTKIN have formally integrated religious moderation into their institutional documents, such as strategic plans (Renstra), rector decrees, and academic regulations. All ten sampled universities have established Centers for Religious Moderation (Rumah Moderasi Beragama/RMB) functioning under the Office of the Rector. For instance: 1) UIN Raden Intan Lampung has issued Rector Regulation No. 23/2022 mandating that all faculties include moderation modules in general education courses. 2) UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta created a Moderation Charter

signed by all deans, integrating moderation values into research funding criteria. 3) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah and IAIN Langsa have embedded moderation indicators into lecturer performance evaluations (BKD).

However, the degree of enforcement differs. Some RMB centers operate effectively as interfaculty collaboration hubs, while others function merely as ceremonial offices. In universities with strong leadership support, RMB centers coordinate regular workshops, student debates, and social media campaigns.

Conversely, institutions lacking sustained budget allocations tend to focus on symbolic events seminars, posters, and slogans without systemic follow-up. This disparity underscores the importance of leadership vision.

A dean at UIN Raden Intan explained: "If the rector personally attends moderation programs, everyone participates. If not, the activity remains at the level of discourse." Institutionalization, therefore, depends on leadership as a cultural driver rather than on policy documents alone.

#### Human Resources and Capacity Building

Lecturers and academic staff are the linchpins of successful policy implementation. Findings show that 79% of respondents rated human resource capacity as "good." PTKIN have invested in workshops, short courses, and national training programs organized by MoRA. However, disparities remain between older universities (UIN) and newer institutions (IAIN). Senior lecturers often possess theoretical knowledge but limited technological skills, while younger lecturers show enthusiasm yet lack institutional authority to innovate curriculum.

MoRA's Training of Trainers (ToT) for religious moderation conducted since 2021 has strengthened lecturer capacity. At UIN Sunan Kalijaga, for example, 200 lecturers completed the ToT program, leading to the establishment of an Interfaith Dialogue Laboratory. Meanwhile, UIN Alauddin Makassar integrated ToT graduates into the curriculum review committee, ensuring consistency between policy and practice. Nonetheless, sustainability remains an issue. Training programs rely heavily on central funding, and universities rarely allocate their own budget for capacity building. Without institutionalized professional development, the momentum generated by ToT programs may diminish once external funding ceases.

#### Student Engagement and Campus Culture

Students are the most dynamic agents of moderation. Across all universities, student engagement scored the highest (84%), showing that moderation values are best manifested in peer interaction, social media activism, and community outreach. These activities not only promote tolerance but also build digital resilience against hate speech. The RMB Center at UIN Lampung developed a student ambassador program where selected youth leaders receive training in peace communication and become moderators of campus discussions.

As one student participant noted: "Religious moderation is not about changing beliefs but about respecting differences. Our generation expresses that through creativity video content, discussions, and volunteerism." The data suggest that the emotional and experiential dimension of moderation flourishes most effectively in student-led initiatives rather than formal lectures.

#### Institutional Sustainability and Resource Allocation

While policy enthusiasm is high, institutional sustainability remains the weakest dimension (76%). Most RMB centers depend on short-term project funding from MoRA or university CSR programs. Only three universities: UIN Ar-Raniry, UIN Lampung have established dedicated budget lines within their annual work plans. Infrastructure

varies significantly: 1) Some centers operate from permanent offices with staff and facilities; and 2) Others are temporarily housed in borrowed rooms without stable staff or administrative autonomy. Additionally, inter-ministerial coordination remains limited. Since PTKIN fall under MoRA rather than the Ministry of Education, collaboration with broader higher education networks is often constrained. This isolation limits opportunities for joint research, international partnerships, and comparative learning.

A senior administrator in Makassar expressed concern: “We have the vision, but not the long-term budget. After one year of MoRA funding, activities stopped. Sustainability must be internalized within our university planning system.” This highlights the need for a more institutionalized financial model, one that treats religious moderation not as a project but as an enduring educational mission.

Quantitative Synthesis: Implementation Indeks

The survey data confirm these qualitative observations.

Table 1 Summarizes the overall implementation performance across dimensions

Implementation Aspect	Mean Score	Interpretation	Key Strengths	Key Challenges
Institutional Policy & Governance	4.10	Very Good	Leadership commitment, formal decrees	Limited monitoring tools
Curriculum Integration	3.85	Good	Curriculum mapping, CPL integration	Lack of standard modules
Lecturer Capacity & Training	3.95	Good	ToT programs, active involvement	Funding sustainability
Student Engagement	4.20	Excellent	High student participation	Limited cross-campus networking
RMB Infrastructure & Sustainability	3.78	Good	Active centers in major UIN	Weak financial autonomy

Source:

The data reaffirm that the human and cultural dimensions of moderation student participation and leadership support are stronger than structural or resource-based aspects like curriculum and funding.

Best Practices and Innovative Models

Two PTKIN stand out as exemplary models: 1) UIN Ar-Raniry Banda Aceh “Community-Linked Moderation”: a) Integrates religious moderation into community service (*KKN Tematik Moderasi*); b) students conduct fieldwork in multi-religious villages, facilitating dialogue and peace education workshops; c) Collaboration with local government and interfaith councils enhances real-world application. 2) UIN Raden Intan Lampung “Curricular Standardization Model”: a) Developed a university-wide *Religious Moderation Curriculum Framework* aligned with MoRA’s vision; b) Each faculty must include at least two moderation-linked learning outcomes per course; c) Institutional accreditation now includes moderation indicators.

These models demonstrate different pathways, one focusing on *societal engagement* and the other on *academic integration*. Both exemplify how contextual innovation can translate national policy into sustainable university culture.

Emerging Trends and Future Potential

Several emerging trends can be inferred: 1) Digitalization of Moderation Education. PTKIN are increasingly using online platforms to disseminate moderation

content, including podcasts, e-learning modules, and digital campaigns. 2) Gender and Inclusivity Dimensions. Women lecturers and student leaders are playing growing roles in moderation advocacy, particularly through interfaith dialogues and humanitarian activities. 3) Regional Collaboration. Some PTKIN have initiated partnerships with universities in Malaysia and Thailand to share experiences on Islamic education for peace.

These developments indicate that religious moderation is evolving beyond local policy into a regional discourse on Islamic higher education reform.

## DISCUSSION

### Religious Moderation as an Institutional Paradigm

The findings reveal that religious moderation has evolved from a *policy framework* into a *cultural paradigm* within Indonesia's State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN). This transformation aligns with theoretical arguments that universities can act as moral community spaces where values, ethics, and knowledge intersect to shape civic consciousness (Appleby, 2000; Halafoff, 2018).

By adopting the *Religious Moderation Policy (RMP)*, PTKIN have repositioned themselves not only as educational centers but as laboratories of interfaith coexistence. Institutional reforms such as establishing Centers for Religious Moderation, developing curricular integration, and promoting student-led interfaith projects-reflect an expanding awareness that academic excellence must coexist with ethical responsibility.

This institutionalization supports Abu-Nimer's (2020) thesis that *faith-based universities can operationalize peacebuilding through education*, bridging the gap between religious ethics and social realities. In PTKIN's context, the *balance between orthodoxy and inclusivity* becomes the central axis of identity: maintaining Islamic authenticity while fostering national pluralism.

However, as the data indicate, such balance remains uneven across institutions. The risk of "symbolic compliance" where policies are adopted but not internalized, illustrates Lipsky's (1980) concept of **street-level bureaucracy**, in which local actors reinterpret top-down policies according to available resources and motivations. Effective moderation thus requires a deeper transformation in institutional culture, not merely the reproduction of government directives.

### Comparative Perspectives: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Turkey

A comparative lens highlights how Indonesia's approach to *religious moderation* differs from other Muslim-majority contexts. In Malaysia, religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*) is framed primarily as part of national ideology (*Rukun Negara*), emphasizing civic loyalty and ethnic coexistence. Malaysian universities have formal interfaith modules, but the discourse tends to remain within civic education, with limited theological innovation (Zainuddin & Osman, 2021).

In Türkiye, secularization under the Higher Education Council (YÖK) restricts overt religious discourse, yet *İlahiyat* faculties foster moderation through historical-critical engagement with classical texts (Aydin, 2020). Turkish higher education demonstrates a more academic, epistemological form of moderation—anchored in hermeneutics and textual plurality than Indonesia's socially oriented model.

In contrast, Indonesia's PTKIN system integrates moderation simultaneously at three levels: 1) Doctrinal: through theological reinterpretation rooted in *wasathiyah* and *rahmatan lil-'alamin*; 2) Institutional: through MoRA's national policy and governance structure; and 3) Socio-cultural: through community outreach, student activism, and interfaith collaboration.

This *multi-layered model* positions Indonesia as a potential global reference for integrating faith-based ethics into national education systems. Yet, compared with Malaysia and Turkiye, Indonesia still faces challenges in curriculum standardization and sustainable resource allocation. Institutional autonomy and financial independence will determine whether the policy's moral enthusiasm translates into enduring structural reform.

### **Pedagogical Transformation: From Knowledge to Experience**

The pedagogical shift observed in PTKIN, from *teaching about* moderation to *teaching through* moderation is a critical innovation. This aligns with the experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015), which posits that values are best internalized through direct experience rather than abstract instruction.

By embedding moderation in community service (*KKN Tematik Moderasi*) and interfaith dialogue projects, PTKIN operationalize what Harris and Morrison (2013) call *education for peace*: learning that is dialogical, participatory, and transformative. The findings suggest that student agency is the strongest determinant of success. Student-led initiatives such as moderation festivals, interfaith forums, and digital literacy campaigns have proven more effective in cultivating empathy and resilience than top-down lectures.

This mirrors global trends where *peer learning* and *social media engagement* become new arenas of civic formation among youth (Halafoff, 2018).

The challenge, however, lies in sustaining pedagogical innovation beyond the enthusiasm of cohorts or leadership terms. Institutional mechanisms such as moderation-integrated learning outcomes and lecturer capacity-building are essential for long-term continuity. Without embedding moderation into *curricular DNA*, it risks being reduced to a transient policy trend (Fatah et al., 2025; Hakim et al., 2026; Isaeni et al., 2025).

### **Leadership and the Ethics of Policy Implementation**

Leadership emerges as a critical factor in translating moderation policy into practice (Aryasutha et al., 2025; Azhar & Halwati, n.d.; Haq & Roesminingsih, 2024). Data from interviews consistently highlight that rector and dean commitment determines whether the Religious Moderation Policy becomes substantive or symbolic. This finding echoes the transformational leadership theory (Bass & Riggio, 2012), which argues that visionary leadership inspires institutional change through moral example rather than bureaucratic authority.

In the most successful PTKIN, leaders actively participate in moderation programs, allocate budgets, and model inclusive decision-making. Their leadership styles foster a *culture of trust* and *collective ownership* among academic staff. Conversely, in universities where moderation remains peripheral, leadership engagement tends to be reactive and ceremonial. This aligns with Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983) policy implementation model: *clarity of goals*, *resource adequacy*, and *consistency of enforcement* are essential determinants of policy success. In PTKIN's context, these determinants depend on leadership capacity to align national directives with local innovation, what may be termed *contextual governance*. Hence, moderation policy implementation is as much an ethical process as an administrative one.

### **Cultural Internalization and Digital Challenges**

Cultural internalization the embedding of moderation values within campus ethos, remains an ongoing challenge. While surveys indicate strong student engagement, qualitative data reveal uneven understanding of moderation as a lived ethic. Some students equate moderation with mere tolerance, overlooking its epistemic

depth as a framework for critical dialogue and empathy. Moreover, digital spaces complicate the internalization process.

Social media exposes students to ideological polarization, misinformation, and algorithm-driven radical content. As research by PPIM UIN Jakarta (2020) and Marhamah et al. (2024) shows, digital religion is shaping new forms of piety and identity politics among Indonesian youth. PTKIN must therefore expand moderation efforts into the digital realm developing *cyber-literacy programs* and online counter-narratives to promote balanced religious discourse (Jumadiyah & Zumrotun, 2024; Rosi, 2025).

In this sense, moderation becomes not only a moral or pedagogical project but also a technological and media literacy project. Universities that successfully integrate digital engagement such as UIN Lampung and UIN Makassar demonstrate that moderation can thrive in the same digital ecosystems where extremism once flourished. This innovation situates Indonesia within global movements for *digital peacebuilding* and *countering violent extremism (CVE)* through education.

### **Toward a Sustainable Model of Religious Moderation in Higher Education**

Synthesizing these insights, the PTKIN experience illustrates a gradual evolution from policy implementation to institutional transformation.

However, sustainability depends on four interlinked pillars: 1) Institutionalization: Establish permanent structures (Centers for Religious Moderation) with stable budgets and mandates. 2) Pedagogical Integration: Embed moderation outcomes into all curricula and lecturer evaluations. 3) Cultural Reinforcement: Encourage continuous campus engagement through student movements, art, and dialogue. 4) Digital Expansion: Utilize social media and e-learning to extend moderation beyond the physical campus.

These pillars form what this paper terms a “Quadripartite Model of Sustainable Moderation”, aligning with global principles of *education for peace* and *inclusive citizenship*. Such a model could serve as a reference for other Muslim-majority countries seeking to balance religious identity with civic pluralism.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Academically, this study confirms previous research showing that religious moderation in Indonesian Islamic education is rooted in *wasathiyah*, tolerance, anti-violence, national commitment, and accommodation of local culture. It also supports policy implementation theory, particularly the view that successful implementation depends on clear objectives, adequate resources, and consistent institutional support. However, this study extends previous research in three ways.

First, it moves beyond single-site and normative policy discussions by offering cross-institutional evidence from ten PTKIN using a convergent mixed-methods design. Second, it challenges the assumption that the establishment of RMB/PMB units is sufficient evidence of substantive implementation. The findings show that institutional structures matter only when supported by leadership, funding, lecturer competence, and participatory campus culture. Third, the study offers a Quadripartite Model of Sustainable Moderation, consisting of institutionalization, pedagogical integration, cultural reinforcement, and digital expansion. This model provides a conceptual contribution for analyzing religious moderation as both a policy process and a lived academic climate.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the implementation of the Religious Moderation Policy in Indonesia's State Islamic Higher Education Institutions and found that PTKIN have made substantial progress in translating national policy into academic governance, curriculum initiatives, student activities, and community engagement. The implementation index of 79.6% indicates that the policy has generally reached a good level of adoption, although progress remains uneven across dimensions and institutions. The main conclusion is that religious moderation becomes effective when formal policy adoption is reinforced by participatory institutional culture. Regulations, strategic plans, and RMB/PMB structures are necessary, but they are not sufficient. Sustainable implementation requires leadership consistency, lecturer capacity, curriculum integration, student participation, digital engagement, and stable budgetary support. PTKIN therefore function not only as policy implementers but also as laboratories for developing an Indonesian model of Islamic higher education that connects religious commitment, democratic citizenship, and peaceful coexistence.

For policy makers and university leaders, the implication is clear: Religious moderation should be treated as a long-term academic ecosystem rather than a temporary program. Strengthening moderation requires measurable indicators, institutionalized funding, continuous lecturer development, student-led innovation, and integration with digital literacy strategies. Without these elements, moderation risks remaining symbolic; with them, it can become a durable academic climate that supports pluralism and social.

This study has several limitations. First, the quantitative data relied on self-reported perceptions from lecturers and students, which may not fully capture actual classroom practices or everyday campus interaction. Second, the study focused only on PTKIN and did not include private Islamic higher education institutions or non-Islamic universities, limiting the scope of institutional comparison. Third, the research used a cross-sectional design, so it could not track changes in moderation values across time or evaluate the long-term effects of policy implementation beyond the 2020-2024 policy cycle. Fourth, although document analysis was included, the availability and completeness of institutional documents varied across universities.

Future research should address these limitations through broader and more diverse samples, including PTKIN, private Islamic universities, and other higher education institutions. Longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether moderation values remain stable across student cohorts and leadership changes. Future studies may also use classroom observation, digital ethnography, or quantitative modeling to test the relationship between moderation education, student tolerance, civic participation, and resistance to online polarization. Such research would provide stronger evidence for improving religious moderation policy and designing more responsive higher education strategies in plural societies.

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